

A Principle WITH Promises

*Medical and nutritional science continue to support
the truths found in the Word of Wisdom.*

By G. Craig Kiser

On February 27, 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation setting down principles of good health, now known as the Word of Wisdom. As a physician, I find this revelation to be one of the most amazing the Lord has provided, “showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days” (D&C 89:2). Though medical science for the past 50 years has substantiated the health risks associated with the use of tobacco and alcohol, both prohibited by the Word of Wisdom, it has only been in the last decade that both medical and nutritional science have begun to corroborate many of the dietary health benefits contained in this outstanding revelation.

Fruits and Vegetables

Natural fruits and vegetables are among some of the most complex and nutritionally dense foods on earth. They are packed with health-preserving phytochemicals and micronutrients. They can heal injured blood vessels and help reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes, obesity, and

diabetes.¹ Raw fruits and vegetables—especially beans, legumes, and vegetables in a variety of colors—are nutrient and mineral dense and cholesterol free and thus serve as divinely engineered packets of protection for our health.

Unfortunately, it is estimated that nearly half of Americans eat fewer than two servings of fruits and vegetables daily. This meager intake of fruits and vegetables was listed as one of four bad habits associated with early death, the other three being tobacco use, alcohol use, and lack of regular exercise.²

Grains and Nuts

Natural whole grains have many health benefits. They increase insulin effectiveness, improve intestinal health, and help reduce the risk of diabetes, colon cancer, and pancreatic cancer. They also lower blood pressure, decrease the chance of heart failure, and help prevent strokes.³ Nuts have favorable oils and minerals that support good nutrition and weight loss.⁴

Unfortunately, when whole grains are stripped of the husk and germ (labeled as “refined” or “enriched” grains),



they lose much of their fiber, minerals, and vital nutrients—and thus much of their protective value is also lost. Also, the body digests refined grains as simple sugars, which rapidly increase blood-sugar and insulin levels and are associated with a variety of health risks.⁵

Meat, Fish, and Fowl

The “flesh . . . of beasts and of the fowls” the Lord has “ordained for the use of man,” but He cautions us to use such food “sparingly” (D&C 89:12). Medical science has confirmed the wisdom of these words. Diets high in animal protein offer limited nutrient value and contain unhealthy saturated fats. Excess consumption of meat can also increase certain health risks.⁶

Processed Foods and Energy Drinks

Processed foods and packaged snacks are usually deficient in nutrients and high in sugar or refined grains, hydrogenated oils (trans fats), and sodium. Since food preferences and eating habits are established early in life, young parents would be wise to guide their children to the natural goodness of whole grains and garden-ripened fruits and vegetables.

Soft drinks are low in nutrients and contain significant amounts of sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, or artificial sweeteners. Although caffeine is not listed specifically in the Word of Wisdom, we would be wise to understand that there are risks associated with the consumption of this stimulant, especially in the case of energy pills and high-energy drinks.⁷



IN THE BEST CONDITION

“The Word of Wisdom does not promise you perfect health, but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.”

President Boyd K. Packer,
President of the Quorum
of the Twelve Apostles,
“The Word of Wisdom: The
Principle and the Promises,”
Ensign, May 1996, 18.



Promises

Although the confirming evidence provided by modern science may give us additional reasons to keep the Word of Wisdom, it is ultimately our faith in the Lord’s word and our consistent obedience to this revelation that will qualify us for the promised blessings:

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint” (D&C 89:18–20). ■

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NOTES

1. See Jane V. Higdon, Barbara Delage, David E. Williams, and Roderick H. Dashwood, “Cruciferous Vegetables and Human Cancer Risk: Epidemiologic Evidence and Mechanistic Basis,” *Pharmacological Research*, vol. 55, no. 3 (Mar. 2007), 224–36.
2. See Elisabeth Kvaavik, G. David Batty, Giske Ursin, Rachel Huxley, and Catharine R. Gale, “Influence of Individual and Combined Health Behaviors on Total and Cause-Specific Mortality in Men and Women: The United Kingdom Health and Lifestyle Survey,” *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 170, no. 8 (Apr. 26, 2010), 711–18.
3. See wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101/what-are-the-health-benefits.
4. See Deirdre K. Banel and Frank B. Hu, “Effects of Walnut Consumption on Blood Lipids and Other Cardiovascular Risk Factors: A Meta-analysis and Systematic Review,” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 90, no. 1 (July 2009), 56–63.
5. See David S. Ludwig, “The Glycemic Index: Physiological Mechanisms Relating to Obesity, Diabetes, and Cardiovascular Disease,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 287, no. 18 (May 8, 2002), 2414–23.
6. See T. Colin Campbell, Banoor Parpia, and Junshi Chen, “Diet, Lifestyle, and the Etiology of Coronary Artery Disease: The Cornell China Study,” *American Journal of Cardiology*, vol. 82, no. 10, suppl. 2 (Nov. 26, 1998), 18–21.
7. See Amelia M. Arria and Mary Claire O’Brien, “The ‘High’ Risk of Energy Drinks,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 305, no. 6 (Feb. 9, 2011), 600–601.