Making nutrition work for you

The first vitamin was discovered in 1897. Since then we have learned a lot about nutrition but there is much more waiting to be discovered. Nutrition is still a relatively young science. However, we do know that what we decide to fuel our bodies with can have a profound impact on energy levels, how well we fend off illness and how we feel from day to day.



It's easy to feel confused by some of the seemingly conflicting nutrition advice out there. There are lots of mixed messages to sort through about how you should eat. Often the latest nutrition news will make headlines, but nutrition findings have to stand the test of time before they are considered confirmed.

Registered Dietitians can help you make sense of the nutrition information available and translate the scientific evidence into practical guidelines that accommodate your preferences and lifestyle.

Common barriers to eating well

Consumer interest in nutrition is soaring and many believe that nutrition is an important part of their lives. But nutrition is still often overlooked when other daily activities take precedence. Lack of time, knowledge, support and energy all contribute to poor diets. These are some of the most common barriers to good nutrition:

- A busy schedule interfering with attempts at healthy eating.
- Skipping meals only to overeat at night.
- Lacking the energy to devote to eating well.
- There's nothing in the refrigerator.
- Turning to food when stressed, bored or tired.
- Fluctuating between periods of sensible eating and unhealthy eating.
- Lack of time or confidence for choosing a healthy diet.

Eating well to get the most out of life

Fueling your body with healthy food is well worth the investment. Check out these rewards:

- Increased energy level.
- Successful weight management.
- Increased mental energy.
- Improved physical performance.
- Stronger immune system.
- Increased ability to handle stress.
- Decreased risk of heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Basic principles of a healthy diet

There are a few basic principles that can kick start a healthier eating style. Try the following:

Eat a good breakfast. Breakfast gets your body and mind revved up and ready to go. Breakfast eaters tend to be more successful at weight management, have fewer cravings, eat less at night and have higher intakes of certain vitamins and minerals. So take 10 minutes to start your day with a bowl of cereal and fruit, a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of milk or a bagel with low fat cheese and a glass of juice.

Eat regularly. Skipping meals sets you up to overeat at night. Fuelling up regularly, every 4-6 hours, helps keep energy level high and prevents overeating later in the day. For most people this means three meals per day and one or two snacks.

Make low fat, high carbohydrate selections. Some fat is essential for good health, but overdoing it can increase the risks of weight gain, heart disease and certain cancers. High fat diets can also make you tired and sluggish. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends plenty of whole grain cereals, breads and other grain products, fruits and vegetables, choosing lower fat milk products more often and leaner meats, poultry and fish. Include some low fat protein selections like chickpeas, kidney beans and lentils. Invest in a low fat cookbook for some new, tasty and interesting meals.

Hydrate. Water is involved in almost every process in the body so if you're not getting enough, your body won't function at potential. Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of dehydration. So just by drinking enough water, you can boost energy. Aim for 6-8 cups a day of water or other hydrating fluids.

Five a day! That's the magic number of servings of fruits and vegetables you are recommended to eat daily. If you eat more than this—even better! Fruits and vegetables help to stave off heart disease, cancer and have been linked to helping control high blood pressure. Load up that shopping cart with fresh produce and have canned and frozen fruits and vegetables on hand for easy access. Grab some fruit to take to work or have it stocked at the office for a quick snack during the day.

Variety matters. If your diet lacks variety it may also lack nutrients. By eating different foods you gain the special benefits that each has to offer. Enjoy foods with different tastes, textures and colours. Variety is the spice of life, so enjoy!

It's easy to become confused by nutritional headlines, but the basics of nutrition are time-tested and simple. Try implementing these necessities of nutrition and watch as your body and mind thank you with good health and energy.