



Nutrition course starter pack

Top 10 tips for healthy eating

Healthy eating is not about strict dietary limitations, staying unrealistically thin, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. Rather, it's about feeling great, having more energy, improving your outlook on life, and stabilizing your mood. If you feel overwhelmed by all the conflicting nutrition and diet advice out there, you're not alone. It seems that for every expert who tells you a certain food is good for you- you'll find another saying exactly the opposite.

This course, created by Abby, a Registered Dietitian, is designed to help you cut through the confusion and learn how to create a healthy diet that works for you! Whether your goal is personal or professional self-improvement, to improve your knowledge and subsequently your health or prevent disease... This nutrition course is the right place to start.

The outcome of this course is to lay a strong foundation for your nutrition knowledge, so that you can build on more complex and interesting topics as we move through the modules.

1. Set realistic health goals

When you start a new eating plan, it is natural to want to be 'the best' ALL the time. This is normal and exciting. But beware of setting yourself unrealistic goals. In the long run, this will only serve to demotivate you. Try your best to set small, realistic goals that you can reach. The more small goals you reach, the more confident you will feel in tackling the bigger goals.

2. Plan your meals and always shop with a shopping list

The old saying 'never go to the supermarket hungry' could not be more true. When you shop on an empty stomach, you are much more likely to make impulsive buys (and unfortunately, these often tend to be healthier choices). Make it your mission to NEVER go to the shops without a shopping list. A good shopping list is created together with a menu plan for the week (remember, fail to plan and you plan to fail). Once again, be realistic when it comes to your menu planning. If you know you only have 20 minutes to prep and cook a meal, don't choose an elaborate recipe that you have never cooked before. Similarly, if you hate cooking, don't think that by just planning intricate homemade meals you will all of a sudden turn into Martha Stewart. As a **bonus** to this starter pack, I have included a printable version of a meal planner and shopping list that you can use to get you started!

3. Stick to a routine, eat your meals at similar times daily

Your body thrives off routine. As you will learn throughout this course, it is best to keep your meal times as regular as possible. Now I am not saying that everyone needs to eat a set number of meals (because this will depend on your personal preference and health status) i.e. 3 large meals per day or 6 smaller meals. What I am saying is that when you determine what suits you best, stick to it!

4. Try your best to identify hunger and satiety cues and act on them appropriately

Most of us are completely unaware of if we are hungry or full. We can blame this on a number of factors like a history of restrictive dieting (a.k.a not listening to our body but rather listening to what the newest 'diet' is telling us is best), certain medications can increase or blunt your hunger cues and even the fact that our fat cells can make us think we are hungry, even if we are not! For one week, I want you to keep a record of what you eat and well as how in made you feel. On this food record you can also jot down information like, how hungry you were before, during and after a meal (on a scale of 1 to 10) as well as a note

on your bowel movements and any symptoms that bother you (common ones include heartburn, excessive wind, fatigue etc.)

5. Choose mainly whole, unrefined or minimally processed foods over highly processed counterparts

Whole foods are defined as: 'Food that has been processed or refined as little as possible and is free from additives or other artificial substances'. A whole food diet has been linked to numerous health benefits. Not only will you be consuming foods in their natural state, meaning that you get the maximum amount of nutrients available, but you will also be consuming less additives. Something I want to highlight at this point, I am not saying that you need to stay away from all processed foods, some processing is often needed to make a food more convenient to eat. It is the highly processed or ultra-processed foods you want to avoid (these foods contain very little or none of the original nutrients).

6. Eat fruits and vegetables everyday

Fruits and vegetables are a valuable source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Multiple studies have shown that a diet high in fruits and vegetables is conducive to good health and can help prevent chronic disease and early death. These foods also contain special nutrients called phytonutrients (or plant nutrients) that give us health benefits over and above those that we would expect. Each group of phytonutrients has variety of functions and varying effects on our health.

7. Fill half your plate with vegetables at each meal (eat a rainbow)

It is important that you eat a variety of fruits and vegetables as different colours usually represent different nutrients (vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients). Vegetables are not only high in nutrients, but they are naturally low in calories, saturated fat and salt. When you fill up your plate with lots of colourful vegetables, it helps you to control your portions of other foods and can contribute to weight maintenance (or weight loss).

8. Include plant based proteins often

Plant based proteins include (but are not limited to) legumes like beans, lentils and chickpeas, pseudo cereals like quinoa and soya protein foods. Plants based proteins are usually a source of protein, fibre as well as various vitamins and minerals. Because of this they are considered to be very nutritious and filling. They are wonderful additions to any diet and have many health promoting characteristics.

9. Choose lean proteins

When choosing animal based proteins (like poultry, meat and dairy) aim to choose lean alternatives. Fat is a very important part of the diet, but we should strive to replace animal fats in the diet with plant fats (like olive oil, avocado's, nuts, seeds etc.)

10. Drink mainly water and limit the amount of sweetener (nutritive or non-nutritive) that you use on a daily basis.

Many people do not drink enough water but instead drink sugar sweetened beverages, tea or coffee. Many of these alternative drinks contain significant amounts of sugar which can contribute to unwanted weight gain and dental caries. If you don't drink enough water, you may become dehydrated and suffer symptoms like fatigue, irritability, loss of concentration and constipation. These are frustrating symptoms to have and can easily be remedied by drinking more water. Your water requirements vary and depend on a variety of factors like age, weight, activity levels and the environmental condition. This being said, for most healthy people, it is unlikely that you will overconsume water and much more likely that you will under consume. If in doubt, drink a little bit more rather than less.

Resources:

American Dietetic Association: <https://www.eatright.org/>

Association for Dietetics in South Africa: <http://adsa.org.za/>

British Dietetic Association: <https://www.bda.uk.com/>

Dietetic Association of Australia: <https://daa.asn.au/>

Dietitians of Canada: <https://www.dietitians.ca/>

Indian Dietetic Association: <http://idaindia.com/>

Irish Dietetic Association: <https://www.indi.ie/>

What is the difference between a dietitian, nutritionist and nutritional therapist?

Click [here](#) to understand these different terms.

I hope that these [10 tips for healthy eating & resources](#) have whet your appetite for your upcoming nutrition course and I look forward to being your educator over the next 16 weeks as your work towards your [Professional Diploma in Nutrition with Shaw Academy](#).

Abby xxx



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