

What is Functional Nutrition and why does it matter?

Functional Nutrition is about finding the right way for each of us as individuals 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 all have different genetic backgrounds, different dietary preferences, and different lives. We all want to be healthy, but figuring out how to make food and dietary patterns serve that goal can be difficult. Functional Nutrition offers the concepts, strategies, and tools to make that happen.

FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION FUNDAMENTALS

■ **For centuries, humans have relied on the food supply as a source of energy, health, and connection.**

However, in the last six or seven decades, changes in the food supply (and 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, but it also contains many diverse components that play important roles in all our bodily functions. In certain proportions and amounts, poor-quality food can influence or create disease, and high-quality food 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 our diets:**

- **Macronutrients**—the proteins, fats, and carbohydrates that are the building blocks of all food
- **Micronutrients**—vitamins and minerals
- **Phytonutrients**—plant-derived substances that have a positive effect on health

■ **Processed foods in the food supply interfere with the function of those basic elements.** Processing practices include hydrogenating oils, adding sugar and sweeteners to foods, processing and bleaching grains, applying toxic agricultural chemicals to crops, and

using trans fats in food manufacturing. These practices may increase the shelf life of food, make food look prettier, or make food taste sweeter. However, when they are the main component of a steady diet, they have the potential to cause harm and make us sick.

■ **Food is information, not just energy (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 IS MORE THAN ENERGY AND INFORMATION

■ **Food also represents connection.** In most cultures, food plays a major role in familial bonding, celebrations, and ceremonies. Through food, we connect with friends and family, and the memories we make with them are often recalled when smelling or tasting familiar foods. The action of eating also integrates the mind with the

body, and this mind-body connection influences how we experience the world around us.

■ **The loss of the shared family meal with food prepared from scratch** has been part of the transformation that is feeding the chronic disease cycle.

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 weekly food and shopping schedules, healthful 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 from your healthcare team, 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 specialized dietary approaches or 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. Unlike diets, these changes are not harsh, short-term 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...

