

Diets Gone Wrong? Don't Take it Personal

Greenwich's Mah Makes Personal Program for Healthy Living

BY JENNIFER CIRILLO

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The problem with dieting is that most people don't know how to do it — from buying groceries to how many times a day to eat, to exercising the right way — and depend on fad diets to show them the way. But before plunging into a new weight loss program halfheartedly, the question dieters should be asking themselves is, "How do I know this diet will work for me?"

The answer is simple. You don't.

Dr. Christopher Mah, a certified clinical nutritionist and medical acupuncturist at Greenwich Sports Medicine, breaks down the weight loss industry explaining that dieters shouldn't get discouraged when a certain program doesn't work for them. "The reason being, not everyone is going to respond to one diet the same way. Because everyone has different reasons why they can't lose weight."

That makes sense, right? Every person has a different chemical makeup. Their body responds to certain foods differently. And we all have our individual health issues.

So, from this point on, forget the word diet and its negative connotations and start thinking about how you can make a commitment to change your life for the better by providing your body with the nutrients it needs most to give you the most out of life.

Narelle Kriezack, a professional squash player and Greenwich resident, began seeing Mah about four months ago, which was about the same time he became one of Greenwich Sports Medicine's treating physicians, because of her spiking sugar levels and to get back into shape after having her first child.

Kriezack, 29, recently won the World Squash Mixed Doubles Championship as well as the World Squash Woman's Double Championship two months ago, and she credits her wins to Mah's help. Kriezack had seen a nutritionist before, "but not as detailed as (Dr. Mah)," she said. "It's so individualized."

And that's the point. Mah conducts a total metabolism test. He wants to know how many calories you are burning at rest. He wants to know about your diet history — which ones you've tried, how long they've lasted and if any of them worked. He also will ask for a three-day diet recall and a thorough health history because "70 percent of a good diagnosis is a good history," he said. The doctor also wants to know when you were happiest with your weight, your sleep history and food cravings — those things can help pinpoint what your body is lacking.

It's called targeted fat loss, a system used at Greenwich Sports Medicine. It's not a new concept, admits Mah, and there are still some



GREENWICH CITIZEN photo / Amy Mortensen

Dr. Christopher Mah, a certified clinical nutritionist and medical acupuncturist at Greenwich Sports Medicine, gives clients an individualized approach to healthy living.

discrepancies among doctors as to what aspects of the system are true, but there is evidence that has proven that every person has a certain genetic code that tells the body where to store fat.

By tapping into that information, it can be determined which hormones need to be optimized and which supplements can be used to get results.

For example, "flabby" triceps are a symptom of high stress. Stress tends to increase the hormones that make more of the stress hormone cortisol. Specific exercises, diet modifications along with herbal preparations called adaptogens, help the body handle stress, reducing cortisol levels. In this case, good supplements are schisandra and rhodiola rosea.

Love handles tend to be the result of circulating insulin levels. To help stabilize insulin levels it's suggested to decrease carbohydrate intake and eat several meals a day that include protein. Supplementation with Fenugreek seeds, which are high in dietary fiber, will help control blood sugar levels.

Sound confusing? Mah's specific approach makes it a lot easier to understand. In the few short months Kriezack has been

treated by Mah, she's already seen results in her game and in her life. "He's educating you on which foods are better for your body to process," said the Australian native, who teaches tennis, squash and paddle at the Field Club in Greenwich. Over that period, she has lost about 20 pounds, but gained muscle mass, which Mah said is important.

"One of the things you want to make sure of in any diet is that you are rebuilding by putting on muscle mass, because in the long run that is what is going to cause you to keep weight off permanently," he said — a fact that has had longstanding truth.

By following 10 healthy habits and keeping in mind a list of 21 "superfoods" that should be included in your meals, all listed with sample menus and recipes in a "patient log book," the idea of eating healthy becomes clear.

"My goal is to put lean muscle mass for permanent weight change," said Mah, "basically to build up your metabolism as much as possible."

"To me, weight doesn't count. If I get you to be three dress sizes smaller and to still be the same weight, I don't think anyone should care about that."

10 Healthy Habits

1. Eat every two-three hours
2. Eat complete, lean protein with each feeding opportunity
3. Eat vegetables with each feeding opportunity
4. Eat vegetables and fruits with any meal; "other carbs" only after exercise
5. Eat healthy fats daily
6. Don't drink beverages with more than 0 calories
7. Eat whole foods instead of supplements whenever possible
8. Plan ahead and prepare feedings in advance
9. Eat as wide a variety of good foods as possible
10. Plan to break the rules 10 percent of the time

21 Superfoods

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| 1. Lean red meat (93 percent lean, top round, sirloin) | 10. Oranges |
| 2. Salmon | 11. Mixed beans |
| 3. Omega-3 eggs | 12. Quinoa |
| 4. Low fat, plain yogurt (lactose-free if you can find it) | 13. Whole oats |
| 5. Protein supplements (milk protein isolates, whey protein isolates, or rice protein isolates) | 14. Mixed nuts |
| 6. Spinach | 15. Avocados |
| 7. Tomatoes | 16. Extra virgin olive oil |
| 8. Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower) | 17. Fish oil |
| 9. Mixed berries | 18. Flax seeds (ground) |
| | 19. Green tea |
| | 20. Liquid exercise drinks (quickly digested carbohydrate and protein) |
| | 21. Greens+ (vegetable concentrate supplement). |

And of course, "always involve exercise and behavioral modifications," he added.

A general rule of thumb when deciding what to feed yourself: "If it didn't run, swim or fly or grow out of the ground at one point it's probably not that good for you," said Mah.

Mah, certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), American Council on Exercise (ACE) and the National Federation of Personal Trainers (NFPT), will give a free lecture on overcoming weight loss resistance on July 19 and 20 at 6 p.m., at Greenwich Sports Medicine, 7 Riversville Road. For information, call 531-3131.

SUMMER, FALL BENEFITS

China Care to Host Raitt, Allman Bros.

Musical legends Bonnie Raitt and The Allman Brothers are the featured performers at the annual fund-raising celebration hosted by the China Care Foundation.

The nonprofit foundation based in Westport strives to help orphaned Chinese children realize a better life through improved health care, housing, education, foster care and providing financial aid for adopting families.

The annual gala will be held in Greenwich on Saturday. The organization's board of directors underwrites the entire event, with last year's event raising \$900,000, all of which went directly to the children. This year's event is expected to generate \$1 million, according to event organizers.

For information, call 227-3655 or visit www.chinacare.org.

CCI Golf Challenge Slated July 13

Community Center, Inc. will hold its 17th annual CCI Golf Challenge on July 13 at the Stanwich Club in Greenwich. The event is co-chaired by Bob Grayson and Joe Cabrera.

Scoring will be best ball of four-some and participants will have a chance to record an individual score. Outstanding prizes will be awarded to low gross and low net teams, plus a new Mercedes-Benz.

For more than 50 years Community Centers, Inc. has been serving residents of Greenwich providing individual family and group counseling, therapeutic recreational and educational programs and

advocacy. For information, call 869-1276.

MS Bike Tour Slated

Registration opens for the "MS Bike Tour Down to the Sound" to be held Sunday, Sept. 17 at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport. Now in its 25th year, this year's event is expected to raise more than \$300,000 for MS research and local client programs.

To reach its goal, the Western Connecticut Chapter of the National MS Society is looking for cyclists of all levels to participate either individually or on teams.

The bike tour offers a scenic 12-, 30- or 62-mile route through Fairfield County. To register, volunteer or to become a sponsor, call 838-1033, option 2 or visit www.msswct.org.

Wallace to Perform Benefit Concert

Greenwich resident Bennie Wallace has performed around the world to great acclaim and will perform at the Annual Garden Cabaret, a gala benefit and exclusive performance for Family ReEntry on Sept. 17 at 3 p.m.

The benefit will be held at Bydale, the Greenwich estate of Joan Warburg, where George Gershwin composed. Family ReEntry counsels individuals returning from incarceration or substance abuse and their families.

Wallace's recordings and original compositions, including film scores for "Blaze," starring Paul Newman and "White Men Can't Jump," make him one of the most accomplished jazz musicians on the scene today. His world-class ensem-

ble bring their own reputations. Tickets begin at \$100. Contact Joelle Musante at 838-0496.

ACGT to hold Dinner Sept. 28 at Hyatt

The Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy (ACGT), the only national public charity committed exclusively to the funding of cancer gene therapy research to combat all forms of cancer, is hosting its fifth anniversary dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Greenwich on Thursday, Sept. 28 at 6:30 p.m.

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Judah Folkman, director of the vascular biology program at the Children's Hospital in Boston.

Tickets must be reserved in advance by calling 358-8000, ext. 327 or online at www.acgtfoundation.org.