

Health Principles in Seventh-day Adventist History

Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists have long been known for combining an emphasis on health and spirituality. But, at one time, the Seventh-day Adventist group was no different in health than any other population or church group, suffering the same illnesses and degenerative diseases as their friends and relatives of all other denominations and population groups.

As the small group formed in the mid to late 1800's and began to study the Bible more deeply, along with the spiritual information they were discovering they developed a very distinctive approach to health, some of which was similar to other health reformers of the day, others which were very distinctive. Some of these practices help Adventists and others who follow this lifestyle live longer and healthier than those who do not practice these habits.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that these health principles are very beneficial for anyone and encourage you to study this information for yourself.

These principles were given to be a blessing for all mankind.

Q&A

What was the original diet for the people on earth?

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the diet that was first intended for people was recorded in the ancient scriptures and changed slowly over time depending on a variety of circumstances. The original diet for humans was a totally plant based vegetarian diet composed mainly of, fruits, nuts and grains. According to these earliest recorded writings, God's ideal diet was given at creation as fruit, nuts and grains. Genesis 1:29

Later, the record shows that green leafy and other vegetables and herbs were added to man's diet. Genesis 3:18

After some time, in Genesis 9:3, everything that lives and moves was added to the diet with some major restrictions that included:

1. No blood. Genesis 9:4

It was after this time, according to the Biblical account that man's life span began to decrease dramatically.

Later, as the Israelites, or Hebrew (Jewish) race left Egypt, they were given specific instructions on health habits and types of foods and animals that they were permitted to eat in order to avoid the diseases that were the main causes of death for the Egyptians, such as cancer, diabetes, heart problems and infectious diseases.

2. No unclean animals. Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14

3. No blood or fat. Leviticus 3:17

How did Seventh-day Adventists develop their distinctive views of health?

After the group of Seventh-day Adventists began studying and praying together, many important spiritual beliefs were discovered including the fact that God wanted people to be healthy. Mrs. Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and whom the Seventh-day Adventists believe was a special messenger of God, was given health information messages in dreams and visions which confirmed the groups findings from scripture and further developed the Adventists' emphasis and knowledge of health principles. She received a vision in 1863 which marked the beginning of the emphasis on health. Earlier she had been warned about the dangers of tobacco, tea, and coffee. Many of the health reforms were being promoted also by other reformers of the day, but many also were recommending harmful practices which God led her to warn against. Her contribution to the health message was setting the correct tone and focus. She taught that all healing ultimately came from God.

What were some of the things that Ellen White recommended or warned against?

Over 100 years ago she warned of the harmful effects of tobacco while doctors were still prescribing smoking for health. She urged moderation in using high-fat foods, especially meats, encouraged a diet of fresh fruits, vegetables and grains, and recommended plenty of exercise and fresh air. The distinctive teachings that Ellen White received in her 1863 vision can be divided into seven main areas.

1. Vegetarianism
2. Avoidance of intemperance in eating and drinking
3. Value of pure water both internally and externally
4. Keeping rooms of the house well ventilated
5. Importance of cleanliness
6. Connection between proper health principles and Christian duty
7. Physical health is dependant upon the right use of the will and mental attitude in depending upon God and claiming divine power.

References from Ellen White

1. The original diet

"God gave our first parents the food he designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to his plan to have the life of any creature taken. ...The fruit of the trees in the garden, was the food man's wants required." *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol 4a, p. 120, 1864.

"Again and again I have been shown that God is trying to lead us back, step by step, to his original design, --that man should subsist upon the natural products of the earth. Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat-eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet." *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 119, 1890.

The Lord intends to bring His people back to live upon simple fruits, vegetables and grains." *Healthful Living*, p. 78, 1897.

"Grains, fruits, nuts and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of endurance, and a vigor of intellect that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet." *Ministry of Healing*, p. 296.

2. Basic healthful diet

"Fruit, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way, free from spice and grease of all kinds, make, with milk or cream, the most healthful diet. They impart nourishment to the body, and give a power of endurance and a vigor of intellect that are not produced by a stimulating diet." *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p 47, 1890.

3. Excluding animal products in the original diet

"Had the use of flesh been essential to health and strength, animal food would have been included in the diet appointed man in the beginning." *Australian Signs of the Times*, Nov. 13, 1905

"...I know that in His original plan, God did not provide for the flesh of dead animals to compose the diet for man." *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 410, 1884.

"Again and again I have been shown that God is bringing His people back to His original design, that is not to subsist upon the flesh of dead animals. He would have us teach people a better way." *Testimony Studies on Diets and Foods*, p. 69, 1884.

4. Basic health reform diet

"Concerning flesh meat, we should educate the people to let it alone. Its use is contrary to the best development of the physical, mental, and moral powers. And we should bear a clear testimony against the use of tea and coffee. It is also well to discard rich desserts. Milk, eggs, and butter should not be classed with flesh meat. In some cases the use of eggs is beneficial.

The time has not come to say that the use of milk and eggs should be wholly discarded. There are poor families whose diet consists largely of bread and milk. They have little fruit and cannot afford to purchase the nut foods. In teaching health reform, as in all other gospel work, we are to meet the people where they are." *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 134.

5. Are all the "food nutrients" found in a total plant diet?

"It is a mistake to suppose that muscular strength depends on the use of animal food. The needs of the system can be better supplied, and more vigorous health can be enjoyed,

without its use. The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood.

These elements are not so well or so fully supplied by a flesh diet. Had the use of flesh been essential to health and strength, animal food would have been included in the diet appointed man in the beginning." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 316, 1905.

6. Would the diet have to change in the future?

"Is it not time that all should aim to dispense with flesh foods? How can those who are seeking to become pure, refined, and holy, that they may have the companionship of heavenly angels, continue to use as food anything that has so harmful an effect on soul and body? ... Let them, rather, return to the wholesome and delicious food given to man in the beginning...." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 317, 1905.