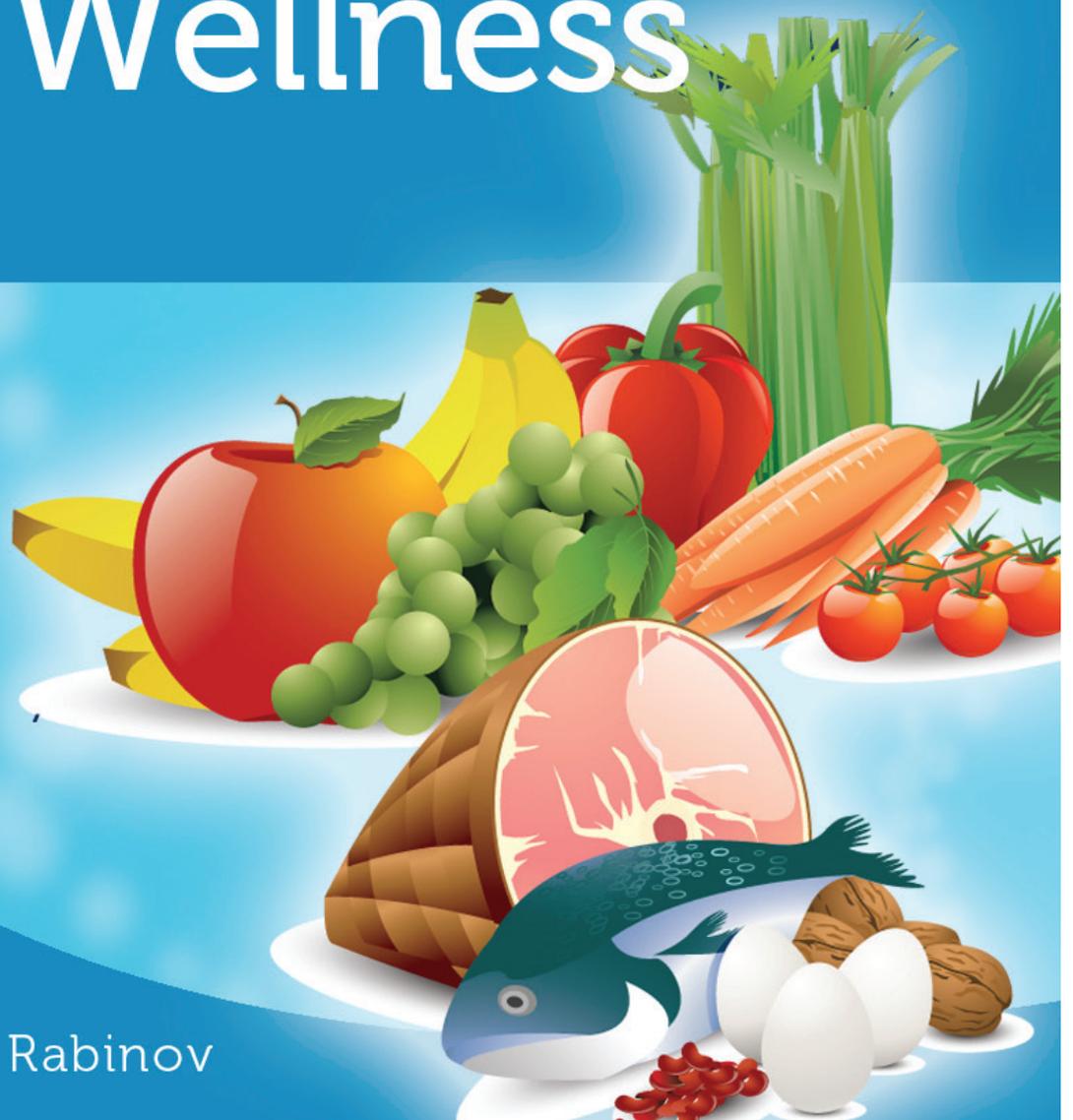


Your Gut Feelings

The Food Body Mind Connection

Food Health & Wellness



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Food Health & Wellness

The Big Picture in Today's World

Most people are confused about food, and with good reason. We are continually bombarded with different and often conflicting messages about what we should and shouldn't eat. Much of the information comes in snippets (eg the latest research findings) and so lacks the necessary depth and context to make it meaningful.

It can also be hard to differentiate between genuine evidence-based information and promotional material put out by food companies to sell products. The preponderance of fad diets can also cause confusion. Significantly too, much of the so-called 'nutrition information' fails to take into account the various obstacles which may be encountered on the road to improving dietary intake.

It is important to be mindful that the various buzzwords or expressions used to promote certain foods or food-types (eg 'Low-fat', 'Lite', 'Low GI') in many cases fail to give the complete picture. Although a given food or food-type may be low in fat, it may also be high in sugar or salt – a feature not generally advertised. In reality, many of the foods consumed today are highly processed – i.e. high in saturated fat, refined carbohydrate, sugar, or salt. They also tend to be low in protein, essential fatty acids (eg Omega 3s) fibre and many essential vitamins and minerals.

The genetic make-up of human beings is that of the Hunter-gatherer. A balanced nutrient intake is essential for optimum health and wellbeing.

Obstacles to the Diet Change

It is also important to be aware of any obstacles which may be preventing us from changing our dietary habits.

In particular:

- We often don't have the knowledge about food and its role in health and wellbeing;
- We generally do not get the feedback from our bodies that the unhealthy food nutritional balance is causing us harm.
- We generally do not get the feedback, except in acute reactions, from our bodies that our body is reacting adversely to a particular food(s), food constituent(s); added chemicals may be causing us harm.
- The damage is usually insidious over years and so damaging that the harm to the body and mind may be irreversible.
- Consequently we function as if there is no harm.
- Each person's requirements and reactions are different and so often require a personalised diagnostic approach.
- In addition, we enjoy the taste, may develop cravings and even addictions of many unhealthy foods.
- Other issues include excess appetite, tiredness, low energy levels, lack of physical activity, social pressures, childhood modelling and conditioning, inadequate support, and psychological issues.
- Ironically, while we may eat unhealthy foods, we do not even contemplate feeding our cars or aeroplanes, and in most cases our animals with poor quality fuel.

What are the Big Picture Essentials?

Essentially, health and wellbeing is dependent on organ function, which is dependent on cell function, which is in turn dependent on the nature and ratio of nutrients being taken up by the cells over time - along with their degree of exposure to toxins. Put another way, what we eat greatly affects our health and wellness.

Our bodies require sufficient daily amounts of protein, Omega 3, fibre, vitamins and minerals for proper function. Generally speaking, whole foods are more likely to provide the appropriate amounts and ratios of nutrients being taken up by the cells.

Our bodies aren't adapted to deal with the excess fats, refined carbohydrate, sugar, and salt frequently found in processed foods.

We are built for famine rather than feast and are made to eat whole rather than processed foods.

In many cases we may react adversely to certain foods or their ingredients. They are often not obvious especially when the reactions are delayed.

Diagnosis and treatment is complex and is addressed under Allergies and Intolerances

Processed foods often contain preservatives, colouring and tasting agents which in excess, or in the cases of people with sensitive constitutions, may be harmful to their health and wellbeing. This topic is addressed under Allergies and Intolerances

How do you bring about change?

The good news is that change need not necessarily be hard to bring about. Some options might be to:

- Develop an understanding of the relationship between food, health and wellness;
- identify the particular nutritional issues in your situation, and where possible any relationship between your food intake and any symptoms. Completing a seven-day food symptom diary may be of assistance.
- If you are concerned about the quality of your diet, not to get upset as most people find it hard to keep to a healthy diet. The worse your diet, the more likely you are to benefit from the change.
- be strategic and take one step at a time.
- Be practical.
- If you run into blockages, seek alternative strategies and appropriate support from family, friends, like minded groups and if necessary seek professional advice.

What Next?

Nutrition plays a significant role in most peoples health and is part of a holistic approach.

Not only can it improve your current health but may also help in prevention.

Improving your health, both physically and mentally, through nutrition is a journey.

While the journey is not easy, being sick is harder.