

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO CLEAN EATING

- ✔ Eat clean. Train dirty.
- ✔ Abs are made in the kitchen.
- ✔ Eat clean, train mean, get lean
- ✔ You can't out-exercise a bad diet.
- ✔ There is no diet that will do what eating healthily does.
- ✔ It's the other 23 hours when you're not in the gym that really count.
- ✔ Clean and whole are the bedrocks of good nutrition.

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EXERCISE. NOURISH. THINK. TRANSFORM.

Introduction

Even if you're brand new to fitness and working out, you've probably seen or read or heard someone talking about eating clean. But what are they talking about?

This guide has been written to help you to break down the fundamentals of clean eating - to know what it is and what it isn't. To help you understand why it is important and to give you the principles that you can build on so that you can see the incredible difference that eating clean can make – not just for your body composition, but for your overall health.

At Active8me we believe that health is something that is priceless. As someone wisely once said “Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise or good nutrition will sooner or later have to find time for illness”. We believe that no one ever regrets eating healthily. We believe that eating well is not extreme – it is essential. We believe that without our health we have very little. After all, you can't buy your health and how do you live life to the full if you're not healthy?

Here's the thing - optimal health and looking fantastic is 80% about what you put in your mouth. So clean eating is a good place to start ...

WHAT is clean eating?

Everyone seems to have a different definition of what actually constitutes 'clean' eating. Bodybuilders have their definition. Then there's the paleo definition, a vegan definition, the TV celebrity doctor definition. The list goes on.

Let's keep it simple. Writer Michael Pollan famously said “Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food”. At Active8me it is this sort of balanced and common sense wisdom that is foundational for our views on the best nutrition.

“Real food doesn't have a label”

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That means clean eating is about choosing natural foods which are raised, grown, caught and harvested with minimal processing – just as our great-grandmother would have recommended. Clean food is whole, unprocessed and without chemicals and artificial ingredients. (These are called wholefoods). A tomato, for example, is a whole food, while ketchup/tomato sauce is not. A corn kernel is a wholefood, while cornflakes aren't. An orange is a whole food, and not processed orange juice or some orange “vitamin water” drink.

So clean eating is about going back to the basics. It's about choices to eat wholesome, healthy food in its most natural state. Choices that promote optimum long-term health for your body.

To make it even clearer what we mean by clean eating, here's what it isn't.

- **It's not a diet** – At Active8me we don't believe in dieting and we don't believe in short-term fixes or thinking. Clean eating is a lifestyle change. It's about redefining the relationship you have to food. It's about slowly making good choices and improving your eating habits over time, rather than the normal ineffective 'yo-yo dieting' that we often see.
- **It's not calorie-restriction or deprivation** – People often equate clean eating with massive sacrifice. Eating clean doesn't mean not eating or restricting calories. It's about healthy eating choices and finding healthy alternatives to unhealthy food. So if you love muffins then clean eating doesn't mean you have to give them up. The challenge is to find a healthier muffin or a healthier alternative.
- **It's not about meal frequency** - Meal frequency and clean eating are two separate things. One is how often you eat, the other is what you eat. We will talk about meal frequency within our programs.
- **It's not about obsessing** - You don't need to get obsessive or throw everything out that you love. Nor do you have to be inflexible and have 100% strict adherence to mythical clean eating ideals that then impact your overall life. You're allowed to enjoy your meals; you should enjoy food; and you'll need to enjoy your meals if you want to make clean eating part of your lifestyle. Certainly clean eating takes a bit more effort than the closest fast food outlet. But it's worth it and it's important.

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WHY is clean eating important?

Simply put, a clean, healthy diet is the key to optimal health. Whole foods are the best source of complete nutrition and provide our bodies with maximum nutritional value. This is even more important today when arguably food is less nutritious than in the past ¹. Here are some benefits of clean eating:

- **It makes you feel more vibrant and energized** - A healthy diet that properly nourishes your body helps you to feel energetic, vibrant and productive. In contrast, processed foods make you feel sluggish, grumpy, ravenous and often guilty. Clean eating provides nutrients to help your cells access fuel to function properly. It helps regulate and stabilise your blood sugar, thereby helping you to avoid fatigue-inducing blood sugar spikes, which can occur after you eat processed carbohydrates, such as sweets or refined grains.

“A clean healthy diet is the key to optimal health”

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- **It helps you fight disease, lower your risk of diabetes, and prevents cancer** ^{2 3} - Eating a clean diet boosts your intake of phytonutrients and antioxidants and supports healthy cell function so you can stay healthy, ward off sickness and fight chronic disease. On the other hand, processed foods, fried foods and saturated fats make you more susceptible to certain cancers and/or obesity-related diseases.
- **It improves your cardiovascular health** - Clean eating and a diet rich in fruits and vegetables lowers your risk of cardiovascular disease and also protects against stroke and high blood pressure. Fruits and vegetables, for example, come packed with vitamin C, a nutrient that helps maintain the strength of your blood vessels. In contrast, an unhealthy diet rich in saturated fat and trans fat (as opposed to healthy fats like the type found in nuts, avocado and olive oil) increases your blood cholesterol, which threatens your cardiovascular health.
- **It helps you look after mental health, not just your physical health** - Did you know that some of the nutrients from your diet (such as vitamin B-6) help to make dopamine – the chemical involved in feelings of pleasure. Did you know that omega-3 fatty acids also support good mental health, while a deficiency can cause moodiness and depression? Did you know that caffeine can increase anxiety and skipping meals can cause headaches or stomach-aches? Good clean eating is not only good for your physical health but also for your mental health.
- **You feel good and at the same time do good by looking after the environment** – Think about the difference between a fresh, sweet, juicy local mango and one shipped from overseas. That mango from overseas has sat in a warehouse for who knows how long. It has been trucked and/or flown to you. Fuel and transport costs, as well as production considerations have produced a higher carbon footprint. It may have been frozen along the way and it will have been packaged in some form which then creates waste and adds to the burden on the environment. And who knows what pesticides have been used in growing it? Vitamins and minerals are inevitably lost along the way, as well as freshness. And that's just a mango. Imagine a more processed food. And I haven't even talked about taste. Get the picture?! Eating clean natural unprocessed wholefoods are good for you and the environment.

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a pink button-down shirt, is standing at a table. She is looking down at a plate of food she is holding. On the table in front of her are several plates of food, including a salad with strawberries and bananas, a pizza, and a bowl of fruit. The background shows a wooden chair and a wall with a red and white striped pattern. The overall scene is brightly lit and focused on healthy eating.

SOME TIPS – what to avoid

There is not a one-size-fits-all definition for clean eating. Everyone is different, with different tastes, different genetic makeups, and slightly different nutritional requirements. That's why it often seems like the experts give contradictory advice and why they can't agree as to what constitutes the ideal diet.

So there is no magic and perfect plan to follow. Remember clean eating is about going back to the basics. It's about good choices to eat wholesome, healthy food in its most natural and unprocessed state. It's about your grandmother's wise advice.

Here's some guidelines for you to help you make those good choices. What not to do and what to avoid.

“If you don't recognise an ingredient your body wont either”

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What to avoid or not do**Comment**

Avoid highly processed food	They may be convenient but highly processed foods are usually high in chemical additives, trans fats, salts and refined sugars. Think about that fast-food burger. Every item on it, from the bun to the sauce, was processed in a factory and created in a laboratory. It's packed with enough artificial colors and preservatives to make it look as pretty as a picture and last as long as possible.
Avoid food with artificial ingredients you can't pronounce	We said not to eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food. Here's another good rule. Don't eat foods with ingredients that you can't pronounce. Need evidence? Look at the label on a box of cookies, a children's lunch pack, or even a bottle of "natural" juice. You'd need a chemistry degree to read it, and even then you couldn't say what those substances are doing to you in the long run. If it's made in a lab, don't eat it. This includes artificial sweeteners! The fewer ingredients the better as the food is probably more natural and less processed.
Avoid most refined food and try and eliminate added sugars	Generally speaking, eating right is about choosing simple, unrefined things. This means avoiding refined flour (eg white flour, white rice), added sugar (sucrose), trans-fats etc. Foods in their most natural state do not contain added sugar—that's why it's called "added sugar"! Added sugar is sucrose, the type that you add to your tea and coffee. It is completely void of any benefit to your body and doesn't give your body the nutrients it craves. Added sugar spikes your blood sugar levels giving you that 'sugar high' followed by a sudden dip. This dip creates a desire for foods that are high in added sugar again. There is a lot more we can say on this point, but we'll leave it for another time. In short – avoid most refined food and eliminate added sugars!
Avoid alcohol	We should never forget that alcohol is a toxin. At Active8me we understand that avoiding alcohol in many social settings is difficult and we live in a real world, but try to keep your alcohol intake to a low level.
Avoid soda, fruit juice and sweetened drinks	Soda, fruit juice and sweetened drinks like ice lemon tea or sports drinks are high in calories and loaded with refined sugar and artificial sweeteners. Don't drink your calories and avoid these refined sugars.

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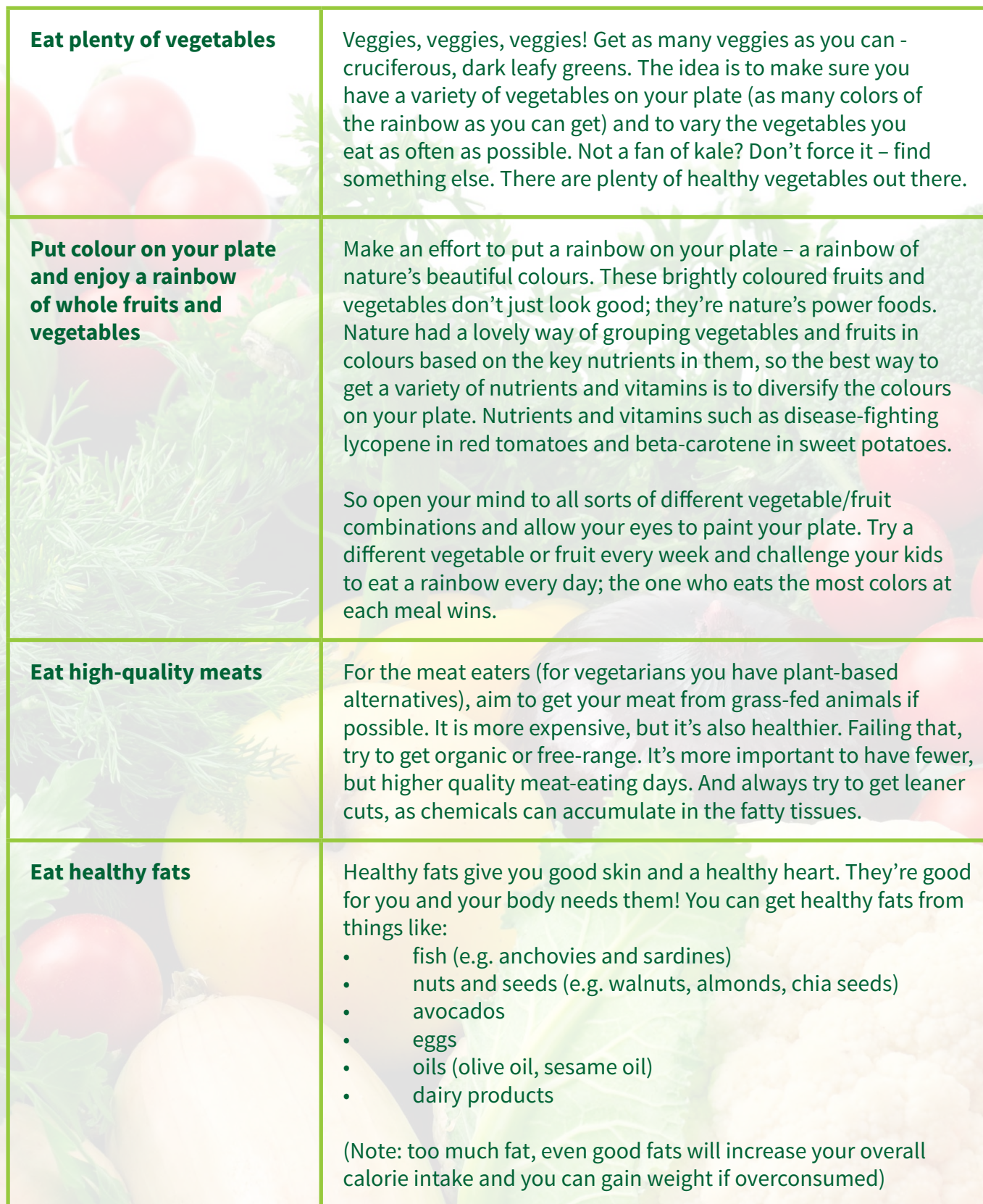
SOME TIPS – what to choose or do

Here's some more guidelines for you to help you make those good choices. What not to do and what to avoid.

What to choose or do	Comment
Choose whole foods	<p>The most important principle of clean eating is to eat foods in their most natural state. Whole foods typically do not contain added ingredients such as sugar, salt, fat, food dyes, artificial ingredients, fillers, etc. It means opting for whole grains over white bread or opting for oranges over orange juice.</p> <p>Some examples of Whole Foods include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole Grains• Fruits• Vegetables• Nuts• Seeds• Unprocessed (Lean) Meats• Fish (Salmon)• Non-Homogenized Dairy• Legumes• Eggs
Eat fresh produce where possible	<p>Another golden rule of clean eating is to include as much fresh produce in your daily diet as possible. Fresh vegetables and fresh fruit provide the vitamins and nutrients to keep you feeling as good as you look, and the soluble fibre to make sure you suck every last bit of nutrition out of everything else you eat. They are the foundation stones to make your dietary system better and healthier.</p> <p>Many people think they can get these vitamins and supplements from a simple greens supplement. These aren't bad, but the real thing is always the best option. We believe if it came from a plant you should eat it like the body was designed to do. But if it was made by a plant then you should try and avoid it. And if you're honest you're often just using this expensive supplement as an excuse to cheat when you get hungry later on.</p> <p>So get familiar with the best-tasting in-season fruits and vegetables and become a master of seasons and spices. Read recipes like they're great literature. Plan a date with yourself and visit your local farmers market every week to buy local, fresh, delicious, colourful, healthy and natural produce.</p>

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Eat plenty of vegetables	Veggies, veggies, veggies! Get as many veggies as you can - cruciferous, dark leafy greens. The idea is to make sure you have a variety of vegetables on your plate (as many colors of the rainbow as you can get) and to vary the vegetables you eat as often as possible. Not a fan of kale? Don't force it – find something else. There are plenty of healthy vegetables out there.
Put colour on your plate and enjoy a rainbow of whole fruits and vegetables	<p>Make an effort to put a rainbow on your plate – a rainbow of nature's beautiful colours. These brightly coloured fruits and vegetables don't just look good; they're nature's power foods. Nature had a lovely way of grouping vegetables and fruits in colours based on the key nutrients in them, so the best way to get a variety of nutrients and vitamins is to diversify the colours on your plate. Nutrients and vitamins such as disease-fighting lycopene in red tomatoes and beta-carotene in sweet potatoes.</p> <p>So open your mind to all sorts of different vegetable/fruit combinations and allow your eyes to paint your plate. Try a different vegetable or fruit every week and challenge your kids to eat a rainbow every day; the one who eats the most colors at each meal wins.</p>
Eat high-quality meats	For the meat eaters (for vegetarians you have plant-based alternatives), aim to get your meat from grass-fed animals if possible. It is more expensive, but it's also healthier. Failing that, try to get organic or free-range. It's more important to have fewer, but higher quality meat-eating days. And always try to get leaner cuts, as chemicals can accumulate in the fatty tissues.
Eat healthy fats	<p>Healthy fats give you good skin and a healthy heart. They're good for you and your body needs them! You can get healthy fats from things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fish (e.g. anchovies and sardines)• nuts and seeds (e.g. walnuts, almonds, chia seeds)• avocados• eggs• oils (olive oil, sesame oil)• dairy products <p>(Note: too much fat, even good fats will increase your overall calorie intake and you can gain weight if overconsumed)</p>

Drinks lots of water

Observe a plant before and after watering and relate these benefits to your body and brain. The amount of water in the human body ranges from 50-75%. So is it any surprise that we should drink lots of water. Pure, unadulterated water. Not soda. Not fruit juice. Not coffee.

How much water should you drink? It differs depending on a number of factors, but rule of thumb: at least eight glasses a day.

If you don't seem to like water on its own, try flavouring it naturally with lemon, mint, ginger, lime, lemongrass, cucumber or some fruit pieces. Or perhaps drink some herbal teas or green tea as well as water so you can sip through the day and keep hydrated.

Read labels and become an ingredient snob

Real food doesn't have a label. That's why you need to start reading nutrition labels and caring about what's in something before you buy it. We understand that life is busier than ever and convenience foods are fast and easy. We understand that it is hard to stay away from all processed foods. But we're talking about the guidelines for what you should do to eat clean.

You are only punishing yourself by not being inquisitive and understanding what added sugars, artificial food colouring, preservatives and chemicals are in food. Ideally you want to buy food that is made with natural ingredients not chemicals. This is processed, absorbed and used better by the body. It will probably taste better too!

So look at labels, not for the calories, but for the ingredients. The ingredients should read like a shopping list. If there are some ingredients that you either couldn't find in a supermarket or would never put in a recipe yourself (like high fructose corn syrup) then skip it. It's best if the ingredient list contains no more than six different items.

Conquer the kitchen

Clean eating requires a little more organization and preparation. However, a little knowledge upfront about nutrition (like this Active8me guide provides) will allow you to have your kitchen properly stocked with ingredients so you can whip up a healthy meal in the time it would take to order takeaway.

You'll probably save money too and it goes without saying that you'll look and feel better!



Shop smart

Clean eating is not hard – it just requires some changing of habits and a change of mindset. Changing the way you shop is part of this.

As a general rule start with shopping the perimeter. This is the natural habitat of the fresh vegetable, meat market, whole-grain baked goods, and the nuts and dried fruits in the bulk bin. Fill your basket with as much fresh produce as you think you can possibly eat in a week. Then move on to the meat counter and the dairy section which are usually located on the perimeter. Think whole food ingredients. Think real food that doesn't need a label. The periphery of the shop is your new territory!

Then when you have to venture into the interior try and find clean substitutes. Try and avoid foods that have labels with long ingredient lists. Avoid processed and refined foods with lots of artificial ingredients you can't pronounce. Avoid soda, fruit juice and sweetened drinks. Stay strong in the face of the extravagant packaging and manipulative slogans.

And remember – it's a journey and it's a lifestyle change. It won't all happen at once and may take a little time to change.



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IDEAS for good swaps and substitutes

Here's some easy ideas for ingredient swaps to help you eat clean.

Substitute this

FOR THIS



White rice



Brown rice, quinoa, basmati rice or brown rice vermicelli



Potatoes



Sweet potatoes



A paratha



Tandoori roti



Yoghurt or sour cream



Greek yoghurt



Regular latte



Small skinny cappuccino



White flour



Black bean puree, almond flour



Breadcrumbs



Rolled oats



Mayonaisse



Avocado



Fruit juices or soda or sweetened drinks



Water or infused water

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Substitute this

FOR THIS



Pasta



Spaghetti squash or wholemeal pasta



Butter



Sesame oil



Condiments



Spice



Coconut milk or cream



Low fat milk



Peanut oil



Olive oil

Conclusion

As you embark on clean eating we want you to remember a few things:

- **This is about you** - there is not one-size-fits-all here. You need to tailor your nutrition to your own nutritional requirements, your own personal preferences and your own food sensitivities and intolerances (if any).
- **This is not about a numbers game** - in our bodyweight and calorie obsessed world it's easy to get stuck on measuring calories-in, calories-out. Certainly these have a place in overall weight management and guidelines for healthy eating. Don't forget though that counting calories doesn't make you healthy.
- **Your great-grandmother's wise advice** - clean eating is about healthy choices and going back to the basics by eating wholesome food in its most natural and unprocessed state. It's not a diet. It's not calorie restriction. It's not about meal frequency. It's not about obsessing and perfection. It's about lifestyle change and nourishing your body in the best way so you can be as healthy as possible.
- **It's a journey** - you will not eat perfectly (whatever that is) right out of the gates. You will give in to cravings. You will buy things you think are clean only to find out later they're not. It might take a while for your tastes to change so you actually crave healthy food. So go easy on yourself, relax and appreciate the big picture. If you're trying then you're eating better than yesterday and over time you will notice a difference.

In our minds the choice is easy. Clean eating is worth it. It's important and you'll notice the difference over time – physically, mentally and in your overall health.

So good luck on your journey. We hope that Active8me can be part of that journey and help you.

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