

Health Maintenance Guide – A Gerson Perspective

Based on the work of Dr. Max Gerson, MD

Dr. Gerson stated in one of his papers that proper nutrition should be the basis of all therapeutic efforts toward health maintenance and that the goal of healthy nutrition is to protect the body and prevent the depletion of organ systems leading to illness. In his earlier writings, he also addressed the fact that it is not a simple thing to outline one type of diet for all individuals. He studied many of the physicians and nutritional researchers of his time and came to understand that there are many factors that influence the ideal diet for people. These can include race, cultural influences, the local environment, age, individual constitution and one's inherent digestive power.

However, keeping in mind that adjustments may need to be made for these characteristics, the following general guidelines for health maintenance are based primarily on the information in Chapter Three of *A Cancer Therapy* entitled *Directions for General Nutrition*, and from some of Dr. Gerson's earlier writings on diet therapy.

We have developed these general nutritional guidelines for people who do not have illnesses, but who desire to optimize their health and decrease the risk of developing future problems. However, these guidelines can also help people with minor health conditions such as allergies, skin conditions, digestive issues, arthritis and more.

Diet

Dr. Gerson created an outline of dietary recommendations that permit enough margin for personal living habits, family feasts and holidays by allowing 25% of the food to be of one's personal choice. The remaining 75% should be consumed for protecting the functions of the highly essential organs—liver, kidneys, brain, heart, etc., by storing reserves and avoiding an unnecessary burden on these vital organs.¹ His dietary recommendations consist of an all organic, primarily plant-based diet. If your digestion is very weak, then using the slow cooking method described by Dr. Gerson in *A Cancer Therapy*, page 24, is advisable.

Foods Recommended for Sustaining Body Function – 75%

Vegetables

Vegetables are packed with valuable phytochemicals--vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other beneficial phytonutrients. Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, Bok Choy, watercress and kale have numerous chemo-preventive constituents that may work synergistically to help prevent cancer.²

“All vegetables should be freshly prepared, some stewed in their own juices and others either raw or finely grated, such as carrots, cauliflower or celery; vegetable salads, soups, etc.; some dried fruits and vegetables are permitted but not frozen. Especially recommended for their mineral content are carrots, peas, tomatoes, Swiss chard, spinach, string beans, Brussels sprouts, artichokes, beets cooked with

apples, cauliflower with tomatoes, red cabbage with apples, raisins, etc.³ Salads are made with green leaves or mixed with tomatoes, fruits and other vegetables”.

Fruits

“All kinds of fruits, mostly fresh and some prepared in different ways; freshly prepared fruit juices (orange, grapefruit, grape, etc.) fruit salads; cold fruit soups, mashed bananas, raw grated apples, applesauce, etc.”⁴

The dark red and purple fruits are packed with flavonoids, which are a type of plant pigment that provide high amounts of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory health benefits. If a person has difficulty with blood sugar regulation and is dealing with hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia, fruit should be limited. It is recommended to use locally grown fruits as they are harvested when ripe, as compared to out of the country tropical fruits.

Other Foods

“**Potatoes** are best when baked; the contents may be mashed with soup or milk; they should seldom be fried and preferably boiled in their jackets.”⁵ Potatoes are rich in vitamin C, vitamin B6, niacin and minerals, including iron, copper, manganese and tryptophan. Potatoes contain all twenty-one amino acids, which are the building blocks of protein, thus forming complete proteins upon digestion. You can read more about the benefits of potatoes on one of the Gerson Institute [blog posts](#).

“**Breads** made of unrefined whole rye or whole wheat flour or mixed.”⁶ If you have sensitivity to wheat or are known to be gluten intolerant, you should avoid wheat, rye or other gluten containing grains.

“**Oatmeal** should be used freely.”⁷ If a serious gluten intolerance exists or with Celiac disease, oatmeal may need to be avoided, unless you obtain a brand such as Bob’s Red Mill which is tested to be free of contamination from the growing field and the processing equipment.

“**Milk and milk products** such as pot cheese which are not greatly salted or spiced, buttermilk, yogurt and fresh unsalted butter.”⁸ Many people today have allergies or sensitivities to dairy and these foods should be avoided if an intolerance is suspected, including lactose. Organic, raw milk and organic raw fermented milk products may be better tolerated by some people.

Sweeteners used in moderate amounts include raw sugar, maple syrup or honey. Avoid or limit amounts consumed if you have problems with high or low blood sugar.

Oils including omega 3 flax seed oil and small amounts of safflower oil or olive oil. Dr. Gerson also recommended fresh, salt-free butter which he said had great value for its vitamin content.

The following items are not recommended:

- Salt, bicarbonate of soda, smoked fish and sausage
- Keep coffee, tea, liquors, wine and beer to a minimum
- Cream and ice cream should be reduced to a minimum or restricted to holidays.⁹ Dr. Gerson stated that “ice cream is a poison for children”

- Refined sugars or sugary drinks
- Over use of fats and oils. Examples of Trans fats include hydrogenated oils or nut butters, commercially baked crackers, cake mixes and frostings, packaged waffle and pancake mixes, frozen pizzas, chips, cookies, pretzels, margarine, French fries, non-fat dried milk, powdered coffee creamer and many commercial salad dressings and packaged convenience foods. Typically, any foods that are packaged, canned, bottled, pickled, preserved, smoked, spiced or frozen.¹⁰ These were not widely available when Dr. Gerson was practicing, but they have had a major detrimental impact on the health of people today. The FDA has given the food industry three years (by 2018) to eliminate these Trans fats from the food supply.
- Avoid all suspected food allergens. Use caution with wheat and dairy as many people do have sensitivities to these foods. A trial period of two weeks without consuming any foods containing dairy, wheat, soy, peanuts, corn or other suspected foods followed by a one at a time reintroduction of each food can reveal hidden food allergies.

Foods for Personal Choice – 25%

Dr. Gerson stated the remaining foods could be of personal choice; however, if you want to optimize your chances of maintaining good health, we recommend that you choose from other healthy, **organic**, whole foods. These include foods that were not allowed in the strict diet of a patient who is following the Gerson Therapy, but are acceptable for the general population. Examples include:

- Legumes (split peas, lentils)
- Beans (pinto, garbanzo, black, lima)
- Non-gluten grains (rice, quinoa)
- Raw nuts and seeds (almonds, macadamia nuts, pumpkin, sunflower and sesame seeds)
- Avocados
- Berries (raspberries, blueberries, strawberries)
- Organic sources of eggs and fresh unsalted butter (determine individually)
- Fish (determine individually) - www.seafoodwatch.org has a list of the least toxic fish
- Red meat – (determine individually) - only lean grass-fed beef. Limit consumption
- Chicken (determine individually)

Beyond Diet

Dr. Gerson did not mention juicing, coffee enemas or supplementation in his discussion of nutrition for health maintenance. The following are suggestions based on our current knowledge of the benefits of these items.

1. Juices

Freshly made vegetable juices, such as carrot, carrot-apple or green or a combination of these are always beneficial. Two to four juices a day can provide an extra source of easily absorbable and concentrated amounts of vitamins, minerals, enzymes and antioxidants. It is best to consume the juices right after you make them to get the full benefit of the oxidizing enzymes (this may not be so crucial for healthy people). Make sure to maintain hydration in addition to juices with herbal teas, lemon water or diluted fruit juices.

2. Coffee Enemas

Coffee enemas will be helpful during a person's initial detoxification phase. We are all exposed to environmental toxins daily, and coffee enemas can assist our liver in enhancing the detoxification process. Coffee enemas should be kept in balance with number of juices, 3 juices for every coffee enema. For general maintenance, it is generally acceptable to do 1-2 coffee enemas a week even without daily juicing.

3. Gerson Supplements

These may not be necessary. Supplements used on the Gerson Therapy or other appropriate supplements should be selected at the discretion of a health care practitioner and based on specific deficiencies or the unique needs and physiology of the individual. Dr. Gerson emphasized getting the required vitamins and minerals needed from our food.

Dr. Gerson did suggest that people keep their potassium and iodine levels optimal. This should easily be met with these dietary suggestions.

4. Optional suggestions

For those desiring a more intensive regime, it is suggested to use the non-malignant protocol for a short period of time (2-4 weeks or longer) to fully detoxify and nourish at the cellular level.

Ten juices and 3 coffee enemas is the maximum for this protocol, but benefit can be obtained on a scaled down level of 6-7 juices and 2 coffee enemas per day. It is the strict adherence to the diet and juices over time, with consistency, that will provide benefit. During this time, be very strict with avoiding salt and use only the allowed amount of flax oil.

After the determined period on the chosen level of the non-malignant protocol, you can transition back to the health maintenance recommendations (75/25% rule) choosing the foods for the 25% category very carefully based on consideration of your digestive strength, liver health and food sensitivities.

5. Cautions with Supplements

Do not use thyroid for the short duration of the non-malignant protocol unless a doctor has determined there is a need for the prescription thyroid medication and feels that it is recommended for long term.

Use no more than 2 drops of Lugol's per day if you do not take thyroid, or as an alternative add seaweed to the diet for the iodine content. If you are diagnosed with Hashimoto's thyroiditis, do not use Lugol's as additional iodine may aggravate this condition.

All other Gerson supplements can be used while on the non-malignant protocol.

Other Living Conditions Necessary to Maintain Good Health

Dr. Gerson wrote that "people and animals need not only proper diet, but enough movement, light, air, sun and a healthy home."¹² He continued by adding, "The rays of the sun are as necessary as food for plants, animals and people. The sun maintains the progression of life [...]. It is a certain fact that the sun and sunbathing have a hugely beneficial effect on the circulation of blood and perspiration of the skin. Too much sunlight can cause sunburn [...] therefore, one must start the sun baths with short intervals, initially some 5-10 minutes, and allow the sun to shine, alternating, on each side of the body. The earlier we take the sun in the morning, the milder the effect."¹³

Dr. Gerson also commented on exercising, stating, "All people and animals need exercise every day, enough muscle work that the accumulated natural reserves will be processed and discharged. Walking puts the muscles in motion and drives the circulation of the blood and ensures a sufficient breakdown and construction of all organs systems. One must avoid excessive exertion. Nature has given us the feeling of fatigue as a guide, just as with food we have the feeling of satiety. He who has the feeling of satiety should stop eating and he who feels fatigue should rest."¹⁴

He recommends gymnastics at least in the morning, in a room by an open window for a limited time (briefly, ¼ to ½ hour) thereby giving the body some of the refreshing effects of an air bath and movement. He also states that for longevity one should move at least one hour a day in the open air. He poetically puts forth— "A hike in the mountains strengthens one's free outlook, in addition to the body; it yields cheerfulness, peace of mind, and lets us again unfold the simple joys of heart and nature".

To conclude, the Gerson Therapy is a great foundation; however, those who are healthy have unique dietary needs. There is no set dietary regime for everyone, but the foundational concepts of consuming nutritious foods as well as those free from toxicity are essential for continued health. Dr. Gerson provided a wealth of knowledge about how we can protect our health and maintain it through diet. For healthy individuals, this means the continual choice to supply the body with nutrient dense foods, find personal variety to sustain health, and supply personal enjoyment. We hope this information encourages you in your journey towards optimal health.

References

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2. Cruciferous Vegetables and Human Cancer Risk: Epidemiologic Evidence and Mechanistic Basis
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3. A Cancer Therapy, Dr. Max Gerson, p 23
4. A Cancer Therapy, Dr. Max Gerson, p 22-23
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