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All About Nutrition: Learn How Your Diet Can Greatly Enhance Your Life

There is No Substitute for a Healthy Diet

A healthy diet is something everyone who cares about their health claims to want, but how do we really get it?

Keys to a Healthy Diet

Developing healthy eating habits isn't as confusing or as restrictive as many people imagine. The first principle of a healthy diet is simply to eat a wide variety of foods. This is important because different foods make different nutritional contributions.

Secondly, fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes—foods high in complex carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, low in fat, and free of cholesterol—should make up the bulk of the calories you consume. The rest should come from low-fat dairy products, lean meat and poultry, and fish.

You should also try to maintain a balance between calorie intake and calorie expenditure—that is, don't eat more food than your body can utilize. Otherwise, you will gain weight. The more active you are, therefore, the more you can eat and still maintain this balance.

Following these three basic steps doesn't mean that you have to give up your favorite foods. As long as your overall diet is low in fat and rich in complex carbohydrates, there is nothing wrong with an occasional cheeseburger. Just be sure to limit how frequently you eat such foods, and try to eat small portions of them.

You can also view healthy eating as an opportunity to expand your range of choices by trying foods—especially vegetables, grains, or fruits—that you don't normally eat. A healthy diet doesn't have to mean eating foods that are bland or unappealing.

Basic Nutrition Guidelines

Nutrition is a hot topic everywhere, with differing opinions and approaches all around us. For honest, straightforward advice, there's still nothing that beats the current USDA guidelines. They're something everyone should know!

USDA Key Recommendations for the General Population

ADEQUATE NUTRIENTS WITHIN CALORIE NEEDS

- Consume a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages within and among the basic food groups while choosing foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol.
- Meet recommended intakes within energy needs by adopting a balanced eating pattern, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Guide or the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Eating Plan.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

- To maintain body weight in a healthy range, balance calories from foods and beverages with calories expended.
- To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Engage in regular physical activity and reduce sedentary activities to promote health, psychological well-being, and a healthy body weight.
- To reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood: Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, at work or home on most days of the week.
- For most people, greater health benefits can be obtained by engaging in physical activity of more vigorous intensity or longer duration.
- To help manage body weight and prevent gradual, unhealthy body weight gain in adulthood: Engage in approximately 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity on most days of the week while not exceeding caloric intake requirements.
- To sustain weight loss in adulthood: Participate in at least 60 to 90 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity while not exceeding caloric intake requirements. Some people may need to consult with a healthcare provider before participating in this level of activity.
- Achieve physical fitness by including cardiovascular conditioning, stretching exercises for flexibility, and resistance exercises or calisthenics for muscle strength and endurance.

FOOD SAFETY

- To avoid microbial foodborne illness:
- Clean hands, food contact surfaces, and fruits and vegetables. Meat and poultry should not be washed or rinsed.
- Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing foods.
- Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms.
- Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly.
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk, raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs, raw or undercooked meat and poultry, unpasteurized juices, and raw sprouts.

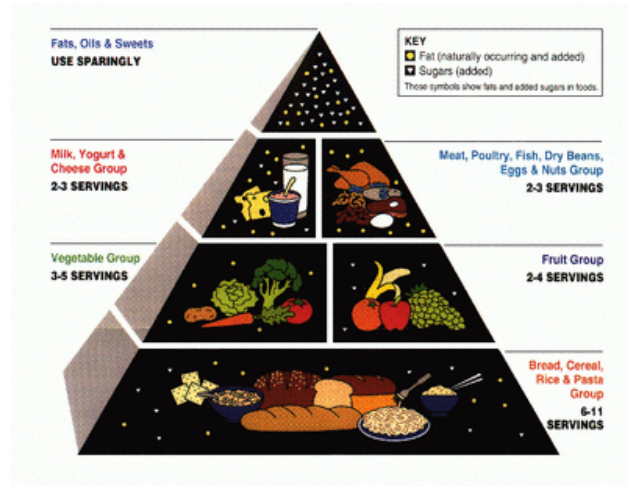
Nutrition Pyramid

Recently, the nutritional food guide pyramid was revised. The revision, completed by the United States Department of Agriculture included new dietary guidelines to achieve a healthy, balanced diet

The pyramid is geared especially towards proper nutrition for children. It focuses on larger amounts of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. In addition, the pyramid stresses the importance of exercise on a regular basis to improve childrens' health.

On the pyramid there are six color coded categories for each food group:

- Orange: Grains
- Green: Vegetables
- Red: Fruits
- Blue: Dairy and calcium-rich foods
- Purple: Proteins (meats, beans, and fish)
- Yellow: Fats and oils



Here is a bit of information from each food group:

Grains: The grains group, which includes foods like bread, cereal, rice, and pasta.

These foods are high in complex carbohydrates, which are the body's fuel. Grains also provide other important nutrients such as vitamin B-complex (folate), which helps your body use the protein needed to build muscle.

Vegetables: Vegetables provide many of the vitamins and minerals needed for good health, and they provide fiber to aid digestion.

Fruits: Fruits are especially good sources of important vitamins like A and C. This food group also adds minerals such as potassium and fiber, which help digestion. It is best to eat fruits raw.

Dairy: The dairy group includes milk, eggs, cheese, yogurt, and is an excellent source of vitamins A and D. Dairy products help strengthen bones and teeth as well as strengthening muscle and nerve functions.

Proteins: Proteins include meats, beans, and fish. These all contain vitamin B and iron to help bones grow strong and support muscles.

Fats, oils, and sweets: This group is essential to maintain body function and provide nutrition, but should be used sparingly.

It is important to keep in mind that the serving sizes are a guideline and can differ day to day. In addition, always keep in mind that moderation is key to a healthy diet and the nutritional values of food can vary depending on how the food is prepared.

Nutritional Food Choices

One of the biggest reasons that diets and attempts at healthy eating fail is boredom. Many folks just do not know how to keep a healthy diet interesting day after day, and it can be quite a challenge.

Given the huge variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meats and other healthy foods at the local grocery store, however, it is definitely possible to create exciting, nutritious meals that will keep that boredom at bay.

However, it is important to check the nutritional qualities of the fruits and vegetables you buy, and not simply assume that all fruits and vegetables are equally healthy.

As far as what to eat, buying anything at the grocery from the following list is a straight path to better health. These foods include:

- Fruits like bananas, berries and apples
- Whole grains including bread and pasta
- Low-fat dairy including milk and yogurt
- Chicken, turkey and fish
- Vegetables like spinach, squash and tomatoes
- Natural peanut butter
- Beans and legumes
- Almonds and other nuts

Foods to avoid

Refined foods are big industry, and draw a gigantic profit. When industries are accustomed to bringing in big profits, they do what any industry would do: protect those profits at all costs. In addition, these profits bring power, and information can be put forth, covered over, or otherwise manipulated to protect that power.

Most people know which foods they should stay away from. The obvious ones include desserts, high-fat meals, candy, fast food and fried food. In fact, most people will feel a big difference simply by staying away from these kinds of foods. The not-so-obvious ones include:

- Pasta
- Fat-free foods
- Most frozen meals
- Processed meats like fake cold cuts
- Soda and juices
- Creamy meals

Your biggest weapon in the battle to eat right is common sense. Use it!

Nutritional Information

Nutritional information seems to be everywhere these days. The secret to feeding your family (and yourself) a healthful diet of healthy food is to read the labels. The United States Food & Drug Administration has laid out strict guidelines for nutritional labeling of all food products.

The nutrition label will tell you all you need to know to choose real health foods. But with new FDA guidelines mandating more detailed info on the labels of every product you buy, it could become a case of overload very quickly.

To get you started, here are a few facts (and myths) about some of the more common, "healthy" snack foods you see nearly every day:

Yogurt: This can be either very good or very bad for you, depending on several factors. Real yogurt has two ingredients: milk (whole, skim or low fat) and live yogurt cultures. That's healthy food - calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A, protein.

However, much of the yogurt at the grocery store is loaded with various kinds of hidden sugars. Flavors like key lime pie, kiwi-raspberry, strawberry-banana, etc., usually means that heavy doses of sugar were added to generate that particular flavor. Many times, the actual "fruit" is of poor quality fruit and was too damaged or over-ripe to sell for raw produce.

The solution? Buy plain, fat-free, sugarless yogurt, and add your own nuts, berries or fresh fruits to it. In this manner you have complete control over how healthy you wish your yogurt to be.

Granola bars: The first granola bars were identical to normal granola except for shape. Instead of a loose, breakfast cereal consistency, granola bars were pressed into a bar shape and baked into that shape. These granola bars often contain dried fruit, as normal granola.

Granola bars have now evolved into expensive candy bars containing chocolate chips and gooey caramel. Whole wheat flour is bleached and denuded of its flavorful kernels.

Finally, here are some things to keep in mind when reading nutrition labels for health foods:

* In the ingredient's portion of the nutrition label, ingredients are listed in order by amount. The ingredient that's listed first is the main ingredient, followed by the next largest amount, etc.

* The nutrition facts label must list each of the required nutrients even if the food provides 0% of the recommended daily value.

* The nutrition facts label must list what portion of the food's calories is derived from fat, from sugar, from protein and from carbohydrates. It will also break down the fat into saturated and unsaturated fat.

Fruit and Vegetables in Nutrition

More Color More Health

Growing up you may have been told to eat your greens, but what about your reds, oranges, yellows and blues? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the 5 A Day Partnership encourages YOU to "Sample the Spectrum" of the colorful vegetables and fruit available this season.

By putting something of every color on your plate or in your lunch bag, you are more likely to eat the 5 to 9 recommended servings of vegetables and fruit every day. Just think: 1 cup of dark, leafy GREENS, ½ cup of RED tomatoes, ½ cup of YELLOW peppers, 6 oz. ORANGE juice and ½ cup of BLUEberries. And you have 5 A Day! It's quite simple when you Sample the Spectrum.

The more reds, oranges, greens, yellows, and blues you see on the plate, the more health promoting properties you are also getting from your vegetable and fruit choices. Nutrition research shows that colorful vegetables and fruit contain essential vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals that your body needs to promote health and help you feel great. Here are the specifics...

Reds

When you add deep reds or bright pinks to your daily diet, you are also adding a powerful antioxidant called lycopene. Lycopene is found in tomatoes, red and pink grapefruit, watermelon, papaya and guava. Diets rich in lycopene are being studied for their ability to fight heart disease and some cancers.

Greens

Do you know why this color is so essential to your diet? Not only do green vegetables look great and taste wonderful, but they are rich in the phytochemicals that keep you healthy. For example, the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin that are found in spinach, collards, kale and broccoli have antioxidant properties and are being studied for their ability to protect your eyes by keeping your retina strong. Also, research is being done on cruciferous vegetables like cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, and turnips to see if they may reduce the risk of cancerous tumors! Greens are also loaded with essential vitamins (folate), minerals, and fiber.

Oranges/Yellows

Orange, the color of a blazing sun, is a must have in your daily diet. Orange vegetables and fruits like sweet potatoes, mangos, carrots, and apricots, contain beta-carotene. This carotenoid is a natural antioxidant that is being studied for its role in enhancing the immune system. In addition to being touted as a powerful health-protector, the orange group is rich in Vitamin C. Folate, most often found in leafy greens, is also found in orange fruits and vegetables, and is a B vitamin that may help prevent some birth defects and reduce your risk of heart disease. With a chemical make-up this good, make the orange group always a part of your 5 to 9 a day.

Bright yellows have many of the same perks as the orange groups: high in essential vitamins and carotenoids. Pineapple, for example, is rich with Vitamin C, manganese, and the natural enzyme, bromelain. Additionally, corn and pears are high in fiber. Yellow fruits and vegetables belong to many different families, but they all share the common bond of being health enhancing with great taste. Go for the gold!

Blues/Purples

Blues and purples not only add beautiful shades of tranquility and richness to your plate, they add health-enhancing flavonoids, phytochemicals, and antioxidants. Anthocyanins, a phytochemical, are pigments responsible for the blue color in vegetables and fruits, and are being studied for their role in the body's defense of harmful carcinogens. Blueberries, in particular, are rich in Vitamin C and folic acid and high in fiber and potassium.

Whites

Vegetables from the onion family, which include garlic, chives, scallions, leeks, and any variety of onion, contain the phytochemical allicin. Research is being conducted on:

- Allicin to learn how it may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure and increase the body's ability to fight infections.
- Indoles and sulfaforaphanes, phytochemicals in cruciferous vegetables like cauliflower, for how they may inhibit cancer growth.
- Polyphenols, another important phytochemical in pears and green grapes for how they may reduce the risk of certain cancers.

Fast Food Nutrition Facts

Fast food is a lot of things.

It is fast, convenient, and fun. But can it be healthy?

Are too many 'Happy Meals' the reason that more kids today are overweight?

The rise in families substituting a trip to McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, etc. for a family meal at home is likely one of the causes for the increase in overweight kids, but it

is not the only cause. Other factors are also to blame, including an increased time watching TV and playing video games, decreased time in physical activity and unhealthy food choices.

An unhealthy food choices don't end at home, where kids may eat too many high fat and high calorie foods and snacks and sugary drinks.

The choices you make when eating fast food can also determine how healthy or 'unhealthy' it is.

How can you make fast food healthy?

One of the easiest ways is to just watch your portion sizes and understand how many calories and how much fat you add to a meal when you 'super-size' your order. It might seem like a good 'value' to go with the special or large meal sizes, but think about what those extra calories will cost you later as your child tries to burn them off to lose weight.

Healthy Choices

In addition to choosing smaller portion sizes, checking the menu at your favorite fast food restaurant will likely help you find other low calorie low fat alternatives to traditional fast foods that really are healthy. These might include a salad, baked potato, or grilled chicken salad.

With other types of fast food, like pizza, choose a thin crust cheese pizza and avoid adding a lot of cheese or extra meat toppings.

It can also help your child eat more healthy if you avoid 'fast food' at more traditional restaurants that you visit. It seems like almost every restaurant, whether it is Italian, Chinese, Mexican, etc. has a kids' menu with high fat and high calorie foods, like chicken nuggets, french fries, etc.

Instead of always relying on the kid's menu, consider getting a 1/2 order or child plate of a more traditional and healthier item at the restaurant.

What Do Nutritionists Do?

Nutritionists develop personalized nutrition plans to ensure that medical and dietary needs are optimized. A nutritionist may be found in a hospital or nursing home setting as well as in community settings such as health clubs, health clinics, and HMO's. Their goal is to assist individuals and groups alike to make healthier dietary choices for optimal health.

Nutritionists advise in good nutritional practices to promote better health as well as structuring dietary plans for individuals or groups of people with specific needs. One

example of an individual dietary plan would be for a diabetic person.

Another example would be for a person wishing to lose a significant amount of weight, while a group plan may be established for a school district's lunch program. Food manufacturers, advertisers, and marketing companies also use the resources of nutritionists in the production of food products that are low in fat and healthier choices for the consumer.

A nutritionist may be recommended to a patient by their doctor for various medical reasons. When seeking out the services of a nutritionist, it is recommended that the individual be a certified professional. The title of certified nutritionist or certified clinical nutritionist indicates that the individual has had specialized education and training in nutrition science and has met national testing standards.

The nutritionist will be able to collect pertinent data, including medical information, to formulate a dietary plan and assist with dietary counseling. Education, monitoring, advice, and support are all important aspects of a personalized nutrition plan.

If you feel that you may benefit from a nutritionist, you should first seek the advice of a medical professional, such as your family physician. This is especially important if you suffer from any medical conditions such as diabetes or any heart conditions. You may find a great benefit to your health by having a personalized nutrition plan.

Is Your Nutritionist Properly Certified?

How to recognize a properly certified nutritionist is something you must know.

The title certified nutritionist (C.N.) or certified clinical nutritionist (C.C.N.) indicates that a person has had extensive education and training in nutrition science, and has met national testing standards.

Both C.N.s, and C.C.N.s work with clients to assess and analyze individual nutritional needs and develop personalized nutrition plans. During this process, they educate, advise, counsel, monitor, and provide support. Both conventional doctors and alternative health practitioners often refer their patients to nutritionists for dietary counseling.

The dietary information you receive from a certified nutritionist is most likely to be reliable and based on current knowledge in the field if the nutritionist has been working in the profession for a minimum of one year and holds one of the following certifications:

Certified Nutritionist (C.N.): C.N.s must earn a Bachelor of Science or higher degree in nutrition science from an accredited college or formal training program that is recognized by state licensing agencies.

They must meet any state licensing or certification requirements in their state, and

comply with all statutes related to the practice of nutrition counseling. C.N.s must also complete a series of examinations required by the National Institute of Nutritional Education.

Certified Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.): To earn the C.C.N. credentials, nutritionists must have received a graduate degree in a health-care field or, if they only hold a B.A. degree, they must also complete 900 hours of medical and clinical nutrition internship.

They are then qualified to take case histories and use various tests and observations to assess an individual's nutritional needs. C.C.N.s may use the results of their assessments as the basis for referring clients to a licensed physician or other health-care professional.
How To Choose a Practitioner

When you are looking for responsible nutrition advice, seek out a certified professional. Always bear in mind that the simple title "nutritionist," although used by many qualified nutrition and dietetics professionals, is a moniker that can also be adopted by virtually anyone who wants to hang up a shingle.

Be wary of bogus qualifications, as well as of what seems to be extreme dietary advice. Because irresponsible information on nutrition can be dangerous to your health, be very careful to ask specific questions and verify the practitioner's education, training, and professional credentials.

Although most states require a license for professional dietitians, the situation is murkier for nutritionists. This is why it's important to be sure any nutritionist you consult has one of the credentials listed above. These assure you of consistent standards of education, training, and professionalism.

If a nutritionist practices in a state that does not regulate their qualifications, you should still look for one of the above certifications, which are granted for C.C.N.s by the Clinical Nutrition Certification Board (CNCN), and for C.N.s by the National Institute of Nutritional Education.

It is also a good sign if the nutritionist is a current member of the Society of Certified Nutritionists (SCN), which is working to establish national standards of practice while promoting continuing education in the field.

Online Nutritionists

If you're looking for an online nutritionist, you won't have far to look. They're in plentiful supply not only on most food and diet sites, but also on those concerning kids, sports and general health.

No matter what your need, you'll find a nutritionist available to assist you with any nutrition related question you may have. Many will even work with you on a long-term basis – no appointments to keep or weather or traffic to battle.

Although there are plenty to be found, it's still prudent to request and review the credentials and qualifications of any nutritionist you consider. A bachelor's degree in the field would be a good indicator, as well as at least a few years in practice following internships.

There are many online courses claiming to provide certification in the field in a few months' time. Be certain that the nutritionist you choose to consult has spent somewhat more time in the profession and doesn't simply claim to know his stuff because he's eaten food all his life!

Those who face severe or life threatening issues would be best advised to consult a real live nutritionist knowledgeable in that particular area. Having a real person that you visit and talk face-to-face with about a serious problem is not only comforting and reassuring, it's the safe and sensible way to address it.

An online nutritionist can only discuss your issue in general terms and should freely admit that a real-world nutritionist is actually the way to go for your particular case.

If they don't or insist that they can help you regardless (most likely for a fee), discontinue contact and find a nutritionist in your area who can help. Some things really can't be done effectively online!

What is an Applied Sports Nutritionist?

An applied sports nutritionist is typically Licensed Medical Nutritional Therapist (LMNT) or Registered Dietitians (RD) who has at least 3 years of experience working in an applied nutrition setting with athletes. He or she is capable of:

- Organizing meals, snacks and hydration at home and on the road and truly be involved with keeping a team fueled throughout the entire year. They have to really be able to look into the future and see where and how a team is moving and have a bit of an instinct on what is the best intervention to implement for a winning outcome.
- Know about the annual training cycle (periodization) of every sport/position or event so they can target appropriate windows for exposures that will safely help athletes reach realistic body composition outcomes. And be capable of accurately assessing body composition & nutrient based lesions in physical exams of athletes.
- Be capable of communicating the plan of action to coaches and athletes in a simple to execute-systematic manner that is always put into circumstantial perspective (off-inseason, pre-post workout, active-inactive days, etc.).

As you can see the applied sports nutritionist has a real "role up your sleeves" type job in the trenches with the athletes year round compared to a clinical setting.

It becomes a tactical experience in management, education and teamwork that brings the nutritionist to the table for meetings with a coaching staff and team to building the most appropriate fueling tactics.

Sports Nutrition

Athletes who want a winning edge should get the right nutrition. When you drink enough water and eat a balanced diet, your body can make energy efficiently and fuel top performance. You can make the most of your athletic talents and gain more strength, power and endurance when you train. Base your diet on a variety of factors including your age, size and physical condition; and the type of exercise you are doing. See your doctor for individualized nutrition advice.

Hydration

Water is the most important factor in sports nutrition. It makes up about 60 percent of body weight and is involved in almost every bodily process. Your body cannot make or store water, so you must replace what you eliminate (i.e., urine, sweat). Everyone should drink at least two quarts (eight cups) of water each day, and athletes need more. Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after sports events to stay hydrated and avoid overheating. When you workout or compete, especially in hot weather, try to closely match the amount of fluid you drink with the amount you lose to sweat.

Fuel sources

Eating a balanced diet is another key to sports nutrition. The right combination of fuel (calories) from carbohydrates, proteins and fats gives you energy for top performance.

Carbohydrates. The most important fuel source, carbohydrates come in fruits, vegetables, pastas, breads, cereals, rice and other foods, and should provide about 60-70 percent of daily calories. Your body converts sugars and starches in carbohydrates to energy (glucose) or stores it in the liver and muscle tissues (glycogen), giving you endurance and power for high-intensity, short-duration activities.

If your body runs out of carbohydrate fuel during exercise, it will burn fat and protein for energy, causing your performance level to drop. This can happen if you start exercising without much muscle glycogen, exercise heavily for more than an hour without eating more carbohydrates, do repeated high-intensity, short-duration exercises or participate in multiple events or training sessions in a single day. Use a carbohydrate strategy to stay energized and perform at your best.

Pre-competition nutrition

What you eat several days before endurance activities affects performance. Your food

the morning of a sports competition can ward off hunger, keep blood sugar levels adequate and aid hydration. Avoid high protein or high fat foods on the day of an event, as these can stress the kidneys and take a long time to digest. Empty your upper bowel by competition time.

Carbohydrate loading

To avoid running out of carbohydrates for energy, some endurance athletes like long-distance runners, swimmers and bicyclists load their muscles with glycogen by eating extra carbohydrates in combination with doing depletion exercises several days before an event.

Bodybuilding Nutrition

People involved in bodybuilding often need to approach nutrition from a different point of view than the rest of us. While most people need to be concerned about limiting the amount of calories they consume per day, bodybuilders must ensure that they take in enough calories to compensate for those that they burn off during their workouts.

Because of this, many bodybuilders find that eating 5-6 meals spread out over the day works better for them than 3 larger meals. But how much should be eaten during each meal? Contrary to popular belief – just because bodybuilders need more calories daily doesn't mean that they don't have to count too!

The key to establishing a beneficial diet to advance bodybuilding goals is simply to eat in moderation at every meal. One of the best ways to do this is with the Mediterranean diet.

The key benefit to the Mediterranean diet is rooted in the fact that it is balanced and draws energy in appropriate proportions from these three dietary sources. Because the diet is balanced by definition, your body does not end up trying to function while being completely "out of whack."

With the Mediterranean diet you can obtain the extra energy boosts necessary for body building without causing your overall caloric and energy levels to end up out of balance.

Of course, it's useful to keep in mind that eating a proper diet with lean meat, fruits and vegetables, and no junk food probably won't get the results you are looking for because it's hard to consume what it takes to build muscle from just food. This is where bodybuilding supplements come in.

The top bodybuilding supplements used by the best athletes are Whey protein shakes, creatine monohydrate, L-Glutamine, prohormones and a vitamin/mineral supplement.

Other nutritional products designed to keep you healthy and looking great are meal replacement shakes, nutritional bars and low carb snacks.

These items are merely scratching the surface of the many complex layers of healthy nutrition and supplementation for bodybuilders, but it certainly gives you a head start!

Anti-aging Nutrition

As the first baby boomers enter their 60's, research into ways to slow down the aging process has increased dramatically. The results of this research often creates more questions than it answers.

Here's a sampling of some of the various ways to try and hold back or slow down the aging process:

If you think that cutting off all the fat from your diet is going to make you look better, think again. A move like that could age you faster instead.

Your body needs essential fatty acids. EFAs help your body process the food to release the energy needed for your life processes. They are important in the transfer of oxygen in your body as well as the regulation of nutrients in and out of the cells among other things.

Plant nutrients also play a key role in anti aging. Fruit, vegetables, and plant extracts have an array of chemical constituents, called phytochemicals or phytonutrients, that are hugely beneficial to skin health and beauty.

Antioxidants are one class of phytonutrients, though there are many. Antioxidants work by supplying an extra oxygen molecule to those molecules that are missing one, called free radicals.

Vitamin E is an anti-oxidant. Anti-oxidants neutralize the free radicals that would otherwise damage your skin cells, aging you more quickly. Consuming nuts, seeds and oils that are rich in vitamin E protects you from the aging effect of these free radicals by neutralizing the free radicals before they can cause damage.

A new diet on the anti-aging scene is the Perricone Prescription. It is not just a weight loss diet, but a way of eating that is supposed to soften wrinkles, firm the skin, reduce inflammation in the body, and increase energy. Dr. Perricone claims that in just three days, people will see the anti-aging effects of this diet.

The staples of the diet are anti-inflammatory foods such as salmon and blueberries. Perricone says foods such as sugar, pasta, bread, bananas and other starches contribute to inflammation in the body and speed up the aging process.

Whether you follow the Perricone Prescription or another healthy way of eating, you owe it to yourself to treat your body right. It will thank you with many years of feeling good, in addition to improving your overall health and well-being.

Nutrition During Pregnancy

As soon as you start thinking about having a baby, you should start thinking about what you eat. Begin loading up on the foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals, learn the five food groups and balance your meals. And once you do become pregnant, make good nutrition a priority. Talk to your doctor about the foods that will provide the nutrients important to your baby's growth, as well as to your own well-being.

While nutritional needs and your own tolerance for eating will change during the different trimesters of your pregnancy, there are some general guidelines that will be important to follow throughout the nine months. For starters, eat balanced meals, do not skip meals, eliminate caffeine and drink lots of water, six to eight glasses a day.

Calcium is one of the most important minerals you will need during pregnancy. The current recommended amount of calcium intake during pregnancy is 1,200 mg, an increase of 400 mg a day over your usual needs. An increase in dairy products such as skim milk, cheese, yogurt, pudding and ice milk, is an easy way to consume lots of calcium. There are also many good non-dairy sources of calcium, including salmon, kale, broccoli, beans and calcium-fortified orange juice.

Folic acid is essential for a healthy baby and helps in the development of the fetal brain and spine. It is especially important during early pregnancy when many women don't even know that they are expecting.

Women should take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day throughout their pregnancy and may need to take a multi-vitamin or prenatal vitamin to meet this requirement. Some excellent sources of folic acid include dried beans, tofu, peanuts and peanut butter, as well as fortified cereals. Many breads are now also fortified with folic acid. Folic acid can also be found in many dark green vegetables, corn, cantaloupe, squash and beets.

Vitamin B12, found in animal products, is essential for proper nerve and brain functioning for both mother and baby. This is of special concern for women who are vegetarians. Vitamin B12 can be found in fortified soy milk and/or soy meat replacements, as well as vitamin supplements.

Protein intake should be increased by 10 grams a day and can easily be found in animal products including meats, milk and eggs. Some plant foods, such as legumes, seeds and cereal grains, can also provide high quality protein. It is more beneficial if you combine one food from two of these categories in the form of such dishes as hummus, split pea soup, bean tacos or even a peanut butter sandwich.

Infant Nutrition

Practicing proper infant nutrition will have life-long effects for your baby, as well as

yourself. The very first step towards proper nutrition for your infant is to decide whether to breastfeed or bottle feed. It is important to consider that mother's milk is the best milk for your baby.

There are a few points to remember when considering breast feeding. First, always remember that nature designed breast milk especially for human babies; therefore, it contains just the right amount of nutrients. These nutrients are contained in a form that is gentle to your baby's systems.

If you decide to bottle feed, there are many iron-fortified formulas available that can provide adequate nutrition. Infant formulas contain protein, calories, fat, vitamins, and minerals for optimal growth and nutrition. If your infant receives enough iron-fortified formula, they may not require vitamin supplements.

When your infant is about six months old, solid foods may be introduced. Be mindful not to start solid foods unless your infant has shown signs of readiness. Signs of readiness include demonstrating good head control and if your infant loses their natural tongue reflex. You may begin with rice cereal and mix it with formula or breast milk.

Once they are used to this mixture once or twice a day for some period of time, then oatmeal may be tried, followed lastly by fruits and vegetables to add optimal infant nutrition.

After your infant has started solids, you may also add water or juice to your infant's diet. Water is preferred by physicians, as juice contains sugar and calories that infants do not need. The water assists in digestion of the solids.

By creating good habits with breastfeeding, bottle feeding, and eventually solids, your infant can receive proper nutrition during their formative first year. These habits of proper infant nutrition will create lifelong nutritional habits.

Kids Nutritional Needs

When it comes to feeding your child, it may seem like there are a dizzying number of rules to follow. Your child needs nutrients to grow strong and healthy, but you also have to limit treats and serving sizes so that your child doesn't develop weight and health problems down the line.

Obesity is becoming a common problem in the United States. Almost two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and more than half of them get too little physical activity.

U.S. nutrition officials are trying to help out. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) created new dietary guidelines to provide more practical advice on how to give your child a healthy, balanced diet. The new guidelines suggest that kids eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains than in the past and that they get 30 to 60 minutes

of moderate to vigorous exercise each day.

The recommendations are tailored for kids based on age, gender, and exercise habits. You can find out what guidelines are appropriate for your child by logging on to the USDA's website. (See the Additional Resources tab).

With the new guidelines, the Food Guide Pyramid also got a new look and a new name: MyPyramid.

Inside the pyramid, six stripes represent the five food groups as well as the oils and fats that your child should consume each day. Stairs on the pyramid represent the importance of exercise and the simple steps you can take each day to improve your child's health.

On the pyramid, each color represents a different food group.

- Orange: grains
- Green: vegetables
- Red: fruits
- Blue: dairy and calcium-rich foods
- Purple: proteins (meats, beans, and fish)
- Yellow: fats and oils

Keep in mind that the serving sizes are guidelines and that, on some days, your child may eat more or less of a certain food group. That's OK. Different foods have different mixes of nutrients, so it's important to offer your child a variety of foods on a regular basis. Moderation is a key part of a healthy diet.

Also, remember that the nutrition content of a food can vary depending on how you prepare it. Apples, for example, are packed with nutrients and can make for a great after-school snack. Apple pie has all those nutrients. But it has lots of fats and sugars, too, so you may want to limit how much you serve.

Diabetes Nutrition

Finding the right nutrition approach for those living with diabetes can be incredibly challenging, especially with the knowledge that people who are diabetic will often have different reactions to particular foods than other diabetics.

For the uninitiated, when someone is diabetic, they are unable to produce or correctly use insulin throughout their body, which is the hormone that is responsible for changing sugar, starches and other food into energy.

This is why it is literally a matter of life and death that a diabetic diet is properly followed.

One of the main goals for a diabetic diet is to lower your weight and maintain it. In addition, the diet is designed to help maintain regular glucose levels in your body. Since diabetes prevents your body from processing glucose the way it should, a diabetic diet has to, to some extent, perform that maintenance. Also, the hope is that a diabetic diet will also help you to keep your blood pressure under control.

The benefits and assistance to your body from the diabetic diet will depend on what type of diabetes you are trying to treat. Each type has its own challenges and level of restriction on the diet. The important thing to remember, though, is that studies show the effectiveness of a diabetic diet is dependent, not so much on the diet itself, but on how well the patient follows the diet.

Overall, there is no official diabetic diet to follow and it really depends on the individual diabetic. However, there is a fairly well-defined list of food items that you should avoid. Anything that contains a lot of cheese, butter, oil or mayonnaises should be avoided on diabetic diets. If you must taste these foods during your meal, you should order them to arrive as a side item.

Other foods that can stray from diabetic diets include those that are prepared with sweet and sour sauce, as well as teriyaki and barbeque. They contain high amounts of sugar and carbohydrates that should be avoided while on a diabetic diet.

Some general guidelines on how a diabetic can stay healthy for many years to come:

- Count the number of calories from fat as being 30% less than the total number of calories eaten throughout one day.
- Include foods that are low in saturated fats and cholesterol, such as skinless poultry, fresh fruit, and vegetables.
- When possible, stay away from red meats, eggs, as well as whole-milk dairy products.
- Make sure that the dairy in your life comes from low-fat or fat-free selections.

10-20% of your daily calories on a diabetic diet should come from proteins in foods, such as lean meat, fish, and low-fat dairy products. The rest of a diabetic diet should consist of carbohydrates coming from whole grains, beans, as well as fresh vegetables and fruit.

Nutritional Vitamin Supplement Controversy

Nutritional supplements are increasingly popular as our aging population strives to slow the clock. What too many don't know is that they are not merely harmless nutrients. High concentrations can cause dangerous imbalances, and some can react harmfully with common prescription drugs. Knowing that such risks exist and informing your

doctor about every one you take or are considering taking is crucial to your health.

Many people equate vitamins, minerals, and other nutritional supplements with only positive effects. Because something is sold as a "health food product," however, does not mean it's safe.

When these supplements are taken in amounts greater than the Recommended Dietary Allowances, they no longer serve a nutrient function; they are considered drugs. Taken in excessive doses these supplements can interfere with the intended action of a medication, as well as negatively affect a person's health status.

The heart of the controversy is both the types and potencies of many supplements. Many in the medical establishment contend that some nutrients, being water soluble, are simply passed through the system, and others that are fat soluble can be absorbed into fat reserves in hazardous levels if ingested without caution. Those who support the use of supplements counter that passing part of a dose of a water soluble nutrient is worthwhile because it ensures saturation of that nutrient at a cellular level, maxing out the body's available supply.

The supplement industry itself has added precautionary statements to their labeling to warn of the potential hazard of ingesting a high level of fat soluble nutrients. Even so, for vitamins and minerals, there is some monitoring by the Food and Drug Administration. For others that are not recognized as essential nutrients, the truth becomes less clear. Benefits may only be implied at best, with statements denying solid evidence of any now a requirement of law. How much garlic do you need each day? How much feverfew?

There still remains no way to know other than the assertions of alternative health care proponents. Some examples of what can happen when a person takes excessive doses of the following supplements are:

- Vitamin A: fatigue, lethargy
- Vitamin D: possible kidney failure
- Vitamin C: gas and diarrhea; dehydration as a result of diarrhea
- Vitamins A, D, and K: reaction to toxicity
- Niacin: flushed skin; impaired liver function
- Iodine: enlargement of the thyroid gland resembling goiter
- Magnesium: diarrhea
- Tryptophan: a rare blood disease with an abnormal increase in certain white cells; symptoms include severe muscle pain, fever, joint pain

(The FDA has declared tryptophan unsafe. DO NOT TAKE IT! If you have any tryptophan in your home, throw it out!)

Be careful! If you feel you need to take nutritional supplements, first discuss your concerns with your doctor, pharmacist, or other qualified health care professional, for example, a registered nurse or dietician. DO NOT self-medicate with large doses of vitamins, minerals, or other nutritional supplements without seeking medical advice.

Liquid Nutritional Supplements

Do We Need Nutrition in a Can? Are Liquid Supplements for YOU?

Until recently such products as Ensure (tm) and Boost (tm) were primarily used to meet the special needs of patients in hospitals and nursing homes. Lately we have seen companies marketing these drinks to people of all ages and states of health.

Liquid supplements are supposedly the answer for busy moms with a tight schedule, business people dashing out without time for a sit-down breakfast, and older adults wanting to guarantee that they will be able to enjoy their grandchildren. What are the benefits liquid supplements reportedly offer?

In general, these supplements are composed of water, sugar, milk and soy proteins, oils, vitamins, and minerals. A typical 8-ounce can has 250 calories, and the Aplus@ version may have as many as 355 calories. Most are lactose free, some have added fiber, and some are specifically designed for children or adults with certain health problems.

Companies are also selling supplements in the form of pudding or bars, with varying nutrient content.

What nutritional need are companies trying to help consumers answer? Below are some of the reasons companies give for buying their products.

Advertisers may use fear tactics to make you worry that you are not getting proper nutrition through ordinary foods. Although some people are consuming less than the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for some nutrients, this doesn't mean they will develop a deficiency disease. If you truly feel you are not getting enough nutrients from your food, consult a registered dietitian or a KSU Extension Specialist in nutrition. They can help you evaluate your need for supplements.

"Too busy to eat right" - Liquid supplements may be a quick way to get vitamins, minerals and protein, but there is more needed for good health! Scientists continue to discover new compounds in foods that provide health-protective benefits. While the canned supplements may lack fiber and other healthy components, they may be high in sugars and calories. Although this was ideal for the original intent of the products, most healthy consumers don't want or need all the extra calories that the supplement provides.

"Difficulty preparing meals or poor appetite" - Liquid supplements may provide an answer for occasional use, but continued use may lead to boredom and even less interest in eating. For a consumer with a poor appetite or impaired ability to fix meals, the solution might be home-delivered meals or eating at a group meal site. These meals will offer more variety and may be available at little or no cost to the consumer.

“Nutrition after surgery, during illness or chronic disease” - Liquid nutritional supplements can be beneficial for people with special nutritional needs brought on by serious illnesses. For example, those with AIDS or cancer have increased nutritional needs, and liquid nutritional supplements are appropriate and valuable in these situations.

In summary, while there is a need for liquid nutritional supplements in certain medical conditions, these products are unnecessary for the average, healthy person. The cost for one 8-ounce can of standard formula, and more for specialized formulas must be part of the decision if a person is considering use of a liquid nutritional supplement.

General Nutrition Centers

General Nutrition Centers (GNC), the largest specialty retailer of nutritional supplements, including vitamin, mineral, and herbal supplements, has more than 4800 retail locations throughout the United States. A large portion of these are franchise locations as well. Consumers may also find GNC products in other retail locations that are contracted to distribute GNC branded products.

At GNC you will find products to provide nutritional assistance, including vitamins, powder supplements for weight loss, building muscle, and overall general health. There is also a wide variety of sports related supplements to gain weight and protein. You will also find meal replacements, herbal supplements, and health and beauty products. Many of the products are GNC's own brand, but there is a wide variety of products from other brands available as well.

The company was founded in 1935 in Pittsburg, PA. In 2003 the company was sold by Royal Numico followed by a subsequent sale to a private firm.

GNC sets the standard in the nutritional industry for truth in labeling and selling only top quality products in their stores. Their moto, “Live Well”, is echoed in their commitment to product research and discovery in the manufacturing process as well as the packaging process for all products.

At any GNC store you are bound to find the products you need or are seeking for your nutritional, weight loss or sports related needs. They have a wide variety of products and supplements to choose from, as well as plenty of knowledgeable staff to assist you.

You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like, provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

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