Nutrition for Dummies

Learn to:
- Understand food labelling
- Tell the difference between facts and fads
- Make the best food choices for you and your family

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Meal Replacement Diets

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About the Authors

Nigel Denby trained as a dietitian at Glasgow Caledonian University, following an established career in the catering industry. He is also a qualified chef and previously owned his own restaurant.

His dietetic career began as a Research Dietitian at the Human Nutrition Research Centre in Newcastle upon Tyne. After a period working as a Community Dietitian, Nigel left the NHS to join Boots Health and Beauty Experience where he led the delivery and training of Nutrition and Weight Management services.

In 2003 Nigel set up his own Nutrition consultancy, delivering a clinical service to Hammersmith and Queen
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Nigel also runs his own private practice in Harley Street, specialising in Weight Management, PMS / Menopause and Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

Nigel works extensively with the media, writing for the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, *Zest*, *Essentials*, and various other consumer magazines. His work in radio and television includes BBC and ITN news programmes, Channel 4’s Fit Farm, BBC Breakfast, and BBC Real Story. Nigel’s first book, *The GL Diet*, was published by John Blake in January 2005.

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As a member of the British Dietetic Association she has spoken and written for the media on a variety of nutrition related health issues. Sue lives in Bristol and spends much of her spare time running up and down hills in the Cotswolds in an attempt to get fit.

**Carol Ann Rinzler** is a noted authority on health and nutrition and holds an MA from Columbia University. She
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Introduction

Once upon a time people simply sat down to dinner, eating because they were hungry or just for the pleasure of it. Nobody said, ‘I wonder how much trans fat is in the margarine’, or asked whether the bread had a low glycaemic index. Today, the dinner table can be a battleground between health and pleasure. For many people, the fight to eat what does them good rather than what tastes good has become a lifelong struggle.

This book is designed to end the war between your need for a healthy diet and your equally compelling need for tasty meals. In fact, armed with a little insider knowledge you’ll find that what’s good for you can also be good to eat – and vice versa.

About This Book

*Nutrition For Dummies* doesn’t aim to send you back to the classroom, sit you down, and make you take notes about what to eat every day from now until you’re old and grey. Instead, this book means to give you the information you need to make wise food choices – which always means choices that please the palate as well as the body. Some of what you’ll read here is about the basics: the roles of vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and even plain water. You’ll also read tips about how to put together a nutritious shopping list and how to include all the foods you enjoy as part of a healthy balanced diet.
For those who know absolutely nothing about nutrition except that it deals with food, this book is a starting point containing sound information you can trust. For those who know more than a little about nutrition, this book is a refresher course to bring you bang up to date on what’s happened in the field since you last checked.

Conventions Used in This Book

We use the following conventions throughout the text to make things consistent and easy to understand:

All web addresses appear in mono font.

New terms appear in italic and are closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition.

Bold is used to highlight key words and phrases in a list, as well as the action parts of numbered steps.

Nutritionists commonly use metric terms such as gram (g), milligram (mg), and microgram (mcg) to describe quantities of protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

Nutritionists measure food in 100-gram portions. So ‘a portion’ in this book means a 100-gram dollop unless we state otherwise.
What You Don’t Have to Read

You want to get to the important stuff but you’re too pushed for time to read it all? We know that feeling and so we’ve tried to make it that bit easier for you. Some parts of this book are fun or informative but not necessarily vital to your understanding of nutrition. For example:

**Text in sidebars:** The sidebars are the shaded boxes that appear here and there. They share anecdotes and observations but aren’t essential reading.

**Anything with a Technical Stuff icon attached:** This information may be interesting but it’s not critical to your understanding of nutrition.

Foolish Assumptions

Every book is written with a particular reader in mind, and this one is no different. As we wrote this book, we made the following basic assumptions about who you are and why you paid out your hard-earned money for an entire volume about nutrition:

You didn’t study nutrition at school or university but now you’ve discovered that you have a better chance of staying healthy if you know how to put together a well-balanced, nutritious diet for you and your family.
You’re confused by conflicting advice on vitamins and minerals, not to mention newer dietary issues such as antioxidants and low carb diets. You need a reliable road map through the nutrient maze.

You want basic information, but you don’t want to become an expert in nutrition or spend hours digging your way through medical textbooks and journals.

How This Book Is Organised

The following is a brief summary of each part in *Nutrition For Dummies*. You can use this guide as a fast way to check out what you want to read first. We’ve designed this book so you don’t have to start with Chapter 1 and read straight through to the end. You can dive in absolutely anywhere and still come up with tons of tasty information about how food helps your body work.

Part I: The Basic Facts about Nutrition

Chapter 1 defines nutrition and what we mean by essential nutrients. This chapter also tells you how to read a nutrition study and how to find reliable information on nutrition you can trust. Chapter 2 is a really clear guide to how your digestive system works to transform food and drink into the nutrients you need to sustain a healthy body. Chapter 3 explores the reasons why you eat
when you eat, the difference between hunger and appetite, and why you like the foods you like.

**Part II: What You Get from Food**

Chapter 4 gives you the facts about protein: where you get it and what it does in your body. Chapter 5 does the same job for dietary fat, and Chapter 6 looks at calories – the energy supply to your body. Chapter 7 explains carbohydrates: sugars, starches, and that indigestible but totally vital substance, dietary fibre. Chapter 8 outlines the risks and, yes, some newly proven benefits of alcohol.

Chapter 9 is about vitamins, the substances in food that control so many vital chemical reactions in your body. Chapter 10 is about minerals, substances that go to build so many of our tissues. Chapter 11 explains phytochemicals, newly identified but very important substances in food. Chapter 12 is about water, the essential liquid that comprises as much as 70 per cent of your body weight. This chapter also describes the functions of electrolytes, special minerals that maintain your fluid balance (the correct amount of water inside and outside your body cells).

**Part III: Healthy Eating**

Chapter 13 discusses what makes a healthy diet. This chapter is based on recent recommendations from the top nutritional organisations so you know it’s good for you! Chapter 14 shows you how to use a food balance model and read food labels to make wise choices when