

What is NUTRITION?



Nutrition is a complex science that includes the study of food preparation and service, economics, social work, psychology, biochemistry, anatomy and physiology, biology, immunology, medicine, food science, technology and many other topics. We eat about 70,000 meals or 60 tons of food in our lifetime. Considering this, nutrition has a huge impact on our health and ability to fight disease. We often hear the word “diet” which makes us feel like something is being taken away but it actually means the “sum total of all we eat” or all of our nutrition, *good or bad*.

The American Medical Association’s Food & Nutrition Council defines “Nutrition” as **the science of food, the nutrients, and the substances therein; their action, interaction and balance in relation to health and disease, and the process by which the body ingests, digests, absorbs, transports, utilizes and excretes food substances**. Sounds pretty complicated but simply it means everything that you eat, what it contains and how your body uses these substances whether you are sick or well.



Nutrition is always based on food but supplements and medications must also be taken into consideration as these can alter how your body uses the food and substances you eat. Some of the substances that are contained in food are called “Essential Nutrients”. These must be obtained from food as the body cannot make them or cannot make them in large enough amounts, so, these are *essential for life*.

There are six groups of essential nutrients including: **Carbohydrate, Protein, Lipids (Fats), Vitamins, Minerals, and Water**. Our bodies require that we get adequate amounts of all of these in order to function well.

There are other substances contained in the food that we eat that are not classified as nutrients and yet they have a beneficial impact on health. These include compounds such as dietary fiber, and plant chemicals, also called phytochemicals. Dietary fiber is actually a type of carbohydrate which our body cannot digest but make it work harder and more efficiently, ultimately, becoming healthier. Phytochemicals are substances which are in plant foods and each has a individual beneficial effect, many acting as antioxidants or chemicals which prevent damage to the body’s tissues.

Remember that nutrition affects your present and future health and good nutrition leads to a better quality of life. Learn more about nutrition to make healthier food choices. This will allow you to fight infection, strengthen your body, delay the onset of chronic disease and enjoy a better quality of life.



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