

## Two Key Nutrition Principles that Can Increase the Health of the Population

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When it comes to nutrition, there are so many diet philosophies, misconceptions, and obsessions that the goal often gets lost. The public spends a lot of time researching the “right diet” to consume, but they often walk away more confused than enlightened. They also don’t find a lot of direction during doctor appointments because unfortunately, not much has changed with physician’s education about nutrition in medical school and they are admittedly uninformed with what to say.

Although human nutrition has become a complicated topic to unfold, especially with the newer field of nutrigenomics, there are some truths that will likely never change. Of course continued research is needed to understand how targeted nutrition can help a person with their unique needs and goals, but even without research everyone should be able to agree on the basic goals of human nutrition, right? No matter the food philosophy a person would like to support or thrives on, I believe there is a neutral ground everyone can find in common.

For example, regardless of if a person would like to follow the vegan diet or a ketogenic diet, common sense tells us that the following are nutritional truths that can be agreed upon:

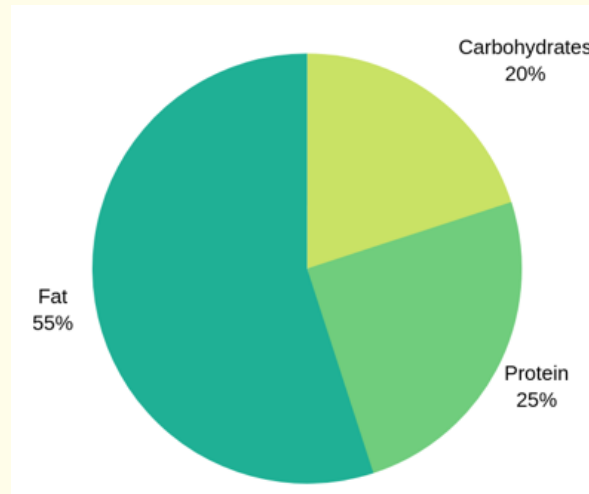
- Eat foods that look like where they come from.
- Cook from scratch using mostly foods without nutrition labels.
- Non-GMO/organic foods are the safest choices.
- Eat when you’re hungry, stop when you’re full.
- Balance the diet with a variety of macro and micronutrient sources.
- Eat mostly vegetables, always pick from the rainbow of colors.

These basics are not groundbreaking concepts and most health care professionals can agree on these, I’m sure. What I’ve noticed in my own practice is that there are two nutrition principles I teach that make the biggest impact on a person’s health outcome. No matter what diet they adhere to, food allergies/sensitivities, or preferences they have, there are 2 instructions a person can follow that tend to make the biggest improvement in health. These are: macronutrient balance and food quality. I’m proposing that if we overlay the following goals as a sort of template over the patient’s existing diet, a person’s health would improve tremendously.

### Macronutrient balance and food quality and their impact on health

#### Macronutrient balance

Counting calories is not the primary goal when educating patients how to manage their food intake. While quantity *does* play a role in energy metabolism, it’s not the most impactful number to track. We need to understand that health is not guided just by quantity of food eaten but rather what it’s composed of.



**Figure 1**

The biggest impact I make on a patient's health is by managing their macronutrient ratios, not calories. There are three macronutrients that all food can be categorized as: protein, fat and carbohydrates. Note that managing these will have nothing to do with the diet philosophy that one has, it can be thought of as a template to overlay on any type of diet a person wishes to follow.

Most functional/alternative/holistic medicine practitioners and researchers agree that a lower carbohydrate, higher fat, and moderate protein diet is what the human body thrives on. Evidence reveals that a high carbohydrate diet can lead to elevated blood sugars which can cause systemic inflammation and damage [1]. Conversely, it's noted that a lower carbohydrate diet can improve serum lipid balance, reverse type 2 and gestational diabetes, reduce systemic inflammation symptoms, improve energy and absolutely cause weight loss [2].

The pie chart above is an appropriate ratio for most people to start with, although it may feel rather strict for those who are eating very high carbohydrates! It's important to emphasize that the goal is not to get too caught up in numbers but to use these settings as goals to aim for: 20% total carbohydrate, 25% protein, and 55% fat. The best way for someone to know what their personal chart would look like is to download a smart phone app like Carb Manager, set it to the above macronutrient ratio goals, and enter everything that's consumed in a day within those limits. This is a great tool to teach patient's which foods belong in each category and how to better balance their meals.

### Food quality

Ancient eastern wisdom along with functional/alternative/holistic medical practitioners of the world understands that food holds more meaning than just calories to provide energy. Food is information to our bodies. Every molecule of what we consume is used to push our biochemical reactions down one pathway or another, this we know can cause a state of disease or a state of health. This newer field of study, called Nutrigenomics, correlates nutrition with the phenotypic expression of our genes.

What does this mean? That the return to a *real food* diet is required if humans want to thrive in health and as a species. We are unhealthier than ever and infertility is constantly rising- is nature telling us something? Although more than just food is involved, major improvements can occur with what we choose to eat. For example there was a recent study on processed foods which compared 2 groups of people who were put on the same calorie intake except one group ate unprocessed foods and the other ate highly processed foods. The

results revealed an increase of all-cause mortality and disease for the highly processed food group. The group eating minimally or unprocessed foods had less risk for disease development across the gamut [3].

What patients need to learn is this: eat food that looks like where it came from in its most unprocessed and cleanest form. Another way to determine if a food is healthy is to think about how humans would have eaten them one hundred years ago or more. Were there potato chips, spray cheese or low calorie breads a couple of centuries ago? No, because it takes factories to make those Franken foods!

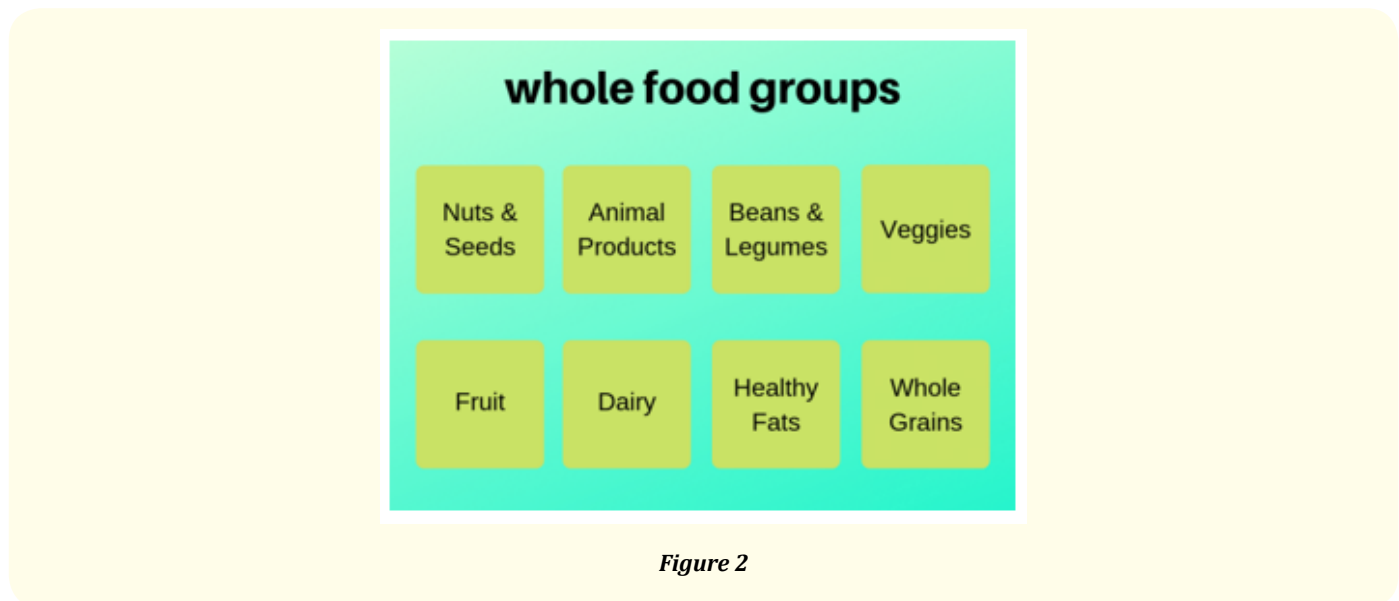


Figure 2

The following is a simple list of foods to choose that are probably recognizable to the body and therefore healthy to consume:

- Grass-fed red meat and any dairy product that comes from that animal.
- Pastured poultry and eggs.
- Organic/non-GMO plant foods (veggies, fruits, grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, etc.)
- Minimally processed fats (grass-fed butter, olive oil, coconut products, avocado oil, sources from the animal product types above).

In conclusion, until us health care providers and researchers can figure out the details of what ultimate human nutrition is (if that's even possible), I believe that the points discussed above should be taught to patients across the world. The basic ideas are to eat a low carbohydrate/moderate protein/higher fat diet that consists of whole foods that are of the highest quality. Until we know more, it makes sense to provide these two easy goals for the public to aim for which would, quite possibly, massively reduce the chronic diseases that are unnecessarily plaguing humanity.

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