



Functional Nutrition Fundamentals: Eating Your Way to Better Health

Functional Nutrition, What Is It and Why Does It Matter?

Functional nutrition is about finding the right way for each of us to eat—using food to maximize the potential for health and reverse dysfunction or disease. There is no single “right diet” that applies to everyone. We have different genetic backgrounds, different preferences, and different lives. We all want to be healthy, but many of us haven’t figured out exactly how to make food and dietary patterns serve that goal. Functional nutrition offers the concepts, strategies, and tools to make that happen.

Functional Nutrition Fundamentals

- **For untold centuries, humans have relied on the food supply as a source of energy, health, and connection.** However, in the last seven decades, changes in the food supply (and in how we use it) have contributed strongly to the growing epidemic of chronic disease. Functional nutrition developed out of a desire on the part of healthcare providers to change that picture.
- **Emerging science is very clear that food is a powerful influence on health.** Food offers not only the calories that fuel our body’s metabolism (engine), but it also contains many diverse components that play important roles in all our bodily functions. Poor-quality food can actually create disease, and high-quality food—in the right proportions and amounts—can reverse disease and sustain health. In a very real sense, food is medicine!

How Food Affects Our Health

- **There are three basic elements in foods:**
 - **macronutrients:** the proteins, fats, and carbohydrates that are the building blocks of all food
 - **micronutrients:** vitamins and minerals
 - **phytonutrients:** substances in plants that have a positive effect on health
- **The abundance of processed foods has negatively impacted our nutrition and health.** Food manufacturing practices like stripping whole grains of their fiber, adding sweeteners and excessive salt to foods, and applying toxic chemical to agriculture can have a negative impact on our health. When processed foods are eaten regularly, they can make us sick.
- **Food is actually information, not just energy or calories.** Food actually tells our bodies how to function by signaling exactly when and how each different type of cell should behave in every situation. So, we want the very best information to reach our cells in order to achieve optimal functioning.
- **Food represents connection.** Examples of how food connects us include families preparing and eating food together, affirming cultural bonds, enjoying celebrations and ceremonies.

How Does Functional Nutrition Work?

Functional nutrition emphasizes healthful eating personalized to YOUR genetics, lifestyle, environment, and health concerns. Functional nutrition offers effective strategies and tools to improve your health, including recipes and recommendations about cooking and food storage methods, as well as steps to achieve mindful eating.

When you work with a functional nutrition practitioner to help you understand and implement your personalized food plan, you will have access to a wealth of additional information to educate and support you in adopting a new approach to food and nutrition. Your provider will also determine whether other interventions are needed.

Changing eating behaviors isn't easy, even after you are well informed about what to do. There will be ups and downs. But, unlike a diet, these changes are not harsh restrictions on your eating and they do not involve counting calories or depriving yourself of delicious, satisfying food. They are scientifically sound approaches that can benefit you for a lifetime! In fact, if you begin with a few basic concepts, you will already be on your path: **eat fresh, eat color, eat texture,** and (from, best-selling author Michael Pollan) **eat real food, not too much, mostly plants.**

Welcome to functional nutrition—the most effective way to harness the energy, information, and connections of food to create health and reverse disease!

Food Is...

