**Drinks and Diet!**

Alcohol is always a huge factor with individuals when discussing their diet and consumption of food and beverages. Beverages are often forgotten and/or not categorized appropriately for the impact they play on everyone’s diet and weight loss program. They can make or break every diet!

I’m pulling up a past article that references the Cal Berkeley Wellness Letter whose last word, was ‘weighing in about alcohol, and its important affect it has on our health in various ways.’

Alcohol contains a lot of calories. So, the question that the Cal Berkley newsletter asked was, “do alcoholic calories cause weight gain?”

With all things being equal: if you simply add alcohol into your diet, rather than drink or eat them in place of other caloric beverages or food items, you’ll gain weight. As far as pure alcohol goes, one-gram supplies nearly twice as many calories as a gram of carbohydrates or protein (7 vs. 4).

But alcohol calories may be different than other calories, according to some research, in that they are burned less efficiently. “Calories from alcohol are, in effect, a little less ‘fattening’ than calories from carbs or fat” meaning that we burn and store them differently than carbohydrates.

“Alcohol is the first fuel to burn. While that’s going on your body will not burn fat. This does not stop the weight loss, it simply postpones it, since the alcohol does not store as glycogen.” (5 ways alcohol hinders fat loss, Robson, D. 1/24/19)

The research on alcohol and weight loss has yielded inconsistent finding. Statistics show that, on average, drinkers are no more likely to be obese than nondrinkers. But many variables are involved, including the amount of alcohol consumed, the type of beverage, the timing, setting, and pattern of consumption, and physiological and psychological factors.

Gender, as expected, also plays a role in how alcohol affects body weight. In a study from the Archives of Internal Medicine; “normal-weight women who had one or two drinks a day gained less weight over a 13-year period than non-drinkers.” They also said that women, unlike men, tend to substitute alcohol for other caloric food or drink items.

A study from the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, compared the food and calorie intake of a nationwide sampling of 1,864 people on days when they did and didn’t drink alcohol. On the drinking day, the men consumed 433 extra calories, on average, the majority coming from alcohol (363). The rest of the calories came from foods and other beverages. However, men consumed more protein, fat, sodium, and meat on the drinking day than they did on their non-drinking day.

In contrast, women consumed an extra 299 calories, on average, on the drinking day, with almost all of them coming from the alcoholic beverages. They didn’t eat significantly more food than on other days, though they also tended to eat more fat and less healthfully on the drinking days.

If you are trying to watch your weight by watching your caloric intake, alcohol can make you less focused on how much you’re eating (this is called dis-inhibition); which might lead to overeating. Thus, most diets don’t include or always advise limiting alcoholic beverages. Also, remember there is a vast opportunity of other issues surrounding and associated with alcohol consumption.

Five quick tips:
1) Drink alcohol with lower caloric value and higher alcohol percentage (like wine). Less will be consumed.
2) Avoid high-calorie liqueurs, which are extremely deceiving and add a lot of calories.
3) Keep healthy food on hand when drinking. Drinking relaxes the inhibitions, relaxing the control muscle of eating.
4) Drink lower calorie beer. 5) Drink water between every alcoholic drink. This fills the belly with fullness and could help with over drinking.

It’s always and completely about moderation! No matter what you eat, drink or do; what you put into your mouth must be healthy, equal in overall calories and less than what your body does in movement for that day! Whether it’s a Big Mac, a bag of carrots or a martini, you must pay attention to the kind of calories, add in that exercise and understand the consequences. Cheers!