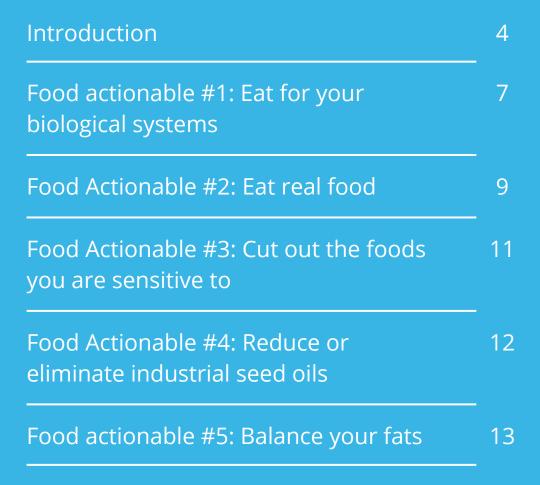


# Nourish to Flourish: Savour the Strength, Energy, and Lifelong Health Food Offers





# Overview





# Overview





# **Overview**

Food actionable #12: Practice time- restricted eating	24
Food Actionable #13: Follow the 80:20 rule	26
The Last Bite: Our Final Thoughts	27
References	28



#### Introduction

# "The food you eat can either be the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison."—Ann Wigmore

The food you put into your body literally becomes the building blocks of who you are. In other words, you are what you eat. Food makes up your muscles, bones, hormones, gut lining, and all the rest of your parts. It is crucial to make sure that you're eating high quality and nutrient dense foods if you want to feel your best.

Despite what self-proclaimed experts may tell you, we don't really know much about nutrition. In fact, nutritional science is one of the most flawed fields out there. Much of the nutritional information we are fed is made for click-bait. Nutrition is a confusing, complicated topic that creates division amongst people. When did the topic of food become so spicy?

Nutrition has become an emotionally charged subject. It feels like it has reached the level of religion or politics. It makes sense—the human experience of navigating through the abyss has us naturally clinging on to concepts that form our identities. We want to be told what to do, and we want to believe that the information we've been given is accurate. We gravitate towards a self-serving bias to unconsciously prove ourselves right again and again. We attach our self-concept to eating a certain way and hope for the best. The problem is that, despite the fact that we believe we're doing everything right, many of us are living in a state of excess inflammation and nutrient deficiency. We would consider this to be a sub-optimal standard of living. When you adjust your general nutrition and then fine-tune the details to fit your individual organism, you will discover the infinite energy life force of Qi.

Many people have a blind spot when it comes to nutrition. They truly believe that their nutrition is better than it actually is. That's because the typical way people consume food in our culture is not in alignment with the evolutionary biology of the human system. Our ancestors ate diets that they thrived on. Macronutrient profiles varied widely depending on location. Some regions had diets very high in fat, while other regions had diets very high in carbohydrates. But across all regions, two things were always true about these diets: they included some kind of animal product and they were free from processed foods. Today, our diet is typically far too low in protein and far too high in processed, refined carbohydrates. There is a mismatch between our evolutionary needs and the foods we are currently eating. In other words, we eat a lot of foods that we aren't designed to eat and that has negative consequences.

The best nutritional plan is the one that works for you. Is your current approach working? If you feel awesome, then you know it is. If you're not sure, ask yourself if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- gas
- bloating
- changes in stool frequency (diarrhea or constipation)
- changes in stool consistency (dry, hard stool or loose stool)
- skin rashes
- itchy skin
- acne
- difficulty concentrating
- memory issues

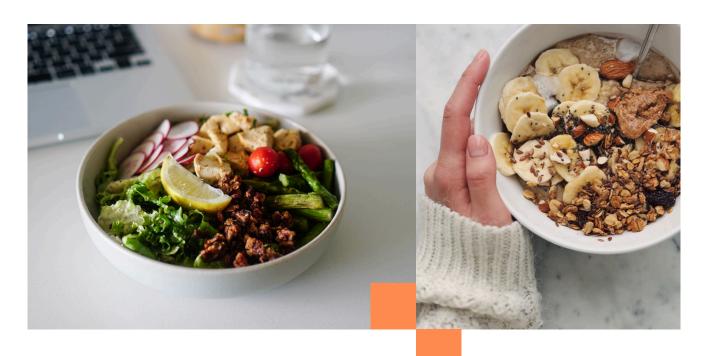
- insomnia or excessive sleepiness
- anxiety
- depression
- excess body fat
- fatigue
- malaise
- muscle and joint pain
- difficulty losing body fat
- difficulty gaining muscle
- living in a state of distraction

If you are currently experiencing some or many symptoms from this list, then it's likely you have an opportunity to tweak your approach to eating. These symptoms are so common that people now believe they are normal. If you go to your doctor, she will prescribe you different medications for each of these symptoms that will only create more side effects. You may not realize that by adjusting how you eat, you can reduce and even eliminate all of these symptoms.

The single universal truth we have discovered about nutrition is that one size does not fit all. Out of all the Qi Elements, food is by far the component that requires the most amount of individualization. We highly recommend you work with a Qi coach to develop a system of eating food in the ways that work best for you as an individual. Nine out of ten people might benefit from eating more fish, but it makes the tenth person sick. There are so many factors to consider that we cannot give you specific food advice unless we work with you one-on-one. We can, however, provide you with some basic general tips.

Your body thrives on a balance of macronutrients: proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. The percentage of each macronutrient required is based on your current situation and your goals. What's best for most people is a balanced combination of various macronutrients and micronutrients in quantities that keep you satisfied but prevent you from gaining weight. In general, most people benefit from having at least one portion of quality protein, unprocessed carbohydrates, healthy fats, and greens at each meal. This includes breakfast (for those who choose to eat breakfast).

We are not here to tell you that there is a right or wrong approach to eating food. Our only goal is to help you feel your best. We desire to help you optimize your human experience. There are many factors to consider when dealing with food choices. Our role as nutrition coaches is to simplify things for you. We meet you where you're at and take you where you want to go. We'll make it easy for you to tidy your eating habits up and you'll begin to feel really good all the time. You'll learn to take it one step at a time, checking boxes and building confidence along the way. Our simplified process makes it easy for you to follow and execute, which allows you to build momentum and success along the way. Eating well will give you mental clarity so you can engage with your work and your life the way that you want to. It will also give you the fuel that you need so you can train the way you want to train. The whole point of our approach is for you to do the things you love to do with our distraction or interference. Being tired or hungry all the time takes your attention away from the things that are important. We will help you get back on track so you can enjoy your life fully.



We really want you to understand that the foods you put into your body are just as important as the effort you put into your exercise. Whether your goal is weight management or building lean muscle, it is imperative that you're willing to address how you eat. Otherwise, you will be disappointed in your results. If you desire a change in body composition, it is based one hundred percent on what you eat. There is no getting around this. You cannot out-train a poor diet. The number one reason people get poor results from the gym is that they don't address how they eat.

The standard diet in Canada is high calorie, low nutrient. It's time we turn this around. If you desire to feel your best, you have a simple opportunity to eat foods high in nutrients that contain fewer overall calories. We have never had more variety of different foods to eat, yet the vast majority of people are living in a state of nutrient deficiency. Suboptimal intake of one or several micronutrients will negatively affect your physical functioning. In contrast, we are eating more calories than we need to survive and thrive. Let's move to eating a nutrient-dense diet. There are great benefits to eating foods that contain the full spectrum of nutrients that humans require for optional health.

Over the last 15 years, we have found that certain behaviours generally provide positive benefits for most people. They are universal actions that anyone can apply to feel better. We call them Food Actionables because knowledge isn't enough—you actually have to do the behaviour to feel good.

#### Food actionable #1: Eat for your biological systems

You have an opportunity to shift how you think about the food you eat. It's not just about looking good, it's about feeling good. You can do this by nourishing your biological systems.

Eating well allows your immune system to operate and function well. Your immune system responds poorly to sugar. Sugar creates metabolic and hormonal chaos, resulting in tons of inflammation. As the sugar drives inflammation, it also suppresses your immune response, resulting in leaky gut syndrome and even more inflammation. Eating foods that you are sensitive to also causes inflammation and causes your immune system to go haywire. On the other side, foods like turmeric, ginger, onions, garlic, extra virgin olive oil, mushrooms, and leafy greens have anti-inflammatory properties, which allow your immune system to function optimally. Foods that contain vitamin C, zinc, selenium, and vitamin D strengthen your immunity and buttress inflammation

What you eat also affects your energy and mitochondria. You can fuel your mitochondria with dirty-burning sugars and processed carbs, or you can choose clean-burning fats. Fats that have medium chain triglycerides, like coconuts, help your mitochondria repair, renew, and rebuild, whereas fried foods cause harm. Your mitochondria respond well to foods that contain B vitamins, coenzyme Q10, carnitine, zinc, magnesium, selenium, omega-3 fats, lipoic acid, vitamin E, sulphur, and vitamin K. Some great food options are avocados, blueberries, pomegranate seeds, broccoli, grass-fed beef, sardines, almonds, and extra-virgin olive oil. The health of your mitochondria and your energy levels are great reasons to eat less sugar and ensure you're eating enough quality fats.

We are exposed to environmental toxins all the time, which sadly makes our bodies toxic waste dumps. In order to deal with this extra waste, mitigate inflammation, manage oxidative stress, facilitate mitochondrial repair, and maintain hormone balance, your body relies heavily on its detoxification system. You can actively help your detoxification system by consuming high-quality protein, vitamins and minerals, phytonutrients, fibre, and clean water. The process of detoxification is hindered by the same foods that cause problems for the other systems: processed foods and sugars. The first thing you can do to assist with detoxification is to ensure that you're drinking enough water to help your kidneys remove waste effectively. Fibre helps your colon move waste along, and phytonutrients help your liver. The best foods to eat for this process are leafy green vegetables such as broccoli, kale, brussels sprouts, and spinach. Your liver also needs many nutrients, such as B vitamins, manganese, magnesium, zinc, and selenium, found in foods like animal protein, seafood, nuts, and seeds. You can also eat garlic, onions, and turmeric to help with detoxification and decrease inflammation. Green tea is an incredible detoxifier, as are herbs like cilantro, parsley, dandelion greens, and artichokes. We encourage you to eat a variety of all these detoxifying foods on a regular basis.





How you eat affects your hormones. Too much sugar creates insulin resistance, inflammation, and metabolic disruption. Eliminating sugar and flour from your diet will improve your health and the function of your hormones. Other factors that disrupt your hormones are not eating enough fibre, nutritional deficiencies, alcohol, pesticides, stress, and lack of exercise. We encourage you to address all of these issues. Make sure that you're eating enough quality protein. Nutritional stress from processed foods increases inflammation and disrupts blood flow, negatively affecting your sex hormones. You may be noticing the overlap of these categories. Sugar is harmful and protein is helpful.

Your circulatory system needs quality foods for the health of your blood vessels. You can provide your blood system with phytonutrients and antioxidants to keep it healthy and functional. Eating a diet rich in nutrient-dense whole foods will prevent your blood vessels from getting damaged. The amino acid arginine, found in sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, almonds, turkey breast, and seaweed, helps to produce nitric oxide, which is a vasodilator that increases blood flow. Omega-3s from wild-caught fish maintain the health of the lining of the blood vessels to prevent clotting. Olive oil helps to reduce the inflammation of the blood vessels. Magnesium is needed to relax blood vessels, and you can find it in foods like nuts, seeds, beans, and greens. Many people are living in a magnesium-deficient state and don't even know it. Stress, alcohol, caffeine, and sugar all deplete magnesium, so it's no wonder why people are so deficient.

It's essential to provide your body with the raw materials for your cells, organs, tissues, skin, muscles, bones, and brain cells. Good quality materials will ensure good functioning of these parts. It's imperative that you get the proper protein, fats, and minerals. The foods for this are proteins, and the best proteins are animal proteins. Eating sufficient amounts of animal protein will ensure your body gets enough of the essential amino acids for growth and repair.

- Nourish your biological systems. Not only will you look better, you'll feel better, too.
- **Support your immune system by cutting back on sugar.** You'll reduce inflammation and give your immune system the ability to quickly respond to threats.
- **Fuel your mitochondria with clean-burning fats.** Eating foods with medium chain triglycerides allow your mitochondria to repair, rebuild, and renew your cells.
- Consume high-quality protein, vitamins and minerals, phytonutrients, fibre, and clean water. These foods support your body's detoxification pathways to help you remove waste.
- **Ditch sugar and increase protein intake to support healthy hormones.** Cutting back on sugar helps repair your body's insulin response, and protein helps with hormone production.
- **Protect your blood vessels by eating high phytonutrient foods.** Arginine, omega-3s, and olive oil work in tandem to support and maintain healthy blood vessels.
- **Focus on animal protein.** Animal proteins contain all of the essential and non-essential amino acids, so you can ensure your body gets what it needs to grow and repair.

#### Food Actionable #2: Eat real food

This action could not be simpler: if it's real food, eat it. Real food means that it's unprocessed and comes as one single ingredient; for example, a potato. When you eat real, unprocessed foods, you will feel great. If you've been eating processed foods for a long period of time, you may have become accustomed to living in a state of inflammation and haven't even noticed. When you take a break from eating processed foods and then reintroduce them, you will immediately feel the difference. It's quite the eye-opening experience. You never really know how lousy you feel until you start to feel good again.

Addictive processed foods are ruining our health. According to a study published in The American Journal of Medicine, it is now estimated that 60% of the average American's diet is coming from ultra-processed foods. These foods contain additives never before encountered by human physiology, and researchers have dubbed these types of foods the "silent killer," as they trigger metabolic dysfunction, disrupt the gut microbiome, depress immune health, and promote numerous health problems<sup>1</sup>.

Once you've started to eat real foods on a regular basis, be careful not to get tricked by purchasing "healthy" snacks like energy bars and crackers. Take a look at the ingredients list. If there are many ingredients and some you can't even pronounce, then it's ultra-processed and you need to back away. This stuff is full of preservatives and chemicals. Your good intentions make you the target market to be manipulated into buying what you perceive as healthy, but in reality is simply junk food. Food companies have been so clever in tricking us for decades. You may think you're getting quality nutrients, but you're actually disrupting your digestive tract, interfering with the function of your hormones, and messing up your blood sugar. We encourage you to become aware of the marketing tricks out there. The people who run the high-end "health food" stores are brilliant. They have found a way to sell us junk food at twice the price and we keep buying it! If it comes in a bag or a box (even it has "healthy" words on it like "gluten-free"), take a look at the ingredients. It's very likely to be highly processed with chemical additives and not good for your health.



Refined foods are harmful to your health. Some examples are wheat flour, industrial seed oils, artificial trans fats, table sugar, and high-fructose corn syrup. Many foods with these ingredients also include chemical additives and preservatives, which increase inflammation and disrupt your gut microbiome. Many people are developing syndromes like leaky gut because the foods they most often consume are harmful.

Eating real food comes with a catch. It means that you are mostly going to have to cook your own meals. Cooking can be a wonderful way to connect to the moment and practice mindfulness. There is something inherently satisfying when you cook for yourself and your loved ones. Real food is delicious and it makes you feel awesome. Enjoy the process of cooking and eating. Preparing a lunch with real food is a great way to stay on track instead of buying lunch, plus you'll save a bunch of dough. It's really hard to find real food at chains and restaurants.



- Eat real foods and cut down or cut out processed foods. Real foods contain a single ingredient.
- **Eliminate ultra-processed foods.** Additives in these foods disrupt your gut microbiome, trigger metabolic dysfunction, depress immune health, and promote a slew of health problems.
- **Check ingredient lists of packaged foods.** Don't be fooled by "healthy" marketing. If there are ingredients you can't pronounce, put it back on the shelf.
- Avoid wheat flour, industrial seed oils, artificial trans fats, table sugar, and high-fructose corn syrup. These ingredients wreak havoc on your gut microbiome and increase inflammation.
- Cook at home as often as possible. You'll have full control of the ingredients and feel great.

#### Food Actionable #3: Cut out the foods you are sensitive to

This step is more challenging because it takes some detective work. If you don't know what foods you are sensitive to, you will have to work with a professional to figure this part out.

The amazing thing is that you may be eating a certain type of food that is making you feel gross and not even know it. When you eliminate the foods that you are sensitive to, you will immediately start to feel better. This can be an absolute game changer. Some common food sensitivities are grains and traditional dairy.

If you're sensitive to a food that is a staple in your diet, you are unknowingly interfering with your optimization. Imagine only being able to inhale 70% of your oxygen and then, with a simple change, magically being able to inhale 100%. That's what it feels like to remove a food sensitivity from your diet. You'll feel way better and wonder why it took you so long to make the change. Don't live at a fraction of your potential.

You might feel some resistance when you approach this one. It's difficult to accept that some of the foods you love are the same ones that are making you feel lousy. Giving up a certain type of food can elicit emotions similar to grief, but we guarantee that on the other side of those tough emotions is a place of peace, joy, and energy.



Every once in a while, you can indulge with little consequence. That way, you still get to enjoy the foods and treats you like without too much restriction. However, with time, you may realize that eating foods you're sensitive to isn't worth if it sends you straight to the toilet.

Remember, no two people are the same. You may have different food sensitivities than others in your household.

- **Figure out what foods you're sensitive to.** Enlist the help of a professional to guide you through a food sensitivity test or an elimination diet.
- **Eliminate these foods from your diet.** Find substitutes or explore new cuisines to help make the transition easier.
- **Work through your feelings.** Letting go of foods you love can be difficult. Hold space for these feelings and know that joy and energy are waiting on the other side.
- **Know that you can indulge occasionally.** Once you've healed, you can revisit foods you're sensitive to. Just take stock of how you feel physically and decide if it's worth it.
- Remember that food sensitivities are unique. You might have different triggers than the rest of your household.

#### Food Actionable #4: Reduce or eliminate industrial seed oils

Highly processed seed oils are making us sick. These seed oils are refined, bleached, and deodorized in order to be suitable for human consumption. The temperatures at which they are processed create by-products that are harmful to your health. Some examples include soybean oil, peanut oil, corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, wheat-germ oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, grapeseed oil, and rice bran oil. Some researchers have gone as far as describing industrial seed oils as toxic waste. This categorization is alarming considering the fact that they are found in almost all processed foods. Start to read the labels and you'll find them in almost everything that comes in a bag or a box. Even seemingly healthy foods like hummus are riddled with these noxious oils.

The pro-inflammatory nature of industrial seed oils harms your health and has been associated with the following conditions: asthma, autoimmune disease, mental health issues, cognition, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome, infertility, eye degeneration, osteoarthritis, and more. It's amazing that food has such a big influence on these conditions. Most people don't associate medical conditions with the food they eat. It's about time we start to look at these powerful relationships.

Consuming these oils will undoubtedly cause inflammation, which makes you feel totally lousy. Cutting them out is one of the simplest ways to reduce inflammation and feel better.



Knowledge of this makes our second food actionable, eat real food, so much more important, as these oils are present in essentially all processed foods. They are also very prevalent in restaurants, so you may want to consider how often you go out for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Social meals can be very enjoyable events with loved ones, so we aren't telling you to never go out. Just be aware of the risk and pay attention to how you feel during and after the meal.

The best oils to cook with are coconut, avocado, and olive oil.

- **Know your seed oils.** Soybean oil, peanut oil, corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, wheatgerm oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, grapeseed oil, and rice brain oil are all classified as seed oils.
- Cut out seed oils. You'll reduce inflammation and feel better.
- **Check ingredient labels.** If you're eating something from a package, take a look at the label. Chances are it contains a seed oil.
- Eat real food and cook it at home. Coconut, avocado, and olive oil are great for cooking.

#### Food actionable #5: Balance your fats

Fats have been a misunderstood macronutrient for several decades. It's time we clear the air and help you understand that fats are an important part of your food plan. Fats are good, fats are healthy, and fats are essential if you want to feel and perform your best.

Fats are the primary energy source of your body and they also play a role in maintaining healthy skin and hair, regulating body temperature, supporting immune function, and aiding in the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K). Your overall health is determined by the balance of fats you consume.

The previous recommendations from doctors and media to avoid saturated fats is misguided. Saturated fats have been blamed for what refined carbohydrates are sugars have caused. Saturated fats keep you healthy. They are integral for the health of bone and muscle and supporting a healthy immune system. If you still think saturated fat is unhealthy, you have been misinformed. For a long time, saturated fats and cholesterol have been vilified in the media. Sadly, the people who avoid these foods are the ones who end up malnourished and ill.

When putting together your food plan, it's important to consider how you balance your types of fats. We need to incorporate healthy saturated fats from meat, coconut oil, and eggs. Monounsaturated fats, such as olives, olive oil, meat, avocados, and nuts, all have a place on your plate. The next type of fat is polyunsaturated, also known as omegas. You can get omega-3 fats from eating salmon (and other fatty fish), flax seeds, chia seeds, and walnuts. The key is to make sure that you're not overconsuming any one kind of fat. It's all about balance.



The biggest opportunity to improve your health regarding fats is to balance your omega-3 fat to omega-6 fat ratio. These fats form your cell membranes, regulate your gene expression, and aid in cell function. When balanced, they allow your trillions of cells to function while reducing inflammation in your body. An ideal ratio for omega-6s to -3s would be close to 1:1. In our modern living, most people have ratios closer to 16:1 or even 20:1. One of the reasons this has become so imbalanced is the increased consumption of the aforementioned industrial seed oils, which contain exceptionally high amounts of omega-6 fats.

The DHA and EPA found in omega-3s are the essential nutrients that regulate triglycerides, total cholesterol, insulin resistance, blood pressure, liver enzymes, inflammatory markers, and oxidative stress. The benefits extend across a spectrum of conditions, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, and metabolic syndrome. Omega-3s enhance mitochondrial function, regulate plasma lipoproteins, and reduce the risk of sudden cardiovascular events by stabilizing atherosclerotic plaques. Increasing your intake of EPA and DHA could be a powerful strategy for preventing and managing chronic diseases. Oversimplified, this can be considered the reason why people experience lifestyle diseases.

Too much omega-6 combined with too little omega-3 is the perfect recipe for systemic inflammation. Oversimplified, this can be considered the reason why people experience lifestyle diseases due to its effect on cellular functioning.

It's really easy to get enough omega-6s from the diet. The trickier part is to ensure that you're consuming enough omega-3s, which can be found in wild-caught, cold-water fatty fish, seafood, walnuts, and flax seeds. Commercially farmed fish lack omega-3s. They are naturally grey in colour, so food companies inject them with pink dyes to make them more appealing to consumers. We recommend that the average person eat six ounces of wild-caught fatty fish like salmon or trout three times per week. This helps you bring your omega-3 to omega-6 ratio back in balance.

To be clear, all fats play a vital role in your health. Saturated fats and omega-6 fats are indeed healthy for you, so long as they are balanced with the other fats. Being mindful of this will help you make better food choices with more variety of fats so that you can start to feel better.

Do not avoid fats. They are essential for cell development and function, overall health, nervous system function, and hormone health and function. They are a source of micronutrients, and they facilitate vitamin absorption. To intentionally avoid fats would be to bring you out of balance.

- **Don't fear fats!** Fats are essential if you want to feel your best. They maintain your skin and hair, regulate your body temperature, support immune function, and help your body absorb fat-soluble vitamins.
- **Balance your types of fats.** Incorporate a variety of healthy saturated fats, monounsaturated fats, and polyunsaturated fats into your diet. Avoid leaning too heavily toward a single type.
- Aim for a 1:1 omega-3 to omega-6 ratio. This ratio is often closer to 1:20 in practice.
- **Cut back on seed oils.** These oils contain an astronomical amount of omega-6s. Cutting them out will reduce inflammation and help get your omega ratio in check.
- Eat six ounces of wild-caught fatty fish (like salmon or trout) three times per week. These fish contain the highest levels of omega-3s, which will help bring your omega ratio back into balance.

#### Food actionable #6: Eat enough quality protein

Protein is an essential nutrient for humans and it is the building block for all body tissues. You need to eat protein to obtain essential amino acids. Since essential amino acids can't be produced by the body, they must be obtained from food. Without a diet rich in amino acids, you will cease to function.

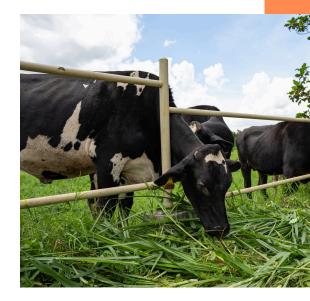
Eating enough quality protein helps you maintain and develop optimal body composition to make you more muscular and lean. Protein is the nutrient required to build muscle. It also has a big impact on immune function, so you won't get sick as frequently and you'll recover faster when you do. Because of its inhibiting effects on the hunger hormone grhrelin, protein will make you feel more satiated, so you'll be less inclined to overeat. It also ensures you have a healthy metabolism, which is necessary for aging gracefully. It reduces appetite and increases your metabolic rate. Protein intake has a stabilizing effect on blood sugars. All of these effects combine to help you with weight management and performance. As the building blocks of your muscles, hormones, and enzymes, high quality protein, when eaten in the correct proportions, will make sure that you feel your best and optimize your health.

If you aren't eating an adequate amount of protein, you will begin to lose your lean muscle. This becomes a big problem as you age because you need to maintain lean muscle for quality of life. People who strength train without eating enough protein will get very poor results and wonder why the exercise isn't working. If you're not eating enough protein on a regular basis, you'll go into a negative nitrogen balance, resulting in enzymes being cannibalized. It's like trying to keep your sink full without a drain plug. If this continues for too long, your vital functions shut down. You do not want to be exercising in a negative nitrogen balance because it results in catabolism of your muscles and soft tissues, defeating the purpose of the exercise. It's quite difficult to maintain a consistent amino acid pool and stay in a positive nitrogen balance unless you're eating it regularly. Your body needs its protein stores to be continually replenished, which means that you need to consume adequate amounts of protein at each meal.

Your optimal amount of protein depends on many factors, such as your sex, body weight, lean muscle mass, activity level, and age. The basic recommendation for protein intake is 0.36 grams per pound of body weight (0.8g/kg). This number is incredibly low because it's the minimum amount to keep you alive. We find people who exercise regularly greatly benefit from eating much more, somewhere around 0.7-1.0 g/lb (1.5-2.2g/kg). It may sound like a lot at first. That's why we encourage you to eat at least one palm-sized serving of quality protein at each meal. It's easy to get used to and you'll feel so much better, be less hungry, and have fewer food cravings throughout the day. Increasing your protein consumption is especially necessary if you are trying to lose body fat or gain muscle, or if you have blood sugar issues.

The source matters. We encourage you to look for pasture-raised animal products, grass-fed beef, and wild-caught fish. These have higher levels of vitamins, micronutrients, and a better omega-6 to omega-3 ratio.

Animal protein is superior to plant protein for several reasons. First, animal proteins are complete proteins, meaning they contain all the essential amino acids necessary for health. Plant proteins are considered incomplete because they do not posses all of the essential amino acids. Plant proteins are less bioavailable, and the overall quality derived from plants is lower than from animal products. The foods that contain the greatest source of concentrated proteins are seafood, poultry, red meat, and eggs. Many people who don't eat enough protein can benefit from adding these foods into their diet. You will notice a drastic improvement in your wellbeing. For some people, protein intake is the one thing holding them back from feeling great on a daily basis.



Second, animal proteins tend to have a better macronutrient profile than plant proteins. On paper, it may seem possible to get enough protein from legumes and grains, but you would have to eat an unreasonable amount. You would have to eat six cups of brown rice (1,296 calories) to equal just four ounces of chicken (271 calories). You would need to eat a minimum of two cups at each meal to get your daily intake. These proteins have an inadequate amino acid profile (especially leucine) required for turning protein into muscle. You would also be increasing your overall carbohydrate intake along with those extra calories, which can negatively affect your blood sugar and body composition. You can combine plant and animal sources to improve your overall intake.

f you're going to eat beans, remember that they are not complete proteins, which makes them a lesser choice compared to animal protein. Some people don't digest beans well and they contain lectins and phytates that inhibit mineral and protein absorption. Beans are better considered a carbohydrate than a protein.

We do have to make a note here that "beyond meat" products are highly processed and violate food actionable #2, eat real food. If you're going to eat a Whopper, just enjoy it. You don't need to trick yourself into eating fake meat to feel better about your choice to eat fast food.



The people who can benefit the most from increasing their protein intake are endurance athletes, weightlifters, those trying to lose weight, those trying to gain muscle, and older people. Just to be clear, you cannot build or maintain your lean muscle if you're not eating enough quality protein. Keep this in mind as you approach your exercise.

- **Protein is essential for functioning.** It builds muscle, influences immune function, buttresses hunger hormones, and regulates blood sugar.
- Understand the difference between essential and non-essential amino acids. Essential amino acids are those your body cannot make, so they must be obtained through protein in your diet.
- **Ensure you're eating enough quality protein.** If you exercise regularly, aim for 0.7 to 1.0 grams or protein per pound of body fat.
- Choose high quality sources of protein. Look for pasture-raised animal products, grass-fed beef, and wild-caught fish.
- **Prioritize animal protein over plant protein.** Animal protein has all of the essential amino acids and a better macronutrient breakdown (fewer carbs and more protein per serving).
- Combine plant and animal sources to boost your intake. Let the animal protein be the star of the show, but add in legumes or grains as a side for extra protein.
- **Consider beans a carbohydrate rather than a protein.** Lectins and phytates inhibit mineral and protein absorption, so you aren't getting the full listed protein content.
- **Ditch "beyond meat" products.** They fall under the highly processed umbrella.

#### Food actionable #7: Fill your plate with plants

Eat all the colours and eat seasonal fruits and veggies. Consuming a wide variety of vegetables ensures that you nourish your body with vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and fibre. Plant foods provide antioxidants that protect you from free radicals, helping to prevent oxidative damage and cancer. Plant foods are alkaline producing, which help you preserve bone mass and lean tissue. A higher level of fruit and vegetable intake is associated with a lower incidence of many conditions, including cardiovascular disease, obesity, high blood pressure, breast cancer, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes.

Non-starchy vegetables are low in calories and high in nutrients, so you can eat a lot of them at every meal. Some examples are artichoke, broccoli, beets, asparagus, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplant, onions, garlic, spinach, kale, mushrooms, parsley, peppers, radishes, Swiss chard, summer squash, scallions, and zucchini.

Starchy plants are the best source of healthy carbohydrates. The amount you choose to eat depends on how active you are and how many carbs you need at each meal. These foods include potatoes, sweet potatoes, plantains, taro, and yuca.

Eat somewhere between two to five servings of fruit a day. If you have blood sugar issues or you're trying to lose body fat, keep the fruit intake to a minimum. Some fruits, like berries and melons, are relatively low in sugar. If you are lean and highly active, you can eat more fruits and still feel great.



- **Eat the rainbow.** Incorporate a wide variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables throughout your day.
- Incorporate non-starchy vegetables at every meal. They are low in calories and high in nutrients— you can't go wrong with any. Leafy greens, squash, beets, cruciferous veggies, and peppers all fall under this category.
- **Focus on starchy plants as your source of carbohydrates.** Choose potatoes, sweet potatoes, plantains, taro, and yuca over other carbs.
- Aim for two to five sources of fruit per day. Berries and melons are the fruits lowest in sugar, so focus on those if you have blood sugar issues or if you're trying to lose body fat.

#### Food actionable #8: Limit sugar intake

Although you may be aware that sugar isn't great for your health, it might be worse for you than you realize. Excess refined sugar consumption can be harmful and addictive. When you eat foods high in sugar, you get a dopamine spike similar to one you'd get from drugs like cocaine and heroine. This spike of dopamine is followed by a crash, which leads to constant sugar cravings. Overconsumption of sugar also makes your blood sugar spike and crash, once again leading to more sugar cravings.

Consuming a diet rich in sugar accelerates aging. Over time, your body produces more and more insulin until it's insulin resistant, resulting in a cascade of harmful effects like increased appetite and sugar cravings, excess storage of belly fat, high blood pressure, inflammation, poor cholesterol profile, fatty liver, altered sex hormones, depression, increased blood clotting, dementia, strokes, memory loss, heart attacks, and cancer. These conditions can all be treated separately with medication, or you can address the root cause of all of them by removing refined sugar from your diet.

Sugar is the major disruptor for Food Actionable #1, eat for your biological systems. It feeds your bad gut bacteria, which promotes inflammation. It also disrupts your immune system, is detrimental to your heart health, and impairs your brain function.

Choose to limit or eliminate sugary beverages like pop and juice. These drinks are incredibly high in sugar and far too easy to overconsume. Liquid sugar allows you to consume lots of empty calories without the feeling of satiety. Drinking high sugar calories is the easiest way to gain weight. We recommend you refrain from adding sugar to your coffee or tea, too.

Beware of hidden sugar. We consume sugar all the time without realizing it. Once again, we encourage you to read ingredient labels. Many foods that appear to be healthy have a ton of sugar in them. It's best to eat real fruit (remember, fruit is a whole food), which naturally provides fibre to slow down the sugar absorption process and curb the major dopamine spike.

This one is very simple: the less sugar you eat, the better you will feel.



- **Sugar is addictive.** It hijacks the reward centre of your brain, so the more you eat it, the more you'll crave it.
- **Sugar accelerates aging.** Excessive sugar consumption leads to insulin resistance, gut dysbiosis, impaired brain function, and increased inflammation, all of which accelerate the aging process.
- **Limit or eliminate sugary drinks.** Liquid sugar is a sneaky way of consuming tons of extra calories. Lose the pop, juice, and sugar in your tea or coffee.
- **Beware of hidden sugars.** Read your ingredient labels and don't assume "healthy" packaged foods are sugar-free.
- **Turn to fruit instead.** Fruit also contains fibre, which slows down the sugar absorption process and helps curb the dopamine spike.

#### Food actionable #9: Restore your gut microbiome

Your gut microbiome is your inner garden and achieving good gut health is essential for improving overall health. The Greek physician Hippocrates said that all disease begins in the gut. An unhealthy digestive tract contributes to a wide range of conditions including diabetes, obesity, autoimmune disease, depression and anxiety, and chronic fatigue syndrome. Your gut has its very own nervous system, and some experts refer to the gut as the second brain. Supporting intestinal health is one of the most important factors to consider as you choose which foods to eat.

This crucial part of health is often totally ignored by the medical system. In fact, most medications destroy the healthy bacteria in the gut. Your gut flora promotes normal gastrointestinal function, protects you from infection, regulates metabolism, and houses the majority of immune cells. When this microbiome is out of balance, you get sick. When you eat the right foods for you, your inner garden will flourish.

Your gut houses good bacteria and bad bacteria. Both of these bacteria are hungry and begging to be fed. You feed the good bacteria with quality whole foods and you feed the bad bacteria with processed foods and sugars. The type of bacteria you feed the most will grow and thrive. When you cut out sugar, the bad bacteria will start to scream at you because they know they are going to die. This is when triggers and cravings are at their loudest. The good news is this only happens for a couple of days or up to a week and then the cravings subside. As you feed the good bacteria, your gut starts to balance out and you'll feel so much better.

A malfunctioning digestive tract becomes permeable, allowing substances to pass into the blood stream. We call this leaky gut. It triggers an immune response because these undigested food particles are perceived as foreign invaders to the body. This is why nutrition is such a critical factor when resolving autoimmune issues. A leaky gut not only causes an immune reaction, it also affects other organs and tissues including the pancreas, skeletal system, kidney, liver, and brain. People with a leaky gut will often experience skin rashes, eczema, anxiety, depression, joint pain, acne, allergies, abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, asthma, difficulty concentrating, brain fog, and poor memory.



Factors that negatively affect the gut flora are antibiotics, NSAIDs, medications, chronic stress, poor diet, chronic gut infections, and alcohol. Our standard diet of refined flours, sugars, and industrial seed oils are also major culprits for causing leaky gut. Wheat products cause particular harm to gut health, yet people tend to ignore it. You can choose to eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and soluble fibre and decrease the amount of processed foods you eat. Foods that nourish the gut are bone broth, potatoes, sweet potatoes, plantains, taro root, yuca, and refrigerated sauerkraut, kimchi, and brine pickles.

Avoid antibiotics as much as reasonably possible. Just one course of antibiotics can wreak havoc on your gut and long-term health. Many gut issues can be traced back to when someone took antibiotics. Obviously, antibiotics can be life saving, so use them when they are necessary.

Chronic stress can damage your small intestine, resulting in inflammation, leaky gut, and irritable bowl syndrome. Mindfulness training and stress management tools are a necessary part of restoring the gut, too.

Remember, your gut microbiome is your inner garden. The right foods feed the good bacteria in your gut while the wrong foods feed the bad bacteria. With every meal you eat, you're choosing which bacteria will grow. Since gut health is so important to how you feel both physically and mentally, it's worth making the effort to tend to your garden daily.

- View your gut as your inner garden. It's full of bacteria that you can nurture to help you feel your best
- **Support your gut for optimal immune function.** Your gut flora is host to the majority of your immune cells. A happy gut flora means a healthy immune response.
- Feed your good gut bacteria. Quality whole foods feed the good bacteria in your gut. Sugar feeds the bad bacteria.
- **Stay strong through sugar cravings.** As the bad bacteria in your gut starve, they will scream for sugar. It takes only a few days for them to be silenced—you can get through it.
- **Incorporate gut-loving foods.** Bone broth, carbohydrates like potatoes and sweet potatoes, and refrigerated fermented foods all help your good gut bacteria thrive.
- **Avoid antibiotics when possible.** They wreak havoc on your microbiome. If you need to use them, take extra care with your food choices during and after.
- Practice mindfulness and use stress management tools. Stress leads to inflammation, which disrupts your microbiome.

#### Food actionable #10: Supplement as needed

We always recommend you get your nutrients from eating real food. The problem is, no matter how well you eat, it can be difficult to absorb certain nutrients via food alone. Most of us are overly stressed and not eating enough quality foods to get the nutrients we need.

As we've already discussed, everyone's nutritional needs are different. Supplements will be the most specific and individualized part of your plan. You must work with a professional to determine which supplements are worth purchasing and which ones are a waste. Once your basic food needs are met, identifying and consuming the exact supplement that you need can be a game changer for your energy, cognition, biological systems, and overall health. You can consume foundational nutrients that everybody needs, and you can target supplements based on your unique needs.

Typically, no two people need to take the same supplements. One supplement that seems to have a universal positive impact on people is magnesium. Whey protein is also a good option for those not eating enough protein. Most people can benefit from taking 2,000 to 5,000 units of Vitamin D per day (preferably with vitamin K2).



- **Get as many of your nutrients from food as possible.** Food will always be superior to supplements.
- **Consult a professional.** Find out what nutrients you might be lacking and get guidance on the best supplements for your needs.
- Check your vitamin D and magnesium levels. Most people tend to be deficient in these two nutrients.

#### Food actionable #11: Eat mindfully

Many of us have become accustomed to eating quickly and eating while distracted. We tend to take for granted the food we eat. This makes us much more likely to overeat, and it also negatively affects our digestive system. Mindful eating is the opposite.

You were not designed to eat in a state of stress. When you are stressed, your body activates the sympathetic nervous system, redirecting blood away from your digestive tract to your muscles. It prepares you to run away or fight for your life. As you can imagine, eating in this state is not ideal. It's akin to taking a break in the middle of your training session to eat. In this state, your body is prepared for physical exertion, not digestion. Consuming food in a state of stress is one of the biggest reasons why people have digestive issues. If you're not digesting food well, then you're not absorbing the nutrients your body needs to be healthy. When you eat, you need to be calm and engage the parasympathetic nervous system. It's called rest and digest for a reason. By mindfully eating, you slow down and restore your attention, making eating more intentional than habitual.

We encourage you to start being mindful about the foods you eat, how you eat those foods, and how those foods make you feel. This will help you determine the difference between physical hunger and emotional hunger. Bring your full attention to the experience of eating. Engage your senses, paying close attention to the the colours, smells, sounds, flavours, and textures. Notice the effects that eating has on your body. Mindful eating helps you appreciate the food, which is something you may sometimes take for granted. Eat slowly and don't rush your meals. Chew more than you usually do; eliminate distractions like phones, TV, and work; and eat in silence (if you're alone).

It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to send your brain a signal that you've had enough to eat and you're full. Most of us eat meals in less than that time, so you can understand why overeating is so common. We encourage you to take a couple deep, relaxed breaths before you take your first bite. Ask yourself if you're in the right headspace to be eating and take a couple more deep breaths. The key is not to rush. Take a moment to enjoy each bite and really savour the experience.



f you've never done this before, we recommend you start with just one meal per day. Make sure you put all your devices and work-related distractions away when you sit down to have the meal. Another option is to extend your meal time to 15, 20, and then 30 minutes. This is especially helpful if you're someone who tends to overeat. It allows you to reconnect to the accurate hunger cues that you might otherwise ignore, which will lead to less overeating.

You will eventually become very much in tune with your body and your hunger signals. Many people eat habitually or because they are emotionally stressed. You have a wonderful opportunity to connect to your body and take back control of the types of foods you eat and how many calories you consume in a day.

- **Practice mindful eating.** Eating in a distracted or stressed state leads to overeating and interferes with digestion and nutrient absorption.
- Pay attention to your surroundings, behaviours, and feelings. What foods are you eating? How are you eating them? How do you feel afterwards?
- **Turn off the TV and tune into your senses.** Pay close attention to the colours, smells, flavours, and textures of your food. Your food should be the entertainment, not your phone, laptop, or TV.
- **Eat slowly.** It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to send a signal to your brain that you're full. If you're already done your food by this time, you might be overeating without realizing.
- **Take a deep breath.** Before you start eating, take a breath. Then another. And another. Ask yourself if you're in the right headspace to be eating.
- **Differentiate between emotional hunger and physical hunger.** Are there feelings you're trying to avoid or a void you're trying to fill with food? Are you eating out of habit?

#### Food actionable #12: Practice time-restricted eating

It's not just about what you eat and how much, but also when you eat. Time-restricted eating refers to eating within a certain amount of hours each day. It's one of the most influential habits regarding your overall health and longevity. People who engage in time-restricted eating drastically improve their health and body composition without reducing the number of total calories eaten. They also benefit from improved cardiovascular health, immunity, weight management, sleep, and energy.

There are clocks in your internal organs. Your gut, liver, heart, and kidneys respond to food timing. Time-restricted eating helps put you back in sync with your circadian rhythm and improves your sleep. Once you eat your last meal of the day, your body recognizes that no more food is coming and it slowly transitions to repair and rejuvenate mode.

In general, it's not recommend to eat late. Late-night snacking throws off your circadian clock, and it disrupts your melatonin and blood sugar. When your melatonin levels begin to rise in the evening and you reach for that late-night snack, you'll spike your blood glucose levels, and they'll remain elevated for a longer period of time. Insulin production slows down at night because your body doesn't expect you to be eating. Instead of preparing your body for sleep, you are waking up your organs when they should be at rest. Your organs are not prepared to digest food late at night, so the food won't move through the digestive system as quickly as it does during the day. This can result in what people call the "food hangover" the next morning. If you wake up feeling groggy in the morning or have a hard time getting out of bed, then time restricted eating might be the solution for you.

Time-restricted eating improves insulin sensitivity, metabolic function, reduces inflammation and oxidative stress, protects brain cells, and promotes healthy brain function. It gives your body a chance to rest and recover instead of constantly digesting food. Your body was not designed to be digesting food all day and night. This process takes a lot of energy from your organs and digestive system. Most of your body's fat burning happens in the six to eight hours after you finish your last meal and increases exponentially after a full 12 hours of fasting. By shifting your eating window, your body will actually start to burn more fat during the night, which is a bonus. This habit is especially beneficial for fat loss.

Dr. Satchin Panda conducted a time-restricted eating study on mice. Both groups of mice were fed the same amount of food and calories. One group ate within a time-restricted eating window and the other did not. The mice without restriction ended up carrying 65% more body fat. These mice developed type 2 diabetes, liver, and heart disease, whereas the group with an eating window restricted to eight hours were totally protected from obesity and disease. Amazingly, when they put the sick mice on the time-restricted eating plan, it totally reversed their diseases (type 2 diabetes, liver disease, heart disease) without medication or changing their diet<sup>2</sup>. The results in this study are truly incredible. We encourage you to be more intentional with when you choose to eat (or not eat).



Most people don't realize that they are eating in 14- to 15-hour windows daily. This slows down your metabolic processes and sets you up to struggle. We recommend you start by reducing your current eating window by one hour. The benefits really start to show when you get your eating window down to 11 hours or lower. We recommend engaging in a 10-hour eating window as a goal, but 12 hours is also a good place to start. You can do an 8-hour window if you're really excited. If you don't want to track your window, we recommend you stop eating within three hours of bedtime. This will drastically improve your sleep and your digestion, and you'll wake up in the morning with much more energy because your gut doesn't have undigested food in it all night.

If you can stick to this plan for six weeks, you'll receive extra benefits of reduced inflammation, improvement of motor control, and increased overall energy. You will also likely reduce body fat.

- It's not just what you're eating, it's when you're eating. Time-restricted eating—eating within a certain window of time each day—dramatically improves body composition without reducing calories.
- When your body's resting, it can't digest. Cutting off eating three hours before sleep helps reset your circadian rhythm, avoids blood glucose spikes and the resultant "food hangover," and improves sleep quality.
- Most fat burning happens six to eight hours after your last meal. Practicing time-restricted eating will help your body burn more fat during the night.
- **Aim for a 10-hour eating window.** This range is where the benefits amplify.
- **Start small.** Try reducing your eating window by an hour to start. Slowly work your way up to 10 hours.
- **Try it for six weeks.** In addition to reducing body fat, you'll reduce inflammation, improve motor control, and have more energy.

#### Food Actionable #13: Follow the 80:20 rule

Optimal nutrition is one of the keys to health; however, extreme dietary restriction can lead to social isolation.

The purpose of having a food plan is to be able to follow it. When choices become too restrictive, it creates stress. Too much stress will make you guit the food plan, defeating the purpose.

With this in mind, we encourage you to stick to your food plan 80% of the time and loosen up and eat what you want the other 20%. This will bring you peace of mind and allow you to stay on track. There's no room for guilt or shame when it comes to eating food and living a healthy life. You don't have to give up the foods you enjoy most. Just make sure you're following your plan most of the time. You can still go out with friends and have a beer or take the kids out for ice cream. Just don't do it all the time.

You can calculate how many meals in a week fall into the 80%. If you eat three times per day, that's 21 meals per week. Incorporate your new food actionable for 17 meals per week. That leaves you with four meals each week to eat whatever you want without any negative feelings. You can fully enjoy these foods because it's actually part of your plan.

The more you stick to the 80:20 rule, the more you'll become aware of foods that don't make you feel good. You may become less inclined to reach for the fried foods or pizza because they become less appealing or it's not worth the cost of how you feel the next day. Or you still love these foods and you can enjoy them without the negative emotions of guilt and shame.

If you don't like the feeling of inflammation or you have specific health needs, we encourage you to follow a 90:10 plan. This would look like 19 meals on point, leaving you with two meals a week to enjoy what you want. It's more restrictive out of necessity, but it will have you feeling amazing as a result.

If you try to eat well 100% of the time, you will go crazy and no one will want to be your friend. The whole point is to be flexible and adaptable. The best part about this strategy is that it's not a diet that you cheat on and feel guilty. You can plan for the 20% in advance and enjoy every bite, knowing that it's part of the plan. This gives you freedom and makes you so much more likely to stay on track compared to overly restrictive diets.

- Aim for an 80:20 balance. Stick to your plan for 80% of meals (17 meals), and eat what you want the remaining 20% (4 meals).
- Let go of the guilt. Life is meant to be enjoyed—one meal off track here or there isn't a big deal.
- **Pay attention to how you feel.** How do the foods outside your plan make you feel, both right after and the next day? Are there specific foods that elicit worse feelings than others?
- Follow the 90:10 plan if you have specific health needs. It's more restrictive, but you'll feel great and still have two meals per week to enjoy whatever you want.

#### **The Last Bite: Our Final Thoughts**

Eating well is the single best intervention to prevent, treat, and reverse disease. It is the difference between feeling amazing and feeling lousy. Food is medicine. Eating quality foods is more efficacious than pharmaceuticals. Nutrition regulates all of your body functions and biological systems. It is such a driver for health, for better or worse, and absolutely deserves your attention.

When it comes to eating food, the proof is in the results. There's no need to debate or get upset about different types of foods or styles of eating. Do what works for you. You'll know it's working because you'll be lean, have lots of energy, and feel great. You'll be able to build the habits of eating well into your lifestyle in a way that works for you. The way it works for you might not work for someone else. It's that individualized. Eating well is not a diet or a fad. It's a way to build habits into your daily routine so you can do it for the rest of your life. You get to decide how many of the food actionables you follow based on your goals, how good you want to feel, and how long you want to live.

We encourage you to be compassionate with yourself. This process requires a lot of trial and error, which means you will make mistakes along the way. That is okay and it's actually expected. It's not about perfection or attempting to do everything right. Remember, mistakes are necessary for learning and growth. Be kind to yourself because changing how you eat can be challenging. We don't recommended attempting too many food actionables at once or else you might stress yourself out. It works much better for the long run when you choose to work on one at a time.

Is food your strength, weakness, or blindspot? Many people are fully aware that food is their weakness. If food is your blindspot, identify the areas that deserve your attention. How will you act in a way today that will start to address this blind spot and start making yourself feel so much better? Which food actionable are you ready to work on starting today? There are so many opportunities to tidy up your nutrition in ways that will have you feeling great on a regular basis. If food is your strength, keep doing what's working for you. Some people eat really well and they still don't feel great. These are the cases where we need to look at the other elements and figure out what's being neglected. Sometimes, people are too rigid with their diet and become overly restrictive, only to feel worse. This is where the underlying issues have more to do with lack of control in one's life or emotional repressing, so they become far too strict with how they eat. In some cases, people need to seek professional help if this goes unaddressed for too long.

It's important to be reasonable with yourself. This is a slow and steady process that works. As you build the habits, you start to feel better and will be able to take on new challenges. When it comes to food, slow and steady wins the race. Say goodbye to fads and crash diets. When you eat for your long-term heath, very good things happen.



#### References

<sup>1</sup>Sherling, Dawn H., Charles H. Hennekens, and Allison H. Ferris. "Newest Updates to Health Providers on the Hazards of Ultra-Processed Foods and Proposed Solutions." The American Journal of Medicine 137, no. 5 (2024): 395-98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2024.02.001.

<sup>2</sup>Panda, Satchin. The Circadian Code: Lose Weight, Supercharge Your Energy, and Transform Your Health from Morning to Midnight. Rodale Books, 2018.



