
01.01.2025

AFTER ALL, WHY “WOMEN’S NUTRITION”?

Trying to balance family life and work or school, plus having to deal with societal pressure to look young, thin and strong, can make it difficult for any woman to maintain a healthy diet. But the right diet can not only improve your appearance, but also your mood, increase your energy and help treat common (and preventable) discomforts and illnesses at different stages of life. **Women's nutrition addresses our health from every angle including the physiological, emotional, social and cultural aspects.**

When we feel encouraged to neglect our own needs and put family or work first, nutrition helps us escape this situation. If you find you are too busy to eat well, nutritional deficiencies begin to appear in symptoms such as irritation, low energy or changes to your skin and hair, among many others. Also, when you are on an extreme diet which reduces vital nutrients, with time the harms will outweigh any benefit.

But it's not just us as individuals who neglect our needs, science does too. **The vast majority of studies are conducted on men, and the results are often used to treat women as well** while disregarding the fact that the two groups function completely differently. Men, whose hormone levels are more stable and predictable, have a metabolism that is different from women's, and that is governed by 2 main hormones at different parts of the month. Although many studies still ignore sex differences, recent studies on women alone are helping us focus on women's health care.

Women versus men — different nutritional needs

The dietary needs of boys and girls are quite similar, **but when puberty begins, women begin to develop unique nutritional needs.** As we age and our bodies go through more physical and hormonal changes, they demand specific nutrients.

Although women tend to need fewer calories than men, our demand for certain vitamins and minerals is higher. Hormonal changes associated with menstruation, pregnancy, pre-menopause and post-menopause leave women more vulnerable to anemia, weakened bones and osteoporosis, requiring a greater intake of nutrients such as iron, calcium, magnesium, vitamin D and vitamin B9 (folate), for example.

Why is nutrition important for women's health?

Good nutrition offers a long list of benefits for women: it helps maintain a healthy weight, increases stamina and energy to carry out daily activities, improves focus and memory, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases. Also, diseases common among women can also be prevented and treated through proper nutrition: heart disease, stroke, diabetes, urinary tract infection,

polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), Alzheimer's, autoimmune diseases, not to mention some types of cancer. Basically, not everything regarding good nutrition (in fact, very little) is just about reducing consumption. You can eat your way to better health!

- **Heart diseases:** Strokes, for example, can be triggered by the lifelong selection of fatty foods that clog and harden the arteries. Those at-risk of heart disease can improve their condition with a more heart-friendly diet. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women, and strokes are more common in women than in men. But heart health is only part of the equation.

- **Gynecological conditions:** A healthy diet aids in pregnancy and reduces the risk of some types of cancer. Consuming unhealthy foods has a cumulative effect and can aggravate or alleviate gynecological conditions such as uterine fibroids, endometriosis, PCOS and infertility. A balanced, low-glycemic diet with healthy fats, natural anti-inflammatories and adequate nutrients such as zinc, folic acid, magnesium, omega 3, selenium, iron and vitamin D, can improve fertility, help to maintain ovarian health and reduce free radicals in the body.

- **Pre- and post-menopause:** At this stage of life, women undergo hormonal changes that can increase the risk of sarcopenia (loss of muscle mass), osteoporosis, Alzheimer's and heart disease. An anti-inflammatory diet rich in high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids helps reduce the risk of these conditions and improve overall quality of life.

A balanced diet adjusted to your individual needs is important in maintaining the good function of all bodily systems, adequate weight and well-being throughout your life.

It's important to remember that what works for one woman is not always ideal for another.

Your diet should meet your own vital nutritional needs and the stage of life you are in. Whether you are looking for more energy and an improved mood, combating stress, treating PMS, improving fertility, ensuring a healthy pregnancy or relieving menopause symptoms, nutrition helps you stay healthy, active and vibrant throughout the years.

Your health should be a top priority and good nutrition is the main way to maintain it. Eating a balanced diet that meets your unique nutritional needs is crucial for good physical health and mental well-being, as well as preventing chronic diseases and strengthening immunity.

Until next time, enjoy your health to the fullest, women!

Isabel.

- If you have questions, need nutritional advice or want to discuss a specific condition, please contact me, I will be happy to help.