

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness segment where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host. We are in the fourth week of our Community Health Challenge, the Wheel of Wellness, and we use continue to use Apple a Day as one of the ways that we can take this deeper dive into each one of [inaudible 00:00:19] components of health, and our topic for this week is nutrition.

Certainly plenty of things that we can talk about when it comes to our nutrition and the way that that can improve our health. I'm fortunate to have with me as my guest today Kary Systma from Lake Region Healthcare. She's a registered nutrition and dietetic technician, and she's also a certified health and wellness coach here at our Health and Wellness Hub. She's got a wealth of knowledge, and we're going to see if we can pick her brain a little bit to help us learn some healthier eating and nutrition tools. Thanks for being with us this morning, Kary.

Kary Systma: Thanks, Katie.

Katie Johnson: As I said, there are so many components to the nutritional aspect of wellness. We could talk about eating properly, reading labels, ingredient lists, food safety, eating disorders, special dietary concerns. There's just so many facets. I'll try and touch on at least a few of them that I think will be maybe higher level and applicable to most of our listeners. I want to start with package labeling. We've talked about this with our Shop with a Doc program recently, and we, I think, all can agree that it's a little bit complicated. Can you help us simplify what we should be looking for on food labels when we grocery shop if we want just start paying attention to making healthier choices?

Kary Systma: Sure, absolutely. The first thing you're going to want to look for on the nutrition facts label that you can find on your package foods in the supermarket, the first thing you're going to notice is serving size. This is very, very important. The nutrition facts label that they list, everything is based off of that number; however, we can often really go too far out of control if we're not paying attention to that number.

From there, you're going to see your calories. That also breaks down into calories from fat, so those are two very important numbers to keep in mind. The next section is listed into nutrients that we want to limit. That's going to be your total fat, your cholesterol, your sodium. Pay attention to those numbers. We do not want our total fat to exceed 65 grams. Our saturated fat should not exceed 20 grams in a day. Our cholesterol should not exceed 300 milligrams, and our sodium should be right around 2,400 milligrams in a day.

Katie Johnson: Those are great numbers. Is there some place, or numbers to know and be aware of, is there some place, if I'm a listeners and I didn't quite jot those down, where's a good go-to source for when I want to just double check that?

Kary Systma: There are a couple of different places that you're really going be able to find a lot of

great information. One is the [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov). You can also find a lot of this great information on our USDA website and [eatright.org](http://eatright.org).

Katie Johnson: Great resources. You mentioned the serving size. I have fallen guilty to this many times, and I'm much more aware of it now, I think. I'm eating something kind of healthy like this package of almonds, and I'm done with the package of almonds when I realize that was three servings in that little package.

Kary Systma: Yeah, absolutely, and that is where we get into trouble. One example I like to use a lot, you'll find these little snack packs of nuts in our checkout isles. We'll grab them thinking, "Perfect, I have just chosen a really great option," however, the typical one that I see is two and a half servings. If you ate the entire package, you would have over 400 calories and over 33 grams of fat just in one serving.

Katie Johnson: That you were thinking was a healthy little snack.

Kary Systma: Exactly.

Katie Johnson: There are also some other numbers that, in addition to staying on top of the daily allowances for calories, fat, and sodium, there's also some other numbers we talk about when we talk about nutrition, and that's in terms of if we want to maintain or lose weight, we maybe want to know what our body mass index is or other kind of calculators. Can you give us some advice on those?

Kary Systma: I can, but first, why don't we talk about what a calorie is because I think that's pretty important to know. Whether you need to lose weight, maintain your ideal weight, or gain weight, the main message is calories count. It is a numbers game. Weight management is all about balancing the number of calories you take in with the number of calories your body uses or burns off. A calorie is no more than a unit of energy supplied by food and beverages. A calorie is a calorie, regardless of its source, from carbs, fats, sugars, proteins. They all contain calories. If your body does not use calories, they're stored as fat.

The number of calories each person needs a day varies on a number of different factors including the person's age, sex, height, weight, and level of physical activity. In addition, a need to lose, maintain, or gain weight and other factors affect how many calories should be consumed. Just as an estimate, a woman, an adult woman could range from 1,600 to 2,400 calories in a day that she would, and-

Katie Johnson: To 2,400, right?

Kary Systma: Yup.

Katie Johnson: Yeah.

Kary Systma: A man would need somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 calories. Here's what you need to know: One pound of fat equals 3,500 calories. If you want to lose a pound, you would need to create a 3,500-calorie deficit. That sounds like a lot, but we

divide that up in a week, if we divide that up in a week, we only need to create a 500 calorie deficit in a day. This can easily be done by monitoring our portion sizes and choosing more fruits and vegetables because they are naturally lower in calories.

If you wanted, I had mentioned earlier the [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), if you click on their webpage and you hit the Healthy Weight tab, it would bring you to a menu where you can assess your weight. Here's where you're going to find the BMI calculator, and you're also going to be able to find some helpful valuable charts on exactly what your calorie needs might be based on your activity level and your age.

Katie Johnson: Those tools are important because, like you said, each one of us is different. There's not one magic number that you can just throw out and say every person needs to follow. I'm glad that we have that tool available to help us do that.

Let's talk a little bit more about some specific food groups. Whole grains is what we hear a lot about today, and I think there's some confusion as to, is that the same thing as whole wheat? If I'm eating whole wheat, is that a whole grain? Why does it matter anyway?

Kary Systma: Sure. Yes, to answer your question, technically, whole wheat is a whole grain, but let me just give you a basic overview. According to the American Heart Association, whole grains are foods that contain the entire portion of each grain, which includes the bran, which is the outer layer of the grain, the endosperm, which is the middle portion of the grain, and the germ, the inner heart of the grain.

Examples of whole grains would be whole wheat, brown rice, cracked wheat, quinoa, barley, and oats. Whole wheat is a whole grain because it still contains all of its original parts, including the bran, endosperm, and germ; however, just because it's made from wheat doesn't mean it's whole wheat or whole grain. You're going to want to look at the food labels, and you want it to specifically say "whole wheat" or list "whole wheat flour" as an ingredient. They're important because whole grains are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and they do contain some protein. The benefits of eating them are a reduced risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer. It's also associated with better weight maintenance.

Katie Johnson: If we're eating things that are made with flour, wheat flour that isn't whole wheat flour, we're missing out on all those benefits then.

Kary Systma: Exactly.

Katie Johnson: Like I said, we could talk on and on and on about all the different facets of nutrition, but we'll have to direct people to join our Health Challenge. We'll give you more tips and resources on our webpage that goes with the Health Challenge, [lrhc.org/wow](http://lrhc.org/wow), and we'll have lots more bonus information and points and a chance to share some recipes as part of the challenge this week too. Make sure you check out the website if you're looking for more, but I'm going to ask you to just leave us

maybe with your top three. What are your top three pieces of wisdom, advice, or resources that can help us improve our nutritional wellness regardless of where we might be on our individual journey with food.

Kary Systma: Yeah, definitely. There are so many, so it'll be hard to limit it to just three, but-

Katie Johnson: Well, you can do more than three if you need to.

Kary Systma: Well, we'll start with that. I am part of our Lifestyle Medicine Program here at Lake Region Healthcare, and the idea of lifestyle medicine is that we can greatly reduce the risk of disease, delay, or in some cases, reverse simply by modifying our lifestyle choices, and nutrition being one of those components. If you were to meet with me in our Lifestyle Medicine Program over at the Hub, one way to get there would be via referral from your physician, the first thing that I would talk to you about would be weight. Maybe you're at your perfect ideal weight. Many of us are not. The most important thing to know, I think, is that it doesn't take a lot. We often think, "Oh, I've got 50 pounds to lose," or more, but really, when we're talking about reducing our lab values, for example, lowering our glucose numbers, a 7% weight loss is often all it takes to start seeing the benefits of getting our weight in line and in order.

Best way you can do that, I would say, is to start keeping track of what your eating. Think of it like this: You wouldn't expect to achieve financial success if you willy-nilly spent what you wanted and didn't keep track of where your money was going. In the same way, we can't really achieve our nutritional wellness goals if we don't keep track of what we're putting in our body. It's such an easy way to keep our weight under control.

You can do this with a simple journal and writing it down or using an app on your phone such as MyFitnessPal, whatever works for you, but be consistent. You don't need to worry about every little last calorie and every little last gram of fat. I think that's where we often fall off the rails because it becomes overwhelming. Think bigger picture. You want an overall snapshot of what you're eating in a week. You can get to the end of the week, look back over what you've written down and say, "Well, I can see some changes that I could have made," or, "You know what? I did a phenomenal job in getting in all my fruits and vegetables this week. I'm going to try to do that again." It's just a way of keeping yourself accountable.

Don't set such high, lofty goals. If we change the way we thought from "I need to diet" to "I want to eat well in order to be well," then we're going to have a greater chance of success. If all you can do right now is start with one apple a day or one vegetable when you typically don't eat any, then start there. I guarantee you're going to start feeling physically better, and you're going to want to continue with making other improvements as well.

Katie Johnson: Those are really good tips, and I can speak from personal experience. I've been keeping a food journal since this challenge started. It is a very good exercise. It's amazing when you know you have to write it down how you stop and think about,

"Is this really worth eating? Is it really good for me to add this," or to be able to say, "You know what? I've got room for this in my diet today." I would challenge our listeners to try it too. That's great advice. Anything else you want to share before we wrap up today?

Kary Systma: You can find me at the Hub if you wanted to talk about anything we discussed today in a little more detail.

Katie Johnson: Great. Kary Systma, nutrition and dietetic technician and certified health and wellness coach at the Health and Wellness Hub at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today during nutrition week on our Wheel of Wellness Community Health Challenge. We invite you to join us. You've got through Thursday, February 8th to join the challenge. Just log on to [lrhc.org/wow](http://lrhc.org/wow). Thanks for joining me today, Kary.

Kary Systma: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Kary Systma and Katie Johnson reminds you, there is so much to do here. Stay health for it. Have a great day.

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