



How Is It that We Eat More and Get Less?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), more than 80% of women and 70% of men consume less than two-thirds of the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) for one or more essential nutrients.

Why We're Getting Fewer Nutrients

What are nutrients?

There are two types of nutrients. Macronutrients include proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Micronutrients include vitamins and minerals found in dietary sources that fuel proper body functioning, such as vitamins A, C, B₁₂, D, calcium, magnesium, and iron.

Why is it most of us don't get enough nutrients?

Reason #1: We eat empty calories (foods that contain little nutritional value), such as:

Heavily Processed Foods, Baked Goods, Soda, Candy, and Desserts

Reason #2: Most people don't know that many aspects of daily living can increase the level of nutrients your body needs, accelerate nutrient losses, or impair proper nutrient absorption. These include:

Antacids—Certain antacids might block the absorption of nutrients such as calcium or iron. Long-term antacid use in some cases has been associated with nutritional deficiencies.

Caffeine—The tannins in coffee and tea can interfere with absorption of calcium, iron, magnesium, and B vitamins. Because caffeine has a diuretic action, it also might deplete nutrients such as vitamin B₆. Caffeine can also increase emotional stress (see Emotional Stress below), increase cravings for unhealthy foods, and cause heartburn (see Antacids above).

Surgery—Recovery from surgery (like any illness or injury) requires additional nutrients, such as protein and antioxidants. Some surgical procedures (gastric bypass, intestinal resection) can also permanently affect dietary absorption of important nutrients such as vitamin B₁₂.

Pregnancy—Mothers need additional nutrients such as folic acid in pregnancy. Nutritional deficiencies may force the mother and fetus to compete for nutrients and might lead to complications for either or both. Nutrient depletion also sets the stage for post-partum ailments such as depression.

Influenza (the Flu)—A body depleted of nutrients not only makes a better host for infectious diseases like the flu but also increases the body's need for antioxidants (E, C, beta carotene) found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. A healthy balance of intestinal bacteria also positively influences the body's immune system and can be fostered by a healthy diet and probiotics.

Emotional Stress—In addition to physical stress, the body might encounter increased nutritional needs (like vitamin C) due to emotional stress—which can also cause unhealthy eating. And a poor diet—lacking in protein, Essential Fatty Acids, and key vitamins—on its own can be the cause of emotional stress. Stress also restricts the body's flow of blood (which carries nutrients) by tightening muscles.

Prescription/OTC Drugs—Corticosteroids can inhibit calcium absorption, birth control pills and hormone replacement therapy can deplete B vitamins, statin medications can deplete essential CoQ10, and certain weight loss drugs or "fat blockers" can reduce the absorption of other nutrients—just to name a few. Plus, some foods and nutritional supplements should be taken separately from certain medications. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for details.

Your Doctor Might Recommend...



Supplements for Better Health

Along with a healthy eating plan, regular exercise, adequate rest and relaxation, your physician might recommend specific supplements to ensure you receive enough nutrients. Some of the things he or she might recommend are:

EFAs

Essential fatty acids (EFAs, such as omega-3 found in fish, flaxseeds, and walnuts) are important for about every function in our bodies. Unlike the fat contained in cookies and cakes, these fats (when taken properly) can have a dramatic effect on health and vitality. And, since it's difficult to get all the EFAs we might need from foods without eating large quantities of fish, a supplement is often recommended.

Probiotics

We've been hearing a lot about these recently. The term *probiotic* refers to friendly bacteria that live in our intestines. It may not sound too appealing, but these friendly bacteria work hard to keep us healthy by aiding in our digestion, supporting regular bowel movements, and supporting our immune systems. While certain yogurts have certified "live and active" bacteria cultures, they might also contain a lot of sugar, fruit syrups, and empty calories.

Fiber

Americans are averaging about 10 grams-15 grams of fiber per day; the recommended intake by health organizations is 20 grams-35 grams. Fiber also has broad-ranging health effects like supporting a healthy colon and cholesterol levels, and aiding in managing weight. It's important to add fiber supplements slowly in graduated amounts with plenty of fluids to allow your digestive system to adjust.

Meal Replacement

A nutritious beverage containing optimal ratios of protein, carbohydrates, fat, and other essential nutrients can work to help stabilize blood sugar levels and prevent hunger surges and cravings. And, with the busy schedules most of us keep these days, a good meal replacement can save us time.

What you need to know about quality

You should understand that not all nutritional supplement manufacturers meet the same standards. It's best to look for companies that are certified by the Natural Products Association and NSF for Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs). These companies are audited to ensure good manufacturing practices are followed and, therefore, quality products are produced. Be sure to ask your healthcare provider to recommend a brand of safe and effective supplements manufactured by a company with history, longevity, respect in the marketplace, and certified GMP manufacturing.