

Welcome to the Elixan Nutrition Guide!

We have put together what we believe are some of the most important areas when it comes to nutrition and your health. You can either dip in and out on the areas that interest you most, or of course read through it all and then if needed send us any questions on how you can best apply it to your needs.

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This guide has been designed as a potential starting point for your health and areas to consider when wanting to lose weight and improve your health. It hasn't been produce to solve every health problem, but hopefully it will enlighten you and point you in the right direction, at the very least we hope it will give you some basis to start from and have you considering other areas of your health and eating plans you may not have previously considered when wanting to lose weight, change your body shape and improve your health.

The advice in this guide should not be substituted for face to face advice from a qualified professional and we are not liable for occurrences that result of changes you make in your exercise and eating plans.

Remember these simple things above everything else!

- We believe you should be nourishing your body not restricting and depriving yourself. Besides that is just not fun and never sustainable long term. So remember to enjoy and nourish, nourish, nourish!
- Keep nutrition and healthy eating simple.
- Enjoy and be excited about any changes you make, be grateful for what you already have but also do not despair if your health is not where you want it to be right now. The changes you are about to make will be a great part of your life!
- Don't worry or give up if things do not quite go to plan, that is life and it is never perfect so enjoy the ride.

Natural, Fresh Food

We have put together what we believe are some of the most important areas when it comes to nutrition and your health. They may not all apply to you but we encourage you to take time to read through it all.

Firstly, there is not a perfect diet or eating plan. Over the years I must have given out dozens and dozens if not hundreds of meal plans. Do they get followed? Hmm possibly at the start, but not long term. You need to find your way, understand the basics and incorporate them into your lifestyle.

Above all, take **responsibility yourself**. Find the support you need but do not rely on other people to do it for you.

Your biggest challenge yet your greatest success? Focus on eating fresh, natural food and removing or avoiding processed food as much as you can. Do not start crazy restriction diets or fad diets unless you are going to use them sensibly for a short period of time as a means to make quick gains but with plans in place to then move on to a sustainable programme. Relying on quick or fad diets to achieve your over riding goal will only end up in failure and you will end up de motivated as quickly as you started the diet!

For many of you, concentrating on eating fresh, natural foods will give you the desired results. For others combining supplements with your eating plan may be needed to get you back on track.

The only exception I would make is if you are following a hard core gym programme wanting to achieve a "beach body, six pack look" then it is hard dieting, restriction and only clean food and sacrifice! This is usually achievable if you are following a 90 / 120 day body transformation programme but not sustainable for much longer than that.

Fresh, natural foods will cleanse the body, reduce inflammation, balance your hormones and generally make you feel and look better.

Above anything else this is your biggest challenge....Make your eating plan packed full of fresh, natural foods, nothing processed and you will achieve your greatest nutritional goal of all!

What should be on My Plate?

- Lots of vegetables, especially green vegetables, these should be the first thing on your plate.
- Healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, oily fish, some animal fat, avocados and olives.
- Lean protein such as chicken, fish, beef, turkey and lamb. you don't need huge portions of these, think quality before quantity.
- Carbohydrates such as oats, rice, potatoes and pasta.
- We usually recommend in this order too!

Reducing processed food will impact every system of your body, you will start to function better. Your heart will be healthier, your brain will function better, your hormonal balance will improve, your skin will glow and your digestive tract will recover from the bombardment of toxins its been overwhelmed by...What are you waiting for😊?

Balance Your Blood Sugar Levels (weight loss and energy levels)

The number one rule for weight loss and improving energy is...balance your blood sugar levels. Blood sugar levels are easily disrupted by sugary foods, refined / processed carbs, alcohol and stress.

Spikes in your blood sugar level often effect weight loss as you swing from high to low energy. During the lows often sugary "hits" are reached for to pick you up and then the process starts again.

Sugar in the blood stream is recognised and your body produces insulin which helps balance your blood sugar levels by removing excess sugar from your blood. Insulin is storage hormone so that sugar is readily stored as fat so a great reason NOT to spike your insulin levels or keep spikes to a minimum.

If you can master your blood sugar levels by consuming foods rich in fibre, protein and fat then the positive impact on your health and weight management will be substantial.

Digestive Tract Cleansing is Key to Your Health

This is missed by most people but one of the key components for a healthy you.

Whatever your goals, make improving your intestinal health priority; imagine it as your core that everything else functions from.

We know, right? Who would have thought their intestinal tract deserves such attention?

Intestinal problems are not always characterised with the classic bloating, cramps, wind, gas type symptoms, other health conditions that can be linked to poor intestinal health are fatigue, auto-immune problems, skin conditions and any form of inflammatory conditions. Diseases such as cancer, diabetes and dementia are also now being linked to intestinal health problems.

Optimal intestinal health appears to be key for virtually every aspect of your health from preventing disease to losing weight; the good news is that as you improve your diet the function of your digestive tract will also improve; however it may need some extra support to regain normal function.

Your intestines are incredible and you really need to take care of them.

Firstly your small intestine houses approximately 80% of your immune system which means to reduce your risk of illness and disease then the functioning of your intestinal tract is absolutely crucial.

Aside from the functioning of your immune system it also produces many of your hormones such as digestive, sexual and mood effecting hormones.

Yet still it does more! It of course helps digest your food and transfer nutrients from your food through its walls ready to be taken to your liver to be directed around the body.

Those are just SOME of the reasons why it needs to be your starting point and priority when it comes to your health and your weight loss too. Research is now showing the link between weight gain and your intestinal flora / bacteria.

However, intestinal health problems seem rife in today's modern world. Whilst some issues may produce symptoms which may be mild and tolerable other symptoms may be severe and really impact your daily life. Whereas other symptoms such as fatigue you may not directly link to your intestinal function.

The good news is some digestive problems can be managed and even alleviated through optimal nutrition and supplements.

The key areas that severely affect your intestinal health are:

- High levels of chronic stress
- Processed foods that contain too much sugar, unnatural fats and chemicals.
- Food intolerances
- Alcohol
- Regular medication

Several things can occur over time. One is damage to the intestinal lining termed Leaky Gut.

Unfortunately, regular consumption of processed food, alcohol, taking regular medication and high stress level can damage the intestinal wall and over time the intestinal / gut wall can become porous. Ideally the gut wall should only allow through what it needs but when it has become porous other items can pass through the gut wall in to the blood stream leading to inflammation...these items are viewed as foreign invaders by your immune system, in turn they are attacked and as a result an inflammatory reaction occurs, over time this can lead to systemic inflammation.

Therefore, if you suffer with ANY inflammatory condition you need to ensure the intestinal / gut wall is healthy and the intestinal tract is functioning properly.

Hopefully you can now begin to see that improving your intestinal health should be your first area to address.

Macro Nutrients

These are protein, carbohydrates and fats (more in sections below). Generally what we find is people consume too many refined carbohydrate such as cereals, breads, pasta and potatoes; too many processed meats and not enough healthy fats, so it's just a case of shifting these ratios around a bit.

Macro nutrients are the main staples of your diet.

The government give the recommendation of the Eat Well Guide but this doesn't seem to put enough emphasis on healthy fats. It encourages high consumption of breads, cereals and pastas but unfortunately most of those found on the supermarket shelf have now become very highly processed. I generally recommend consuming these foods in smaller doses; see them as side dishes not the main part of your meal.

Micro Nutrients

These are your vitamins and minerals and although needed in much smaller dosages are mightily important aspects of your diet, without them your health may be severely effect. They are so often undervalued and under considered when considering food options.

Be honest, how often do you select your foods based on the number calories, levels of fat (i.e. low fat foods) and how much sugar and salt they contain? I'd guess nearly every time, right?!

From now on pay some consideration to the nutrient value of each of your meals, remember your goal is to nourish and rejuvenate the body so start choosing your foods based not solely on levels of sugar, salt, fat or number of calories but is the food you are consuming high in vitamins and minerals.

When it comes to weight loss often people ask about fat burning fat supplements, we believe weight loss comes down to nourishing the body so invest your money in a good quality multivitamin as a starting point before anything else.

Remember a healthy body will start burning fat☺

Healthy Fats

We LOVE HEALTHY FATS!! You should too and from this moment forward make them your best friend!

They will truly bless you, help you lose weight (yes eating more fat will help you lose weight), balance your hormones (absolutely crucial), support your brain function (your brain is about 60% fat), improve your skin health, ensure your nervous system functions correctly (certain fats surround something called the Myelin Sheath that are the connections on your cells that link your cells to each other to ensure they communicate properly with other cells) AND on top of all that healthy fats ensure that the structure of your cells are maintained.

In summary healthy fats are awesome! Just incredible, so much so that some are essential to our health. This means the body can't produce them so they need to be consumed via your diet. Omega 3's are one of these Essential Fats and can be found oily fish, nuts and seeds which you need to consume regularly.

Healthy fats when consumed sensibly will NOT make you fat; this is one of the biggest misconceptions with people that want to lose weight, in fact the more healthy fat you eat the better you will manage and control your appetite, reduce your cravings which will all make sustainable long term weight loss far easier.

Healthy fats will not cause heart disease, as you can probably tell by now healthy fats should be encouraged in your diet; when it comes to fat and heart disease, it's the type of fat you need to be concerned with consuming; avoiding healthy fats will actually PUT you at risk of heart disease.

Bad / Unhealthy Fats

Fats are not all equal; please do not live by the principle of "I need to avoid fat". You need to eat the right fats and eliminate the bad ones, it's that simple really. Unhealthy fats are NOT found in nature; they are man-made and found in processed foods.

Bad fats interrupt so many of the processes mentioned in the healthy fats section above and now are heavily linked to heart disease and high levels of inflammation (more on this later).

Another reason to avoid processed fats is that your body has a really hard time of identifying what these fats are; they are therefore treated as foreign invaders and attacked by your immune system. This in turn causes inflammation and over time this inflammation is linked to many of the chronic diseases we see today.

Consuming unhealthy fats on a regular basis WILL raise your chances of suffering with heart disease.

Low Fat Foods

This is up there with the best of them when it comes to nutritional mistakes. About 15 years ago I used to believe the message of choosing low fat foods was the right thing to do, how wrong I was.

Hopefully by now you're starting to appreciate the need to consume healthy fats for virtually every aspect of your good health.

Low fat foods were probably created with the best of intentions, take out the fat from food and we'll all be healthier, right? Unfortunately not, one aspect of fat in our food is that it provides taste, take it out and you're lacking taste so sugar is used to replace fat; therefore one great reason to avoid low fat food is that they are high in sugar.

A simple method is; if the food package says low fat then avoid it and choose a fresh, natural option instead i.e. proper food!

Protein

Protein is great for building lean, toned, sexy muscles...without the bulk:-)

Protein is crucial to your health, proteins are made of Amino Acids that are needed for virtually every aspect of bodily function; they are generally known as your building blocks.

There are 22 Amino Acids, some are called "essential" in that the body can't produce them so you need to get them from your diet and some are "semi essential" which means your body can synthesise them from the combination of other Amino Acids.

Animal meats are called "complete proteins" as they contain all the amino acids. Nuts, seeds and vegetables still contain protein but not all the "Amino Acids" so are often called incomplete proteins.

You should probably eat both in your diet, but of course Vegans and Vegetarians choose not too; if you are feeling good and in good health when following a Vegan or Vegetarian diet then great but some, or many of us may need quality animal protein too. We are all very different and have different requirements so you have to work out what is best for you.

Proteins are needed for all repair processes in the body so key to your health, animal produce has high levels of vitamins and minerals as well as being excellent sources of protein.

We do appreciate that quality animal protein can be expensive at times but you only need a relatively small portion so it can be more than affordable.

We recommend buying a small portion of quality protein as opposed to a larger portion that has less quality, so buy the best you can. A farmers market is great place to find free range meat at great pieces.

If you want build lean, sexy muscle then you'll need train properly and have a higher level of protein than if you weren't training.

Carbohydrates (carbs)

Aaaah carbohydrates! One of the great debates in nutrition! We get frustrated by how complicated people make this issue.

So we want to make this easy for you so think of your carbohydrates as being fibrous or non fibrous then you'll know which ones to choose.

Fibrous are carbs such vegetables, beans, fruits, oats and certain grains.

Non fibrous are carbs such as cakes, crisps, chocolates, pizza, breads and pasta; basically most processed foods.

Sweet potatoes, white potatoes and rice are also carbohydrates. These are usually fairly good choices, particularly sweet potatoes and wild brown rice or basmati rice.

However, the 2 KEY ASPECTS TO CARBOHYDRATE CONSUMPTION are:

Control your portion size and avoid the non fibrous carbohydrates!

Firstly, eat as many vegetables as you can and 2-3 pieces of fruit a day is okay for most of us; however diabetics may find that too many.

Carbs Portion size: when we are choosing foods such as pasta, oats, rice and breakfast cereals (the latter as a treat!) an UN cooked portion size about 30 / 40 grams. Yes, when you measure it out you will be shocked at how small this actually is! We encourage you should treat these foods more as side dishes as opposed to the main food group on your plate.

In our opinion too many non fibrous carbohydrates or too many processed carbohydrates are probably one of the biggest causes of weight gain. Carbohydrates are broken down to sugar to be absorbed by the body; too much sugar is converted to and stored as fat hence the reason why too many non fibrous carbohydrates will probably cause you to gain fat.

Remove Food Intolerances / Irritants / Allergies.

In your modern world your body is being overloaded by toxins and irritants; in this section we are talking food irritants / intolerances.

If you're struggling to lose weight or have health problems that are particularly linked to inflammation such as digestive problems, skin health, arthritis or fatigue then I would definitely investigate whether certain foods are causing you a problem.

I prefer to use the words irritants / intolerances as opposed to food allergies, they are really different things. Intolerances can build up when you are over exposed to something or you can just naturally react to certain foods.

Food irritants and intolerances can sometimes be overcome by total avoidance of the suspected food for around 12 weeks; this can sometimes "switch off" your body's immune reaction to the food.

However, if you suspect that something is causing you a problem a simple check is to totally avoid that food for 7-10 days; basically if your symptoms go or reduce within that period it's a fair bet to say that right now you need to totally avoid that food to give your system a break.

Food irritants / intolerances, over time, can become a real problem as they create low grade chronic inflammation as your body attacks the offending food as it sees it as a foreign invader; inflammation is now being linked to many chronic diseases. Unless you give your body a break from the offending food your body will keep the immune defence against that food on red alert

Food irritants will also make you feel tired or in some cases exhausted, this can be related to the over working of your Adrenal Glands (more on that later on) which then makes trying to eat healthy foods and regularly exercise a chore or in some cases impossible; this is why it's often key to establish if you have any reactions to food.

I would recommend using Genova Diagnostics food intolerance testing.

Manage Your Food Cravings

Many people I speak to complain of having cravings and struggling to lose weight.

Cravings can be a sign that your body is missing something.

If you genuinely have cravings (different to sitting at home, watching TV thinking hmmm "I just fancy a piece of cake!") then will power alone will NOT work! So don't blame yourself but there are solutions.

One issue that can accompany food cravings is lack of energy, you feel tired so you crave something sweet and the rollercoaster begins.

Please note; this section is looking at day to day cravings not those specifically associated with your menstrual cycle, but using the information here should really help in balancing your menstrual cycle.

Several quick and easy ways to manage cravings can be with supplementing with Chromium, L Glutamine and Magnesium; always buy the best quality supplements you can.

However, long term you want to start balancing your blood sugar levels and also your intestinal tract health as mentioned in the earlier sections above.

You could be craving certain foods, often sugar / processed carbs, due to an imbalance in your gut bacteria. Certain gut bacteria thrive and actually live off sugar therefore you could be craving these types of foods due to the imbalance in your gut bacteria.

Live bacteria and L Glutamine supplements are great for balancing the bacteria in your gut; removing processed sugar will make huge difference too.

Your digestive tract produces hormones that regulate your appetite; two major players are Leptin and Ghrelin which help regulate your appetite by telling your brain when you are full or hungry. The signalling of these hormones appear to be hugely affected by the choice of foods you make and its now believed processed food that our body cannot recognise is one of the major reasons the functioning of these hormones is occurring.

If you're really struggling with cravings then try supplementing with chromium and also a healthy bacteria supplement.

Regulating your blood sugar levels is also going to really help you in managing your cravings, imagine your energy levels in a nice straight line; any deviation in this line either up or down is going to hit your energy levels...sometimes incredibly hard! This can easily lead to cravings as your energy levels bounce up and down.

Cleanse Your Body and Reduce Inflammation and Toxic Load

Thoughts regarding the relevance of systemic inflammation and toxic load are becoming more and more linked to causes of chronic illnesses such as Alzheimer's, Diabetes, Heart Disease and Cancer.

Other more subtle signs of chronic inflammation or toxic overload can potentially be seen in many people who experience those “never ending” colds or who have a bad episode of Arthritis or IBS.

In your modern world your body is bombarded with toxins found in processed foods, drinks, chemicals and medicines. Your body can usually cope with some toxic overload but unfortunately if you are exposed to these elements repeatedly they may begin to accumulate as your body cannot clear them out quickly enough leading to low grade, chronic inflammation which is thought to lead to many of the common illnesses and diseases we see today.

Check Your Calorie Intake and Calorie Counting

Be honest, have you ever tried a calorie controlled diet?

Are you happy with your weight right now?

Aaah calories, everyone loves to calorie count but do we really need too?

Well you probably need to be aware of your daily calorie intake and how too many calories can easily creep in to your daily eating ritual without you noticing...this is often a classic reason for weight gain.

However, you do NOT need to obsess over calories, they should not control your life, basing your weight loss around calories restriction is rarely effective long term but you might use it from to time and find it works for you.

Most calorie controlled diets eventually fail and the real kick in the butt is that those who lose weight on calorie controlled or calorie restricted diets eventually regained the weight loss and nearly always with around 10/20% more than their original weight! Usually within 2 years).

Firstly it is NOT the only aspect to weight loss, in fact on many occasions it becomes the focus of weight loss, consuming people and becoming an obsession when it really doesn't need to be.

Personally, I never count calories I focus more on eating fresh, natural food. Do this regularly and your body will regular your appetite and you'll naturally control your calorie intake.

Remember you should be enjoying your changes, not obsessing over calories...if you are then you are probably eating the wrong the foods! Also remember, you need to be nourishing your body not having it governed by dietary restriction.

Your daily maintenance calorie intake should be around 2000 calorie, no more; you should start by spending a few days using something like my fitness pal app to measure your calorie intake.

Now, most research states that if you want to lose weight you need to create a calorie deficit of about 500 calories so your weight loss calorie target would be around 1500 calories

Regardless of your current weight, don't rush with calorie restriction; **gradually** reduce your calorie intake by around 200-250 calories until you're between 1500 and 2000 calories. Reducing 200 – 250 calories every few days should give your body enough time to **gradually** adapt.

You certainly have be aware of your calorie intake, if you are regularly consuming more than 2000 calories a day you will probably gain weight...unless you are training very hard. **Key Point:** keep a close eye on the small little calorie boosts that sneak in to your diet without noticing, these are often sugar laden too!

Calorie restriction is not a long term answer to weight loss; make sure your average daily intake is around the 2000 calorie mark or slightly under, regularly exercise and then work on EVERYTHING else in this guide before cutting more calories!!

Quick Tip: Do not fear being hungry at times, being hungry is a great ancestral tool to keep us alert and ready for action!

Balance Your Hormones

One of the key aspects to a healthy, well functioning body is to have your hormones functioning as they should do. Often nutrition plays an important role, whether it's positive or negative on your hormone function / balance.

Hormones work like your communication system around the body, being produced and then moved around the body to initiate action to be taken as needed. As in all walks of life, if there is a communication breakdown then things tend to go haywire, sometimes subtly and other times wreaking havoc.

Estrogen is the dominant female hormone (actually there are 3 separate hormones which combined are termed Estrogen) so obviously a key area for you to focus.

The ultimate biologic effect of Estrogen in the body depends on how it is metabolised. The metabolism of Estrogen takes place primarily in the liver through Phase I (hydroxylation) and Phase II (methylation and glucuronidation) pathways, which allow the Estrogen to be detoxified and excreted from the body; it's this metabolism process that is crucial is to your health.

Sugar has a large effect on insulin levels; insulin can increase production of testosterone and generally effect hormone balance. I would strongly recommend you work on balancing blood sugar levels if you have any form of hormonal imbalance.

Foods and nutrients that aid Estrogen balance are generally those that impact on how it's metabolised. Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage play significant roles in the detoxification pathways. Vegetables in general are excellent sources of fibre and can bind to Estrogen in the digestive tract to aid clearance.

Magnesium and Vitamin E are also important in Estrogen balance; low serum vitamin E is associated with elevated Estrogen levels, and may negatively affect Estrogen detoxification whereas Magnesium promotes key Estrogen detoxification.

Also, B Vitamins such as B6 and B12 function as important cofactors for enzymes involved in Estrogen detoxification.

Coping with Stress and Fatigue (Adrenal Health)

How often do you feel “stressed” at some point; may be regularly or even every day? The word “stress” is non-specific really, it’s just a general term we all use but here we are going to look at how your body responds to stress.

Often, but not always, accompanying stress comes fatigue or feelings of not being able to cope with everything that is going on.

When your body is under any form of stress it releases Cortisol from the Adrenal glands, Cortisol helps manufacture glucose from proteins and fatty acids to give us energy to combat the stressor.

In my opinion it stands to reason, although not always medically recognised, that if you are under constant stress then your Adrenal Glands will be required to continually produce Cortisol to combat the stress.

If you are in the nutrition camp then generally the thought is that your Adrenal Glands can only do this for a limited time before function is impaired, this sounds quite reasonable as nothing can go on forever...this has been termed “Adrenal Fatigue”

However if you are in the Medical camp, then usually Adrenal Fatigue is not recognised as a medical term or condition. The belief being that your Adrenal Glands don’t actually get weaker, they actually get stronger the more they are used. Much like a muscle, if you use it, it then grows back stronger....my belief is of course that you can easily over train that muscle and likewise you could easily over work your Adrenal Glands.

Which camp you are in isn’t overly relevant, it’s all about feeling good and being healthy; we are all very different so affected in many different ways and you have to find what works for you and follow your own beliefs

If you feel like the following than investigating Adrenal Fatigue could be just what you need:

- Constantly tired
- Completely fatigued
- Wired and tired, i.e. tired but can’t sleep
- Feeling unable to cope with life’s daily demands

Adrenal Fatigue isn’t just a blanket approach, for example if you are completely fatigued / exhausted then your Cortisol production could be minimal, if you are wired and tired then your Cortisol function is probably more askew i.e. your Adrenal Glands may be over or under producing Cortisol at the wrong times.

However, regardless of what is happening, usually fatigue or exhaustion is involved and even the smallest of perceived stress can be too much for you to cope with.

There are lots of things you can do to combat the issues, however key starting points are removing caffeine, sugar and processed foods from your diet as these heavily impact your Adrenal function.

Find time for relaxation, your Adrenal glands repair at rest so REST is key and get plenty of sleep. Embark on a nutrient rich diet and supplement plan including multivitamins, B Vitamins, Vitamin C and Magnesium.

Yes, I very much appreciate that caffeine and sugar are the first things you reach for when tired so it can be very hard to break the cycle but it's critical to your recovery.

I know firsthand how tough fatigue can be to beat but it can be beaten and you can recover, you need to be prepared to make some changes, sometimes significant but it will definitely be worth it.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS): Mitochondria dysfunction

We just wanted to touch on this; it's a very specialist subject but the reference here may help yourself or someone you know.

Mitochondria dysfunction could be a key area to focus on if you're suffering with CFS but one you may not have heard of before.

Mitochondria are referred to as the energy power house of your cells, pure and simple they produce energy we need to function.

As this is such a specialist subject we would urge you to visit a site by Dr Sarah Myhill if you suffer with or know anyone that suffers with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; here is a link to her page on CFS: <http://www.drmyhill.co.uk/wiki/CFS - The Central Cause: Mitochondrial Failure>

Thyroid

The thyroid is hugely significant, in fact so much so that it governs many processes in the body; lack of energy, feeling cold and digestive problems can be signs of Thyroid dysfunction.

Usually those suffering with Thyroid issues suffer with Hypothyroid which is a low or underactive Thyroid which is what we are discussing here.

Thyroid dysfunction is usually managed by your medication but good nutrition is important to keep it functioning correctly

Tyrosine which is an amino acid and an essential component for the synthesis of thyroid hormones and neurotransmitters. In order for thyroid hormones to be produced effectively, the body must be receiving optimum supplies of this amino acid.

Iodine is an essential nutrient for thyroid hormone synthesis. Typical iodine deficiency signs include a metallic taste in the mouth and heavy mucous secretions. Kelp is a concentrated source of bioavailable iodine.

B vitamins and Copper are necessary for the normal manufacturing of the thyroid hormones.

Calcium and Magnesium imbalances can be a problem for thyroid hormone function. It is important that these two minerals are well balanced for optimum functioning of the thyroid gland.

Vitamin A supports thyroid hormone production.

Vitamin C, Zinc, and B vitamins all help to support the adrenal glands, which in turn, help to support thyroid function.

If you suffer with Thyroid dysfunction and therefore low energy levels regulating your blood sugar by avoiding refined sugar, large portion sizes of carbohydrates avoiding processed food can really help to improve your energy levels.

Removing Wheat, Gluten and Dairy

Removing food groups from your diet is quite controversial.

Firstly, if you are functioning well, have a happy healthy body and enjoy eating wheat and dairy produce then there's no need to stop.

I personally do better when I avoid eating wheat, gluten and dairy but when I have them occasionally I can cope.

However, I tend to find I get a white coating on my tongue if I have too much of them, my energy levels drop (sometimes considerably) and I get mild intestinal issues. They all pass within 24 – 48 but if I was having wheat, gluten and dairy daily I know I would really struggle, in total I may have one piece of either wheat or dairy a week i.e. a small piece of chocolate etc but often I'll go weeks without either...the less I have the better I feel!

I would consider myself hyper sensitive to these foods and certainly my energy levels are far better when I avoid wheat, gluten and dairy.

If you suffer with a lack of energy or fatigue problems, any form of intestinal issues or struggle to lose weight then you could consider removing these food groups from your diet.

Within 7-10 days of total avoidance you would know whether you function better with or without wheat, gluten and dairy and then whether to continue with avoiding the food and then a reintroduction programme.

Finally, I do not agree with the view that you need to eat these foods for nutritional value, you can meet all your nutrient needs but consuming a wide range of vegetables, fruits, quality meat, eggs, fish nuts and seeds!

Vegetarian and Vegan Diets (abbreviated to VV for writing purposes!)

Like weight loss, there will always be a great debate or just a plain old disagreement on what works and in this case on whether a VV diet is better than the standard Omnivore diet.

It's simple really, it comes down to your personal body needs so try both, see how you feel and function and then make your decision.

However, I totally advocate that vegetables should be the first thing on your plate. Personally, I have tried a VV diet and it didn't work for me, but now I have far less animal protein and have VV days and meals throughout week so I have cut down my animal protein consumption considerably and I feel good.

Many of us probably "over do" animal protein, and often it's of poor quality; so if you enjoy animal protein then think quality over quantity.

However, if you choose to avoid animal produce completely then there are a few areas you may need to supplement with to ensure your vitamin and mineral requirements are met.

With that in mind, some may argue that a VV diet does not meet all your dietary requirements but I know there are many people and also high level athletes that function extremely well on VV diet so it's a very personal thing.

Supplements you MAY need to include if following a VV based diet are B12, Omega 3's, B Vitamins, Iron and Zinc. Some of these can be covered if you choose to eat eggs and fish but if you choose not too then you may need to supplement with them. A good B12, multivitamin and Omega 3 supplement should cover your bases but like everything with regard to your health it comes down to your personal needs.

Supplements

Can we find everything nutritionally we need in our food? Possibly so if your diet is completely natural, fresh and organic; but for most of us that is not always practical.

Personally, I have used supplements for many years and supplements such as Vitamin D, Omega 3's, a Multivitamin and healthy gut bacteria should be part of your daily / weekly plan.

Vitamin D is recommended for virtually everyone as it's only really obtained via exposure to sunshine and seems to play a key role in many critical aspects of your health.

Omega 3's are an essential fat that your body cannot produce so its crucial you take them in via your diet or supplements. Omega 3's are so critical to your optimal health we recommend taking an Omega 3 supplement daily or several days a week.

Healthy gut bacteria are also critical to your health; above we mentioned the need for you to optimise your intestinal health and therefore recommend you supplement daily with a healthy gut bacteria supplement.

Unfortunately there isn't a regulatory body or standard body governing the quality of supplements.

We have been using Nutri for a decade now and we chose them for the following reasons:

Their supplements are bio available, this means they are easily available and absorbed for the body to use. An example is Magnesium; there are several different forms available in supplements. Nutri only use the most bio available form, which does mean is more expensive. However, cheaper brands often use forms of Magnesium which are poorly absorbed...basically you are then just wasting your money!

Nutri use sustainable sources; an example are their Fish Oils. They are one of the only supplement brands to be awarded the Friend's of the Sea certification which means the fish used for their Omega 3 supplements are sustainably fish.....add in their rest of the info!

Nutri supplements are backed by a huge amount of scientific research and the nutrients in their products are always of the highest quality.

Intermittent fasting (IF)

We are big fans of intermittent fasting for weight loss and a healthy body, basically going sustained periods without eating.

IF 2-3 times per week NOT every day.

Please note: IF should not be used if you are training hard (4-6 times a week), in that case you should be eating regular meals for energy and repair.

If you are diabetic and on medication then IF may be contraindicated as your blood sugar levels will be affected when fasting.

If you have problems regulating Cortisol then IF may not be suitable for you.

IF works really well in terms of fitting it in to your lifestyle i.e. say you use IF 3 days a week, you skip breakfast and lunch and then just have an evening meal - that might work really on your busy days.

Here are a few examples of IF: you really don't need to over complicate things, just do it 2-3 times per week!

The 5:2 diet

The 16:8 diet

Or just skip all food and eat one meal a day in the evening so you are on a 24 hour fast

There really aren't any fixed rules to IF, just start by having periods of your day without eating!

Key point: With IF try and still eat fresh, natural food; doing an IF day and then eating processed food or refined / non fibrous carbs at your meal time could be counter effective.

Quick tip! If you are having a day of IF, when you first start doing it you may start to feel nauseas or light headed when not eating for hours on end. This can often occur late morning, it's nothing to be concerned about as it's just your blood sugar levels dropping, this will pass as your body ramps up hormonal production to keep you energised but its not particularly pleasant so you may need something like a small handful of Almonds to hand to take the "edge off"....or of course you can just power through!

Your body will adapt to this and it will gradually go as your body gets used to fasting.

Try IF, if you feel better for doing it then use it appropriately, but if you feel worse for doing it (give it a few attempts) then quite simply...stop doing it!

Bone Health

It's estimated 1 in every 2 women over the age of 50 will suffer from a fracture. That's an incredible statistic and great reason to start taking care of your bones right now.

Vitamin D, K2, Calcium, Phosphorous, Magnesium and Omega 3's are some of the key nutrients needed for bone health.

Bone is constantly remodelled so it isn't just Calcium that bones need, this turnover is affected by the menopause so even a more crucial time to start thinking about improving your bone health.

The great news regarding bone health, actually like most health issues, is that you are in control over how healthy or unhealthy your bones become.

The two key areas for bone health, like most health issues are:

Regular impact exercise, body weight or weight training: weight training or resistance training pulls on your muscles which pull on your tendons which pull on your bones which in turn strengthens the bone. Impact exercises like running, box jumps and skipping also do a great a job in strengthening your bones.

Good Nutrition: This is the other element for healthy bones as the nutrients are needed for the continuing remodelling your bones are subject too; we mentioned the key nutrients in the paragraphs above and a good, varied diet really is crucial to keeping your bones healthy.

The Power of Choice and the Psychology of Eating and Exercising

If you were honestly asked “what do you need to do to improve your health and or lose weight?” what would you say? Probably “I should eat healthier foods and exercise more”. We all know it and we all probably know how important both aspects are to avoiding chronic disease too.

So the next question is “why doesn’t everyone choose healthier options?”

We all have similar choices / options in life, so what drives you to make better choices?

Many people think changes need to be perfect, or big or huge, or the timing has to be perfect or they need to be life changing....and then it can become over whelming!

What is driving you to make changes? Would small micro changes work for better for you? What support do you need around you? What advantages or disadvantages are there of making changes?

Where are you on the stages of change?

Pre contemplation – Contemplation – Preparation – Action – Maintenance –Termination?

Lot’s to think about, but why not start tomorrow? Make one small change, take one small step, the following day take the next step and then another...and just keep going!

Where to Start?

Start simply, there's no right or wrong. What suits your lifestyle, what can you sensibly achieve right now and then build from there....even small changes can have a significant impact.

And, of course enjoy it!

We are here to help you in any way we can, pop us an email at info@elixan.co.uk and we'll get back to you ASAP to get you moving!