

## OPTIMIZE HEALTH

Sanjay Gupta in his book, *World War C, Lessons from the COVID – 19 PANDEMIC and How to prepare for the Next One* believes that we need to optimize health and prime the body for pandemic proofing. (1)

Almost everyone Gupta talked to during the pandemic had a story of change either for better or worse. **He joked that people came out of this either with more weight on (the chunk), stronger spiritually (the monk), a greater dependence on alcohol (the drunk), or a leaner, fitter body (the hunk).** Most would probably identify with the chunk and monk, rather than the drunk and hunk.

However, being called a chunk is sensitive because it referred to being overweight. However, in the United States one in three adults and nearly one in five children are considered obese. **Now dangerous obesity raises the risks for all kinds of disorders and disease – among them COVID.**

Good nutrition and other lifestyle habits like regular movement and restful sleep have the power to drive down risk of the major chronic diseases in the United States. When it comes to good nutrition, there are styles of eating that do not have to conform to any single, restrictive “diet.” **One can find an ideal approach to nutrition that works with your preferences and personal needs.**

Realize that changing your diet in an effort to optimize your health will take some time – and it should. Most of us have a general idea of what is good for us, what we like and don’t like, and even what our own super foods are. **Reducing your intake of** refined sugars and flours, artificially sweetened foods and beverages, fast food meals, processed meats, highly salted foods, and sweets **is no longer a suggestion, it is a mandate!** In the wake of this pandemic, we will need to analyze how we nourish ourselves at a deeper level than we have ever done in the past!

While no single food is the key to good health, a combination of healthy foods will help secure the body against assault, and it is never too early to begin. **Only 10% of Americans get the recommended number of fruits and vegetables a day.** (2) More than a third of us eat fast food daily, and at least one meal a day comes from a pizza box or a drive through. Make no mistake: Every smart micro decision you make to nourish yourself is part of the plan to make you pandemic proof.

Gupta also has a section on taking regular walks, practicing short bursts of activity, tracking your movement, and picking up an old sport you used to play.

(1) Sanjay Gupta, *World War C, Lessons from the COVID – 19 Pandemic and How to Prepare for the Next One* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021) pp. 193-197, 210-211

(2) See [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

*Written by: Dr. Dale Johnson*