

INTRODUCTION

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This book deals with varied and interesting topics, all of which are applicable to women, young and old, in the State of Israel.

I congratulate the Society for Promotion of Women's Health and the Danone Institute for the discussion of *Nutrition in the Female Life Cycle* resulting from their successful joint venture.

Women's nutrition is a much talked about subject, making headlines worldwide. I recall when women, their bodies and their feelings were topics not to be discussed; when an adolescent suffering from bulimia was complimented on "how well she looked" instead of reaching out and tendering professional help.

Many of us are unaware of the importance of nutrition and how it effects our health. For many, weight loss has become a goal and unsupervised dieting a norm. Many women spend much time, energy and resources on their appearance, some becoming nearly obsessive. Adolescents and women consider fashion models and actresses as idols to be emulated. Thin is young, beautiful, healthy and "in" today, when only two hundred years ago plump women were the ideal.

For the last several years I have chaired the Women's Health Center in the Rabin Medical Health Center. The promotion of women's health is very important to me. Not enough emphasis has been placed on the specific problems of women's health. Genetic, emotional and sexual differences indicate the necessity for special medical attention.

Studies show that women are the main advocates and promoters of health care in the family. Women have direct impact on the health and education of their children. I am a strong believer in long term investment in education. As an educator in the past and an activist for young adolescents at present, I think that we must give the future generation tools to deal with the most pressing problem of puberty – body image.

During puberty teens deal with the many changes in their bodies and develop physical self-awareness, be it positive or negative. They are constantly comparing themselves to others. This can effect their personalities, their self-awareness and their developing relationships with others.

I have met adolescents looking for counseling in coffee shops which double as counseling centers run by the Elem Organization. Youth are constantly asking for guidance; and among the topics are body image and social standing. Most adolescents are interested in the accepted subjects of healthy eating, proper diet, overweight, nutrition for athletes, etc. Also among the youth frequenting the Elem coffee shops are those suffering from eating disorders. Elem tries to focus on the disorder, and through persuasion, attempts to help the adolescent face the problem and direct her to proper and acceptable treatment.

Good nutrition is important to the health of a woman. Food is one of life's pleasures but good nutrition has a direct impact on the quality of life; as it says "A healthy soul in a healthy body".

I sincerely hope that the subject "Proper Nutrition in the Life Cycle" will become an integral part of the school curriculum recommended by the Ministry of Education. I hope you will continue increasing public awareness through conferences and books discussing new research and developments of this very important subject.