

## Nutritional Knowledge for Newbies



# *Nutritional Knowledge for Newbies*

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## Nutritional Knowledge for Newbies

This e-book was designed with the newbie in mind. It examines why we eat the foods we eat, nutritional elements, how our nutritional needs change throughout life, and how nutrition affects our health. **Plus 3 bonus chapters:**

Good Fats and Bad Fats,

8 Super Foods and the Diseases They Prevent and

The Couch Ain't Dat Comfortable

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## Introduction

**Thank you for downloading this ebook! Poor dietary habits can cause malnutrition and other physical and mental health problems. My hope is that this information leads you to a better understanding of the importance of proper nutrition and encourages you to examine your dietary habits.**

**Understanding proper nutrition is an important component in achieving overall health. Nutritional deficiencies can have a detrimental effect on your mental and physical health. I put together this e-book to give you general nutritional information, such as how nutrients are absorbed, the different types of nutrients your body needs, the different nutrients, and amounts, that your body requires throughout your life, and more.**

## About the Author

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*I am a certified life coach and have earned my Bachelor's in Complementary and Alternative Health and my Master's in Teaching and Learning with Technology. Using my education and personal experience, I have written blog posts on health and wellness and created an online course that teaches students how to incorporate adequate sleep and physical activity into their daily lives.*

*My passion is helping people improve their overall health through small lifestyle changes and accountability.*

*Brandi Moore*

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**“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.” -Buddha**

**“In a disordered mind, as in a disordered body, soundness of health is impossible.”**

**-Marcus Tullius Cicero**

**"A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at." - Bruce Lee**

**“The part can never be well unless the whole is well.” -Plato**

## CHAPTER 1

# **Factors and Controversies That Drive Food Choices**

**Our food choices are determined by social circumstances, physical availability, and our psychological and philosophical relationship with food.**



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**Many factors determine food choices and availability of food in our environment. Our food choices are determined by social circumstances, physical availability, and our psychological and philosophical relationship with food. When someone offers us food at a party or other social gathering we may accept, even when it is not the food we would normally eat, because the individual is inviting us into their life. Under these circumstances, we partake because we do not want to offend the individual and/or because we want to try something new. However, when we are offered a food, such as meat when we are vegetarian or vegan, we will decline based on personal views and philosophies (12).**

**Our relationship with food begins when we are babies. We grow up eating the food our parents feed us and continue eating them as we age. This is why, as parents, we should understand nutrition and feed our**

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**families healthy foods from the start (12). However, for many families, healthy foods are not always available.**

**Low-income communities are especially vulnerable to inadequate access to healthy foods. These communities**

**usually lack grocery stores and fresh produce, so**

**families must rely on fast food restaurants and**

**convenience stores for food. Food available from these**

**sources is high in saturated and trans fats, sodium and cholesterol and is lacking in nutritional value.**

**Community leaders are beginning to understand how**

**lack of nutritious food is affecting families in these**

**neighborhoods and are implementing programs to bring**

**grocery stores and produce carts into these**

**neighborhoods (5).**

**The absence of healthy foods and inadequate physical activity can lead to health problems and chronic disease in children and adults. Many people do not know**

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**that inadequate nutrition can be detrimental to children, now and in the future, because it puts them at risk of obesity, heart and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. All of which can worsen as the child ages unless they adopt a healthier diet and daily exercise plan (12).**

**A diet low in sodium, cholesterol, saturated and trans fats and high in nutrients, as well as adequate physical activity, can help children and adults reduce or reverse the risk of obesity and chronic disease. Not all fats, however, are harmful. In fact, a diet, such as the Mediterranean Diet, that contains mono and polyunsaturated fats can actually increase levels of HDL (good cholesterol) in the blood and reduce LDL (bad cholesterol) and decrease the risk of cardiovascular and heart disease, obesity, and cancer (12).**

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**A Mediterranean based diet is high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, and healthy fats, as well as whole grains (6). I found a Mediterranean meal plan in Good Housekeeping that allows for substituting ingredients and adjusting suit personal tastes (6). For those interested, the meal plan can be found [here](#).**

## CHAPTER 2

# The Connection Between Nutrition and Disease

**Malnutrition and chronic illness can be avoided when a variety of foods are consumed.**

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**Proper nutrition is essential to achieving and maintaining good health and healthy weight. A person should consume the correct amount of nutrients and calories, energy, according to age and activity level. Lack of proper nutrition can lead to malnutrition and chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer and strokes. Heart disease is the number one leading cause of death in the United States, cancer is second and stroke is fourth. A person can reduce the risk of illness by eating foods low in saturated and trans fats, sodium and cholesterol, and by consuming the proper amount of protein, healthy fat, water, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates (12).**

**Malnutrition and chronic illness can be avoided when a variety of foods are consumed. A diet that is not balanced, does not offer adequate nutrients and variety, and one in which moderation and calorie control are not**

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**exercised can also cause malnutrition, obesity, and chronic illness.**

**Malnutrition can occur when one consumes too much of one nutrient and not enough of another and can lead to chronic illness. For example, when a person consumes too much sodium the risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and heart disease increases (12).**

**Chronic illness, such as heart disease and cancer, can be avoided or reversed with a diet high in, or solely made up of plant-based foods and low in sugar (4).**

**Nutrient-rich, healthy recipes and tips can be found [here](#).**

## CHAPTER 3

# **Nutritional Requirements Across the Lifespan: Pregnancy through Adulthood**

**Nutrition requirements vary throughout the  
lifecycle and should be adjusted for each stage so  
deficiencies do not develop.**



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**Nutrition requirements vary throughout the lifecycle and should be adjusted for each stage so deficiencies do not develop. Lack of nutrients can cause illness and, in some cases, death. The cycle begins before pregnancy as the mother prepares to carry and provide for the baby and continues throughout life.**

**An expectant mother does not require many more calories (only about 350-450 more) than a woman who is not expecting. However, the expectant mother does require more vitamins and minerals, such as folate, iron, and iodine. Folate is important throughout the life cycle, however, women of childbearing age and those who plan on becoming pregnant should consume 400 mcg of folate per day. The amount should increase to 600 mcg per day when the woman becomes pregnant. Inadequate folate intake before and during the first trimester can cause neural tube defects (1).**

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**Iron and iodine are essential during each stage of the lifecycle, as well. Iron is needed to transport oxygen through the body. Iodine aids in fetal growth and development. Expectant mothers may be required to take supplements for one or both minerals to ensure the health of her and her child. An increase in these minerals, as well as, zinc and calcium are important for breastfeeding women also (1).**

**Newborns should get the nutrients they need from breast milk or formula. Around six months of age, when solid foods are introduced, pureed meats may be the best choice as first foods as they offer more iron and zinc (8). Children aged 12 – 24 months should continue to drink milk for the nutrients it provides, however, solid foods are increasingly important. At this stage, food consumption may be irregular, however, nutrition is not**

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**much of a concern if the child eats healthy foods when he does get hungry (12).**

**Through childhood and teenage years, children require more calories than during other life stages because of their increased activity level. Although, parents must ensure that the child's energy output is sufficient for the energy input and that the child is consuming nutrient-rich foods (8). Between the ages of one year to around ten years, caloric intake jumps from 800 calories per day to 1800. From ages 9 to 13 caloric intake can vary between 1,400 to 2,200 for girls and 1,600 to 2,600 for boys depending on activity level (12).**

**Nutrition for adult, as with children, should focus on preventing deficiencies, heart and cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes. Processed foods, fast foods, and foods high in sodium, fat, and cholesterol should be kept to a minimum at all stages of life.**

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**Physical activity should also become or remain a priority at each stage (8).**

**As adults reach middle age and beyond, diet and activity modifications may be required. As metabolism slows, activity levels and energy intake may require adjustment, as to prevent diet-related illness (8).**

**Menopausal women should increase calcium intake and weight-bearing exercises in addition to the high fiber, low fat, low sodium, nutrient dense diet recommended for most older adults (1).**

**Nutrition is important at each stage of life.**

**Consuming the proper nutrients and calories can help prevent diet-related diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and deficiencies. Additional modifications may be required at different stages to ensure continuing health. However, with a proper diet**

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**and regular exercise, overall health and well-being can be obtained.**

## CHAPTER 4

# **Micro- and Macro-nutrients: Functions, Sources and How They Impact Health**

**Micronutrients provide energy to the body.  
Macronutrients are made up of vitamins and minerals  
and are needed in smaller quantities than  
micronutrients.**

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**Macro- and micronutrients are important to health and well-being and are found in different foods.**

**Macronutrients are made up of vitamins and minerals and are needed in smaller quantities than micronutrients. Vitamins and minerals are essential nutrients that assure health, growth, and metabolism and are acquired through food. Most vitamins are not made in the body, and both vitamins and minerals are only found in small amounts in the body. Each vitamin and mineral has a specific function, and when too few of either are consumed deficiencies occur and can cause health problems (2.).**

**Vitamin A is essential for healthy vision, development of white blood cells, reproduction and growth. Foods that contain Vitamin A include carrots, broccoli, eggs, and fish. Deficiencies in Vitamin A can lead to blindness (2).**

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**The group of B vitamins are call folate and include folic acid and folates. Folic acid is a synthetic compound used to fortify foods. Folates are found in foods such as leafy greens, beans, milk and other dairy products, and orange juice. Folates are important in metabolizing amino acids, producing proteins, synthesizing nucleic acid, and forming blood cells. Deficiencies in folate can cause premature birth, birth defects, low birth weight, heart defects, and malformation of limbs, spinal cord, and brain (2).**

**Iodine is an essential nutrient found in iodized salt, water, seaweed, and fish. This mineral is essential for fetal brain development and hormone production. Iodine deficiencies can cause mental retardation, goiter, and impaired cognitive development (2).**

**Iron is a necessary nutrient because it carries oxygen from the lungs to other tissues in the body and**



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**aids enzyme reactions. Iron can be found in meat, lentils, leafy vegetables, and chickpeas. Iron deficiency can lead to anemia, which can cause illness and death, fatigue, and death during childbirth (2).**

**Zinc can be found in nuts, cereal, liver, eggs, and seafood. Zinc aids the immune system, and deficiencies may cause anemia, short stature, wounds to heal slowly, reproductive problems, impaired cognitive and motor function, and appetite disorders (2).**

**Micronutrients, protein, carbohydrates, and fat are also essential to health and well-being (2).**

**Micronutrients provide energy to the body.**

**Carbohydrates and fiber are derived from whole grains and fruits and vegetables. The body requires carbohydrates and fiber because, not only do they fuel the body, but feed the bacteria in the intestine.**

**Carbohydrates fuel red blood cells and aid in weight loss.**

**Fiber eases elimination and reduces the risk of intestinal and colorectal cancers and cardiovascular disease (12).**

**Protein contains essential amino acids that aid in bone and muscle tissue growth, build hormones, antibodies, and enzymes, and replace cells and cell structures. Certain proteins also transport fats, vitamins, minerals, and oxygen throughout the body and balance fluids and electrolytes (12). Protein can be found in foods like meat, legumes, nuts, milk, and eggs (13). Signs of protein deficiency include decelerated growth in children and impaired, brain, kidney, immune system, and digestive functions. Excess protein consumption may also cause kidney disease, cancer, and bone loss (12).**

**Contrary to popular belief, fats are an essential nutrient in maintaining health. However, there are good fats and bad fats. Good fats, poly- and monounsaturated,**

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**aid in removing LDL, bad, cholesterol from the body and may reduce the risk of cardiovascular and heart disease. Good fats can be found in foods such as olive oil, nuts, and avocados. Bad fats can be found in foods like meat, butter, and lard (12). The Mayo Clinic posts expert blogs that give more information on good and bad cholesterol, which can be found [here](#).**

**Every body requires macro and micronutrients to maintain health and prevent deficiencies. When we consume too many or not enough nutrients illness can occur. A balanced diet acquired from a variety of foods can help ensure health and proper nutrition.**

## **CHAPTER 5**

# **Digestion, Absorption, and Metabolism of the Macronutrients Carbohydrate, Protein, and Fat**

**Digestion and absorption is the way in which the  
body receives nutrients.**

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**Digestion and absorption is the way in which the body receives nutrients. “The macronutrients are the large (macro) molecules in food that provide our body with energy. The necessary macronutrients: carbohydrate, protein, and lipid each yield stored energy when released,” (7).**

**Digestion begins in the mouth and then moves through the major digestive organs: pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, and anus. The accessory digestive organs teeth, tongue, salivary glands, pancreas, liver and gallbladder aid in digestion (7). Each of these organs works to extract nutrients from food for use in the body.**

**Digestion of micro- and macronutrients begins in the mouth. The teeth work to break down the food into smaller pieces for easier digestion. Enzymes in saliva also break down food, and the water in saliva moistens**

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**the food (bolus) so it is easier to swallow and pass down the esophagus into the stomach (12).**

**In the stomach and intestines, acids liquefy and further break down the bolus through a squeezing action called peristalsis. The bolus is held and liquefied in the top part of the stomach and passed a little at a time to the lower stomach and intestines where it becomes chyme. By the time the bolus has reached the small intestine proteins and starches have begun to break down and fats have separated. At this point, carbohydrates can continue to be broken down to provide more energy, or they can become building blocks of protein or units of fat (12).**

**Most fat digestion takes place in the small intestine, at which time bile from the gallbladder emulsifies fat preparing it for enzyme action. Fatty acids are then absorbed by intestinal villi and enter into the**

**bloodstream. The small amount of cholesterol that reaches the large intestine becomes trapped in fiber and exits the body during elimination (12).**

**Protein digestion begins in the mouth with chewing and saliva, however, in the stomach, stomach acid alters protein by uncoiling the strands to better enable enzymes to attack the peptide bonds. In the small intestine, alkaline pancreatic juices neutralize stomach acid allowing enzymes to break down larger strands of protein. After the protein is broken down, cells of the small intestine absorb amino acids and send them to the bloodstream where amino acids are dispatched to the body's cells (12). Any product that cannot be used will be released from the large intestine in 18-24 hours (11).**

**Micro- and macronutrients are important to digestion and maintaining health. The body requires nutrients to perform essential bodily functions,**

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**including aiding in digestion.**



## **Bonus Chapters**

**This section includes 3 bonus chapters:**

- **Good Fats and Bad Fats**
- **8 Super Foods and the Diseases They Prevent**
- **The Couch Ain't Dat Comfortable**

## Good Fats and Bad Fats

Most people are concerned about their health but do not know where to start. One way to improve health and potentially lose weight is to stop [overeating](#).

Another way is to incorporate more good fats and less bad fats into your diet. Unfortunately, some people believe that all fats are bad and avoid them in their diets. However, according to the [American Heart Association](#), fats are an essential element in our diet. They provide energy and support cell growth. Fats also provide warmth and aid in nutrient absorption and hormone production. Therefore, you need to know the difference between good fats and bad fats in order to help improve your diet.

### Bad Fats

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**Bad fats, such as butter and meat fat, contain saturated and trans fats which increase LDL (bad) cholesterol.**

### **Good Fats**

**Good fats, such as those found in liquid oils like [canola, olive, and avocado](#), reduce the amount of LDL (bad) and increase HDL (good) cholesterol in the body.**

**As with all things, moderation is the key. Eating a diet high in fat and too many calories can cause weight gain. The trick is to balance calorie intake with physical activity, modify or reduce your fat intake, and eating a variety of foods to ensure adequate nutrient consumption.**

## **5 Super Foods and the Diseases They Prevent**

### **Five Super Foods You Should Have in Your Diet**

1. **Garlic**: Garlic, as well as onions, chives, shallots, leeks, and scallions, belong to the genus *Allium*. These foods offer numerous health benefits. Garlic is known to be used as a powerful antibiotic. Additionally, garlic aids in the prevention of numerous diseases including lung cancer, brain cancer, heart damage, prostate cancer, and aids in improving cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

2. **Tomatoes**: They contain lycopene and lutein, which are carotenoids, that protect the eyes from

**damage produced by light. Consuming tomatoes can also protect against cancer, aid in maintaining healthy blood pressure, and help diabetics reduce blood glucose levels. Additionally, cooked or stewed tomatoes contain more key nutrients than raw tomatoes (that's right, pizza time!). As an excellent source of vitamin C and antioxidants, tomatoes also combat the formation of free radicals which can reduce risk factors associated with prostate and colorectal cancers, improve or maintain heart health, and reduce constipation, among other benefits.**

**3. Berries: Berries are not only delicious, but they are good for you, too! Rich in antioxidants, they help control damaging free radicals and reduce inflammation. Berries can protect against high blood sugar levels and have been shown to reduce blood sugar and improve insulin response in high-carbohydrate**

**diets. Berries are high in nutrients including vitamin C, manganese, vitamin K, copper, folate, and fiber. They are also beneficial in lowering cholesterol and improving or maintaining heart health.**

**4. [Avocado](#): Who doesn't love avocado (besides my daughter and my husband)? Here are just a few more reasons to love this fruit: They are nutrient-rich and contain high amounts of vitamin K, folate, vitamin C, potassium, vitamin B5, vitamin B6, vitamin E, and fiber. They are contain higher amounts of potassium than bananas. While a high fat food, a majority of the fat is oleic acid, which is a monounsaturated fatty acid that reduces inflammation and has a beneficial effect on genes associated with cancer. Additionally, the fat in avocados can improve nutrient absorption from plant-based foods. Avocados are also beneficial in lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels and increasing levels**

**of good cholesterol, which reduces inflammation and improves blood pressure. Finally, they contain high amounts of antioxidants which can help protect your eyes and may inhibit the growth of cancer cells, specifically prostate cancer.**

**5. [Watermelon](#): Watermelon is another delicious food you should put on your grocery list. It is nutrient dense and contains high amounts of vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, and calcium, as well as many other nutrients. Watermelon is 90 percent water so it helps keep you hydrated. It is also beneficial in decreasing the risk of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, as well as aiding in digestion and improving regularity. The vitamins and nutrients in watermelon can help prevent asthma, cancer, inflammation, reduce muscle soreness, and improve the health of your skin and hair.**

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**It is important to remember not to consume too much of a certain food or nutrient. Eating a variety of foods can help to ensure proper nutrition and reduce the chances of malnutrition.**



## **The Couch Ain't Dat Comfortable**

**A question that often comes up when people are considering change is: How do I even start? One answer is, begin with the problem that you find is the most painful. Many issues may be causing pain in your life, but there is one that hurts the most. This is the one you want to start with to begin the process of change and improving yourself. Taking on too much at one time can be overwhelming and cause procrastination or prevent you from even beginning at all, which can result in stress. So, you'll have at least three stressors at this point: the thing that you want to change, overwhelm, and the stress that occurs with procrastination.**

**Before I continue the how, I should tell you the why. Procrastination is harmful to your well-being and overall health. Studies have shown that “...people who procrastinate have higher levels of stress and lower well-**

being,” ([Jaffe](#)). Procrastination is complicated because it is more than just putting something off; it is failure to self-regulate. Individuals who procrastinate are more likely to perform poorly and have higher amounts of stress and illness than those who don’t (Jaffe).

Stress can be harmful to your mental and physical health and, if left untreated, can cause high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

These are only a couple of reasons why you should act on your desire to change, now the how. First, you must want to change. If you are trying to change for someone else, it probably won’t last. You must do it for yourself. You should also make it as enjoyable as possible. For example, you want to lose weight but the thought of going to the gym makes you nauseated. You might want to consider replacing “exercise” with something fun like hiking or sports, whatever physical

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**activity you enjoy. However, if you're like me and the thought of exercise (at all) makes you slide deeper into your sheets, try whatever you find least offensive. I have tried many different activities and hated them or wasn't very good at them and too embarrassed to continue, until I discovered yoga. I found videos (Shout out to [Yoga with Adriene](#)) on YouTube that you can do in the comfort of your own home. I also invested in an inexpensive rowing machine because it is fun (to me, anyway) and gives you a full body workout.**

**Next, make it a habit. Set aside some time at least 5 days per week, 30-60 minutes per day (after you get the okay from your healthcare provider). If it has been awhile since you have exercised, you might want to start out slow and work up to 30-60 minutes per day. Maybe you start out walking around the block for 15 minutes and move on from there.**

**Finally, don't be too hard on yourself! If you backslide it's no big deal, just start again. We all have days that we just can't even and nope through the day. It happens. But the more you do it, the better you will feel. You have to own your life and be accountable for what you do (or don't do). It is up to you to effect the change that you desire!**

**So,**

- **Get off the couch**
- **Be accountable**
- **Establish a routine**
- **Do something you enjoy**

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