

balance

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Holistic nutrition: Eating for mind, body and soul

In today's fast-paced, high-demand world, we have become a culture focused on convenience and that includes how we eat. When hunger strikes, it's much easier to open a can, unwrap a package or pop a lid than it is to actually prepare a fresh meal. But according to holistic nutritionists, the cost of convenience is not so much the impact on your pocketbook, as it is the impact on your *health*. With the epidemic rise of obesity and diabetes, the link to your health and what you eat has taken centre stage and many are looking to holistic nutrition as a way to not only feed their bodies but heal themselves as well.

What is holistic nutrition?

Holistic nutrition is all about eating healthy food as close to its natural state as possible for optimum health and well-being. Hallmarks of holistic nutrition include unrefined, unprocessed, organic and locally grown whole foods. It's an approach to eating that very consciously considers everything that's eaten and focuses on eating for health above all else.

Top health benefits of a holistic diet

Holistic nutritionists believe that food is not only fuel, but medicine for the body. As once stated by Hippocrates, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food," which is a principle embraced and promoted by holistic nutritionists. By following a holistic nutrition plan, you may experience a number of health benefits, such as the following:

- Weight loss and weight management
- Disease prevention
- Increased energy levels
- Improved mood
- Better sleep
- Improved skin tone and texture
- Strengthened immune system
- Balanced blood sugar levels
- Reduced cholesterol and blood pressure levels
- Improved digestion and relief from constipation

Additionally, holistic nutritionists believe that many chronic illnesses can be prevented or improved through diet, and promote the use of holistic nutrition to manage conditions such as:

- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Arthritis
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Cancer
- Colitis
- Gout

Looking for additional support? Your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EFAP at 1 800 387-4765 or visit workhealthlife.com.

At its core, holistic nutrition is designed to heal the body, mind and soul so that you can achieve ultimate health.

Is holistic nutrition right for you?

Food in its natural state is what humans were meant to eat, but over the decades convenience has nudged out some of these healthier choices. While eating an exclusively holistic diet can be overwhelming and inconvenient for some, making small changes can make a big difference.

If you're interested in dabbling in holistic nutrition, start small by replacing pop with water or fresh organic juices, shop at your local farmer's market, buy organic when you can, and avoid packaged foods whenever possible.

Remember to talk to your doctor before making any significant changes to your diet, especially if you're considering holistic nutrition to manage or improve a chronic illness.

Holistic nutrition: 10 principles for healthier eating

The key to holistic nutrition is eating natural foods – unprocessed, whole, organic foods – whenever possible. So whether you're interested in tweaking your diet with new holistic options, or are ready to completely overhaul your eating regime, these 10 principles will help point you in the right direction for better health. You can cherry pick a few or try them all – the key is to consider your diet now and make sustainable changes that you can stick with.

Eat whole, raw foods: This is nutrition in its simplest form and is as easy as it sounds. For a healthy snack, eat an apple, banana, carrot, celery, grapes, melon, avocado, or your favourite fruit or vegetable the way nature intended – raw and unprocessed!

Go organic: Avoid pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics and hormones in your food by selecting organic options whenever possible. Plus, organic food tastes better and may be more nutritious.

Lose the sweet tooth: Refined and artificial sweeteners may taste sweet, but their impact on your health is anything but. It will take time, but by replacing sugar, corn syrup and sweeteners with naturally sweet alternatives like fruit, you will reap significant health improvements.

Drink your water: There's nothing new here – eight glasses a day is recommended by holistic nutritionists to promote good digestion and health. However, avoid (or significantly reduce) pop, alcohol and all caffeinated beverages.

Reduce your sodium intake: Sodium is one of the key factors in developing hypertension or high blood pressure. Although the ideal daily sodium consumption is between 1,500 and 2,300 milligrams, most people eat much more than they should. Reduce your salt intake by avoiding processed food and by keeping the salt shaker off the dinner table.

Buy local produce: Produce that's grown locally not only looks and tastes better; it's also more nutritious. In fact, it's often better to eat local, fresh produce that's not certified organic than it is to buy certified organic food that was shipped a long distance. Consider growing some of your own fruits and veggies, or visit your farmer's market for local produce.

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Eliminate white flour: Many holistic nutritionists will recommend the elimination of all wheat from the diet. If this isn't an ideal option for you, go with whole grain options instead when purchasing cereals, breads, rice or pasta since the white varieties are stripped of most of their nutrition and fibre.

Eat healthy fats: Healthy fats are important for good health, so be sure to incorporate moderate amounts of organic cold-pressed oils like extra virgin olive oil or flax seed oil in your meal preparation. For high-heat cooking, select oils that can stand up to the heat such as organic canola or coconut oil. However, avoid trans fats from hydrogenated oils, and saturated animal fats from red meat and dairy products.

Watch your portions: Even when you're eating healthy food, it's still important to be mindful of your portion size. A serving of meat should be about the same size as a deck of cards, while a healthy serving of pasta is about a half a cup (uncooked).

Everything in moderation: Food is one of life's greatest pleasures. Have fun with food, indulge in a treat occasionally and give yourself permission to enjoy your favourite, not-so-healthy meal once in a while. Healthy eating shouldn't be about deprivation – it's about making good choices most of the time for sustained success.

Resources:

<http://www.holistichelp.net/holistic-nutrition.html>

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/167813-definition-of-holistic-nutrition/>

<http://www.howtothings.com/health-and-fitness/a3293-how-to-apply-holistic-nutrition-principles-to-your-diet.html>

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09354.html>

<http://www.holistic-wellness-basics.com/holistic-nutrition.html>

<http://www.myfamilyhomeopath.ca/Nutrition.html>

<http://www.holistichelp.net/holistic-nutrition.html>

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