

PERSONALBEST
WELLNESS REINVENTED

FOOD IS MEDICINE



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Food is Medicine

Ever since food was stuffed into a can in the 19th century for military usage, convenience foods have held a space in our cupboards and a place in our hearts. The 'invention' of the TV dinner in the early 1950s, followed by the introduction of the 'frozen dinner' and the 'microwave meal' provided the foundations of an industry that saw £4.7 billion spent on ready-to-eat convenience meals in the UK alone last year!*

TASK: Below are three words we hear and use every day, but what do these three words mean to you?

FOOD - DIET - NUTRITION

FOOD

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DIET

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NUTRITION

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*Source, Euromonitor

These are the definitions according to the Oxford English Dictionary:

FOOD - NOUN

mass noun

Any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink, or that plants absorb, in order to maintain life and growth.

DIET - NOUN

The kinds of food that a person, animal, or community habitually eats.

'a vegetarian diet'

Or

A special course of food to which a person restricts themselves, either to lose weight or for medical reasons.

'I'm going on a diet'

DIET - VERB

diets, dieting, dieted

Restricting oneself to small amounts or special kinds of food in order to lose weight.

'I began dieting again'

NUTRITION - NOUN

The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.

'a guide to good nutrition'

Whilst convenience foods have developed and refined to match current food trends such as vegan and gluten free, whilst offering consumers a greater choice and healthier options, there is still a huge lack of understanding as to what constitutes a healthy diet.

You may have been shocked to have heard the recent news that a teenager has been left blind and deaf after living off a diet of chips, crisps and sausages. Although an extremely rare case, the teenager in question suffers from an eating disorder known as ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder). According to eating disorder charity Beat, those suffering from the condition often avoid food with a certain texture, smell, taste or appearance, or only eat food at a certain temperature.



"When this behaviour starts as a child it tends to continue as an adult. Processed food was not the problem per se. It was that he was only eating that type of food and nothing else. Nutrients are extremely important for vision and hearing – but a lot of people are not aware of that." Dr Atan, of University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust.

Although this case is rather extreme, it highlights a trend that has a global reach. For the first time in China's history, the number of people who are overweight now exceed those who are underweight. In his book *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*, Michael Moss goes on to inform how the obesity rate in Mexico has tripled in the past three decades and how over 60% of adults and 30% of children in the UK are overweight, while the United States remains the most obese country in the world.

In our hectic lives and supermarket driven 'distractions', it could be argued that our relationship with food has become slightly skewed. Diet is something we do when we need to lose weight, nutrition is for athletes and the healthy, whilst food is for filling us up.

Food is way more than fuel; it should be nutritious, and our diet should contain all the nutrients required to maintain health, life and growth.

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Hippocrates was so far ahead of the game when, around the year 400 BC, he observed that to prevent and treat diseases, first and foremost, we should eat a nutrient-dense diet.

Are you as healthy as you would like to be?

What does your 'diet' look like?

As many of us are rarely more than a few metres away from our phones, try this exercise for a week: Each time you eat something, pause before eating and take a photo. At the end of the week, you will have a clearer and more honest picture of what you really eat.

Food for thought...

If your body was a machine that could print £50 notes at will, infinitum, but required regular exercise, 8 hours sleep and a healthy diet, then it's likely your thoughts and lifestyle choices might change.

Try to shift your focus away from how you may look to how good can you feel.

What does your body require to work at its optimum?

You are what you eat.

Food is an important part of our lives, not only does it provide the energy and nutrition our body requires in order to function, it provides a social opportunity for us to gather with friends and share our time and thoughts. Food can also act as a supporting mechanism. How often have you reached for chocolate when you are feeling low, or craved a coffee when you are feeling tired?

But can food be medicine? As we have seen, certain patterns of eating can lead us to poor health and in the most extreme cases, disease. It is sad to say that these patterns of eating are adopted by the majority in developed countries. Technology and creative thinking have turned many foods into something that are unrecognisable from their original form but taste delicious. These modified foods often contain the 'Golden Trilogy' of Fat, Sugar and Salt, making consumers want to eat even more of them.

So, what should you eat?

The science...

Based on research by the World Health Organisation, we should be consuming essential nutrients that come from a food source as they are vital for disease prevention, growth, and good health.

These essential nutrients can be broken into two categories: macronutrients and micronutrients.

Macronutrients are eaten in large amounts and are the cornerstone of your diet. They are protein, carbohydrates and fat, all of which provide your body with energy.

(Hardly any food contains only one nutrient, most are a combination of carbohydrates, fats and proteins)

Micronutrients are made up of vitamins and minerals.

Carbohydrates

So, what are carbohydrates and are they good or bad? Carbs fuel our bodies, and are essential for good health. But before you reach for the white bread or pasta, keep in mind that the type of carbohydrate you eat matters. Some carbs are healthier than others. The three different carbohydrates found in food are sugar, starch and fibre.



To try to understand carbohydrates better, think of them as either “whole” or “refined.”

Whole carbs are unprocessed and contain the fibre found naturally in the food, while refined carbs have been processed and had the natural fibre stripped out.

Examples of whole carbs include vegetables, whole fruit, legumes, potatoes and whole grains. These foods are generally healthy.

On the other hand, refined carbs include sugar-sweetened beverages, fruit juices, pastries, white bread, white pasta, white rice and others.

- Try to eat a variety of vegetables every day.
- **Whole fruits:** Apples, bananas, strawberries, kiwis, etc.
- **Legumes:** Lentils, kidney beans, peas, chickpeas, etc.
- **Nuts:** Almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, macadamias, almonds, peanuts, etc.
- **Seeds:** Chia, sunflower, flax, pumpkin, sesame seeds, etc.
- **Whole grains:** Oats, quinoa, brown rice, etc.



Protein

Protein is not just for bodybuilders! Every cell in the human body from bone, muscle, skin and hair contains protein. Protein is used primarily for growth, health, and body maintenance.

Proteins are made of up different amino acids, and whilst the body can create these on its own, there are many essential amino acids that can only come from food. Your body needs a variety of amino acids to function properly.

Fats

Fats often get a bad rap, but recent research has shown that healthy fats are an important part of a healthy diet. It might be high in calories, but those calories are an important energy source for your body. According to Harvard Medical School, fat supports many of your body's functions such as vitamin and mineral absorption, blood clotting, building cells, and muscle movement.

The most well known unsaturated fats are Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. Unsaturated fats are important for your body as they provide essential fatty acids your body can't make. You can find these healthy fats in nuts, seeds, fish, vegetable oils (e.g. olive, avocado), avocado and eggs.

Fish such as salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines and herring are loaded with heart-healthy Omega-3 fatty acids, high quality proteins and a variety of important nutrients.

Try to limit your intake of saturated animal-based fats like butter, cheese, red meat, and ice cream.



Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamins are essential for healthy vision, skin, and bones and are vital for staying healthy. There are 13 essential vitamins that the body needs to function properly, including vitamins A, C, B6, and D. As each vitamin plays an important role in the body, not getting enough of them can cause health problems and disease.

You should aim to eat a varied, well-balanced diet full of vegetables and fruits to ensure a good intake of vitamins and minerals.

Minerals are essential for many body functions, including building strong bones and teeth, regulating your metabolism, and staying properly hydrated. The great news is that many common foods contain multiple mineral and vitamin sources, so you can meet your daily needs from everyday meals.

For example, **calcium** can be found in many dairy foods (e.g. milk and cheese), broccoli, cabbage, soya beans, nuts and sardines. Many dairy free alternative drinks such as almond milk are fortified with calcium.

Examples of foods which contain **iron** are shellfish, spinach, broccoli, organ meats (e.g. liver), legumes and quinoa.

So, what are you going to have for dinner tonight?

We are not advocating that you ditch processed food and switch to a plant-based diet, just become more conscious of the choices you make.

Try to eat foods that are close to their natural form, as these will be more nutrient dense.

Try to think ahead before going to the supermarket, because at the end of a long working day you will be tired and decision-making may be poor.

Create a menu plan for the week and make a shopping list.

Don't be tempted by the 'special offers' in the supermarket. Focus on the outer edges of the supermarket as this is where the fresh food is found. But remember, *"Everything in moderation, including moderation."* Oscar Wilde