

Diet is a four letter word, says registered dietitian

By **SIMONE JOSEPH**
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TORONTO — We are constantly bombarded by two opposing forces: the pressure to eat more and the pressure not to eat, says registered dietitian Sharon Gottlieb.

Gottlieb, director of nutrition at the Fitness Institute, spoke about her book *Seeing the Light: Eat Well, Be Active, Feel Good About Yourself, Once and For All* (Nutrition Institute) at a recent Toronto Hadassah-WIZO presentation.

She began her talk by discussing a popular trend in food advertising — promoting mammoth, mega everything, like biggie fries and massive soft drinks. Gottlieb showed slides of advertisements with slogans like “big food for big value.” In contrast to these ads, she showed media images of the “ideal women”: rake-thin Jennifer Aniston (Rachel Green on the popular TV sitcom *Friends*), toothpick-sized Calista Flockhart (star of the show *Ally McBeal*) and other lightweight celebrities.

Then, she displayed a slide that was a

example of a mixed message — it was a *Good Housekeeping* magazine cover from November 1999. The cover read “Ready, Set, Crash Diet.”

A few lines down, it read, “New Classics For Thanksgiving” which invited the reader to look at the recipes inside.

Gottlieb is an ex-dieter. She began dieting when she was about 10 years old and now calls “diet” a four-letter word. Instead of dieting, she advocates healthy eating. Think green, red and orange, she says. Eat salads with light dressings and fruit salads.

Gottlieb adheres to the “drink eight glasses of water” rule. In her book, she writes that drinking water is a must to replace the water we are constantly losing in our perspiration, breathing and elimination of waste from the body.

Water is filling and has zero calories and fat. If you are not used to drinking eight glasses of water daily, start with a few cups



Sharon Gottlieb

and gradually build up to eight, she advises.

Gottlieb warns people to beware of what she calls “multiples” — anything that is sold in a bag or a box like cookies or crackers or is served in a bowl like chips or nuts.

When eating multiples, it is difficult to just eat one, she says. Once the hand to mouth motion starts, it is near impossible to stop, she says. The solution? Go for a walk after dinner to avoid snacking or have a mini-meal instead of a snack.

She also warns against having too many carbohydrates. In her book, she explains that starchy foods like bread, pasta and potatoes used to be considered fattening. When national food guides began emphasizing grains, vegetables and fruits, people began including starchy foods in their diets.

“Before long, the bagel became king. Pasta ruled supreme,” she writes.

Recently, people have begun questioning

the place of starchy foods in a healthy diet. While many people think starchy foods are low in fat “they can pack a real calorie-laden punch, especially when consumed in typical North American serving-size portions,” she writes. If you are eating too many starchy foods, substitute vegetables and fruits for some of the starch.

Choose whole grains over white flour, she says.

During the talk, Gottlieb addressed concern that when barbecuing, meat fat may drip onto wood, charcoal or gas flames and form potentially cancer-causing chemicals. Her suggestions to prevent this include: choosing meat which is well-trimmed of fat, removing skin, avoid placing meat directly over coals and pre-cook meat in the microwave or oven to reduce barbecuing time.

During the question-and-answer period, I tested her approach to healthy eating with a question from my life: What can you do if you’re a chocoholic? Her answer: Try having light hot chocolate or a light chocolate popsicle or have one delicious chocolate and enjoy it.