



UNDERSTANDING NUTRITION 4E
Whitney & Hamilton

Understanding Nutrition

Fourth Edition

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Hamilton

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with
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*Understanding
Nutrition*

Fourth Edition

*To the world's children, born and to be
born—may they be nourished both
with the understanding of nutrition
and with love*

Ellie Whitney
Marie Boyle

About the Authors

Eleanor Noss Whitney, Ph.D., R.D., received her B.A. in Biology from Radcliffe College in 1960 and her Ph.D. in Biology from Washington University, St. Louis, in 1970. Formerly on the faculty at the Florida State University, she now devotes full time to research, writing, and consulting in nutrition and health. She is president of Nutrition and Health Associates, a nutrition information resource center in Tallahassee, Florida. Her previous publications include articles in *Science*, the *Journal of Nutrition*, *Genetics*, and other journals, and the textbooks *Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies*, *Understanding Normal and Clinical Nutrition*, and *Nutrition and Diet Therapy*.

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Preface

With this edition of *Understanding Nutrition*, we are celebrating the book's tenth birthday. It's a happy event for us. We have continued to enjoy monitoring the changes that have taken place in the field of nutrition and in our reader's needs, and we hope this edition reflects them.

Among new and substantially revised subject matter are many sections of the chapters, and many of the highlights. Chapter 1 has been expanded to two chapters, so that it can accommodate information on food labels and the U.S.RDA in close proximity to the RDA. New discussions appear in the first twelve chapters on the glycemic effect of foods, diabetes, protein quality, stress and nutrition, common digestive problems, the assessment and treatment of obesity, B vitamin roles and interactions, drug-nutrient interactions, toxicity of micro-nutrients, fluid and electrolyte balance and imbalance, acid-base balance, water balance, blood pressure regulation, calcium and osteoporosis, milk substitutes, calcium supplements, iron supplements and contamination iron, marginal iron deficiency, behavioral effects of iron deficiency, and many other subjects. Chapter 13 on foods and food safety is new: it brings together information on food additives, pesticide residues in foods, engineered and convenience foods, natural food toxicants, food contaminants, and food poisoning. Chapter 14 contains a new section comparing human milk with other milks and infant formula; the remaining chapters have also been updated. At the ends of the chapters are self-study sections, permitting students to analyze their own diets; the needed forms are all in Appendix K.

Many of the highlights are also new, delving into such fascinating topics as the ways in which the body maintains homeostasis, natural foods, nutrition and cancer, vegetarianism, nutrition and the brain, nutrition and fitness, controversial uses of vitamin B₆, nutrition and premenstrual syndrome (PMS), vitamin-mineral supplements, cancer and the Delaney Clause, nutrition and children's behavior, and more. Especially notable is Highlight 8, which gives an expanded treatment of anorexia nervosa and bulimia, commensurate in extent and depth with students' interest in these eating disorders.

The appendixes are also all revised, and we are pleased to present several new ones. Appendix A provides background on the endocrine and nervous systems, complementing B and C on basic chemistry, chemical structures, and metabolic pathways. Appendix D assists the student with routine nutrition calculations. Appendix E contains the newest information on assessment, and Appendix F our recommendations on nutrition books and journals. Appendix G contains the elegant, revised Food Exchange System first presented at the American Dietetic Association's annual meeting in October, 1986 (and the chapters incorporate the new system). Most pleasing to us is that Appendix H contains a new nutrient data base assembled by ESHA Research, Inc. of Salem,

Oregon: it presents the composition of over 1,000 foods with respect to 19 nutrients, including for the first time dietary fiber, magnesium, phosphorus, and vitamin B₆. This appendix also includes sodium, potassium, cholesterol, and the fatty-acid breakdown of foods, eliminating the necessity to present this information in separate appendixes.

The concept of nutrient density has received greater emphasis in this edition than in previous editions. It's an old term, now, but its applications are still new and surprising. Tables throughout the chapters on vitamins and minerals present the nutrient contents of foods in two ways: the left side of each table does it the old way (ranked by nutrient per serving); the right side does it the new way—ranked by nutrient per 100 kcalories of the food. This puts foods into a new perspective, and together with the color photographs of foods rich in various nutrients, helps the reader to appreciate the value of certain foods—especially vegetables—more realistically than ever before. The impact is heightened by a presentation that begins by contrasting two meals in Chapter 2, discusses those two meals in chapter after chapter thereafter, and culminates with a synthesis in Chapter 13.

As before, one of the main missions of the book is to assist the reader who wants not only to learn nutrition “facts,” but also to become a discriminating consumer of newly emerging nutrition information. “How can I decide what to believe?” the reader wants to know. Portions of every chapter—the digressions—and most of the Highlights are devoted to constructing a sieve through which readers can filter new nutrition claims and separate the valid ones from the rest. The book continues to deliver the message that there is no absolute certainty, even in science’s “facts,” and that human critical thinking and judgment must always be applied in assessing claims. Students often find this news difficult to accept, but we cannot make it otherwise. Selections from the original Note to the Student, which expanded on this statement in the first edition, are appended right after this Preface.

As before, we have tried to keep the number of footnotes to a minimum. Most statements that have appeared in the previous editions with footnotes now appear without them, but every statement is backed by evidence and the authors will supply them on request. Also, as before, we have retained our informal, conversational writing style, hoping this will make the reader’s study of nutrition as enjoyable as possible. It is a fascinating subject; we hope our enthusiasm for it comes through on every page.

*Eleanor N. Whitney
Marie A. Boyle
January 1987*

Note to the Student (excerpt from first edition)

You may have some questions in mind as you approach the study of nutrition. In getting to know students over the years, we have some idea of what your concerns may be.

I Keep Hearing Exciting News about Nutrition. How Can I Tell What to Believe? This is the complaint we hear most often from students. Because of it, we have designed this book not to be just a book of facts but also a book of principles that you can use to assess the nutrition information you encounter

elsewhere. Today's nutrition science stands firmly on the principles of chemistry and molecular biology. This book is based on those principles.

Even with the principles clearly in mind, however, it is sometimes hard to tell whether a statement made in the marketplace is a valid fact or a myth. Some major controversies currently raging in our field concern sugar, fiber, cholesterol, vitamin C and cancer, additives, and many other issues. It would not be fair to present these issues to you in textbook fashion as if they were settled, but it makes the study of our lively science needlessly dull to omit them. Our decision has been to reserve the **chapters** mostly for solid information, on which the experts in our field largely agree, and to present separate **highlights** on the current issues, for more speculative material. The highlights alternate with the chapters and are printed on colored pages to remind you that they convey more tentative information.

Even though we are scientists, in some cases we have no facts. Researchers in nutrition are earnestly endeavoring to learn more, but there are many areas where we are still in the dark. Students can be infuriated when a teacher seems to weasel: "I want the facts, and you are hedging. Give me the answer, straight and simple." It is frustrating to ask why and have a cautious scientist reply, "Well, we know this, and this, and . . ." but leave your question dangling. It is insulting to be told, "It's too complicated to understand," which sounds suspiciously like what mother used to say: "Wait until you are older, dear." But the truth of the matter is that there are a great many things we do not understand. One of the most exciting, as well as frustrating, experiences for students can be the dawning realization that they are approaching the outer bounds of human knowledge. The answers are simply not all in yet; no one knows what they all are; no one ever has. This is true in many areas of nutrition; it is a growing, young science. Although its questions are immensely important and fascinating, that is all they are—questions. We have tried to be honest in this respect: to show you what we do know (with a high probability) and to admit what we don't.

In attempting to present a fair picture of current nutrition research in the highlights, we have found ourselves at times confused, frustrated, angered, and amused. If you too respond this way in reading the maybes and probablys of today's nutrition issues, then be assured that you are close to the reality of our science. Any book that claims at this time to present absolute answers to all questions is actually only presenting one person's prejudices. The writer may be proved right in years to come, but some of the winners have not yet been declared. If you wish to be informed on the current issues, you will have to accept the ambiguities and contradictions in the evidence and the disagreements among the experts as an intrinsic part of scientific research in progress.

But Then How Can I Choose What to Believe? In the absence of all the facts, we still have to live and make decisions. Should you eat polyunsaturated fats? Avoid tuna? Beef? Sugar? It would not be fair to answer simply "We don't know" to all these questions. Where the answers are uncertain today, we owe it to you to help in developing the skill to evaluate new information as it appears tomorrow. Our field is beset with claims and appeals, and all of us as consumers need to be equipped to deal with them.

There are some guidelines that would help you discriminate between reliable information and false advertising. It seems to us that a separate chapter devoted to this subject would not serve the purpose. You need continuous, repeated exposure to the kinds of claims made to consumers, and you need practice in

assessing them. We offer frequent opportunities, by way of **digressions** throughout the text, for you to examine such sources of nutrition information and to assess their reliability against the criteria of accurate scientific reporting. In these digressions we have identified the most common characteristics of fraudulent advertising and the most common misunderstandings that arise from reading about nutrition research.

The digressions are set off with color like this; if they prove too distracting you can skip them and possibly come back to them later. But they constitute a theme that runs throughout the book.

In some cases we have clear-cut evidence that a claim being made on the marketplace is fraudulent. We feel obligated to explain and elaborate these cases. It is not enough to tell you these are myths and provide nothing to replace them. But there is another problem. It seems to us that it is also not enough to say “That is a myth, and this is a fact.” After all, aren’t “they” saying their myth is a fact? Confronted with a choice between what “they” say and what “we” (in a nutrition text) say, you are in the bind of having to choose whom to believe, with nothing further to go on. We hope, by providing relevant information, to show you that what we say is more probably true than the myth you might otherwise believe. We believe it is important to develop the incentive and ability to identify reliable nutrition information on your own. Armed with this skill, you can continually gather and apply the information that is relevant to your own particular concerns.

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Contents in Brief

Preface xv

1 Nutrition and Health 1

HIGHLIGHT: The Wisdom of the Body 13

2 Recommended Nutrient Intakes and Diet Planning Guides 17

HIGHLIGHT: Natural Foods 45

3 The Carbohydrates: Sugar, Starch, and Fiber 51

HIGHLIGHT: Sugar: Why so Powerful? 83

4 The Lipids: Fats, Oils, Phospholipids, and Sterols 89

HIGHLIGHT A: Nutrition and Cancer 117

HIGHLIGHT B: Nutrition and Atherosclerosis 123

5 Protein: Amino Acids 133

HIGHLIGHT: Vegetarianism 161

6 Digestion, Absorption, and Transport 167

HIGHLIGHT: Nutrition and the Brain 199

7 Metabolism: Nutrient Transformations and Interactions 203

HIGHLIGHT A: Nutrition and Fitness 222

HIGHLIGHT B: Alcohol and Nutrition 230

8 Energy Balance and Weight Control 239

HIGHLIGHT: Eating Disorders and Society 281

9 The Water-Soluble Vitamins: B Vitamins and Vitamin C 289

HIGHLIGHT A: Vitamin B₆: Does it Cure PMS and Other Ills? 328

HIGHLIGHT B: Vitamin C: Rumors Versus Research 336

10 The Fat-Soluble Vitamins: A, D, E, and K 341

HIGHLIGHT: Vitamin, Mineral, and Other Supplements 366

11 Water and the Major Minerals 371

12 The Trace Minerals 407

13 Foods and Food Safety 437

HIGHLIGHT A: Questions about Additives and Cancer 475

HIGHLIGHT B: World Hunger 480

14 Mother and Infant 491

HIGHLIGHT: Nutrition and Behavior 521

15 Child and Teen 529

16 The Later Years 549

continued

Appendixes

- A Cells, Hormones, and Nerves
- B Basic Chemistry Concepts
- C Biochemical Structures and Pathways
- D Aids to Calculation
- E Nutrition Assessment
- F Nutrition Resources
- G Food Exchange Systems
- H Table of Food Composition
- I Recommended Nutrient Intakes (RDA, RNI)

- J Vitamin/Mineral Supplements Compared
- K Self-Study Forms

Index

- Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) *inside front cover*
- U.S. RDA *inside back cover*
- Weight Tables *inside back cover*
- Conversion Factors *inside back cover*

Contents

Preface xv

1 Nutrition and Health 1

The Nutrients 2

The Energy Nutrients 4

The Vitamins 6

The Minerals 6

Water 7

The Assessment of Nutrition Status 7

Undernutrition 7

Overnutrition 9

How Well Do We Eat? 9

Why Do We Eat As We Do? 11

SELF-STUDY: Record What You Eat 12

HIGHLIGHT: The Wisdom of the Body 13

2 Recommended Nutrient Intakes and Diet Planning Guides 17

Recommended Nutrient Intakes 18

The Setting of the Nutrient RDA 18

The RDA for Energy (kCalories) 20

Other Recommendations 21

The U.S. RDA and Food Labels 21

Diet Planning Guides 28

Food Group Plans 29

Dietary Guidelines 33

Nutrient Density 37

Exchange Patterns 37

SELF-STUDY: Calculate Your Nutrient Intakes 44

HIGHLIGHT: Natural Foods 45

3 The Carbohydrates: Sugar, Starch, and Fiber 51

The Constancy of the Blood Glucose Level 52

Hypoglycemia 54

Diabetes 56

The Chemist's View of Carbohydrates 57

Chemical Symbols 57

Making and Breaking Pairs: Chemical Reactions 58

The Single Sugars: Monosaccharides 60

Glucose 60

Fructose 60

Galactose 61

The Double Sugars: Disaccharides 61

Sucrose 61

Lactose 62

Maltose 63

Health Effects of Sugars 63

Alternative Sweeteners 67

The Complex Carbohydrates: Polysaccharides 69

Starch 69

Glycogen 69

Cellulose 70

Health Effects of Complex Carbohydrates 70

The Fibers	71
Health Effects of Fiber	71
Different Fibers, Different Effects	72
Hazards of Too Much Fiber	73
The Carbohydrates in Foods	74
Recommended Carbohydrate Intake	74
Sugar Intake	76
Fiber Intake	78
Glycemic Effect of Foods	80
SELF-STUDY: Examine Your Carbohydrate Intake	82
HIGHLIGHT: Sugar: Why So Powerful?	83

4 The Lipids: Fats, Oils, Phospholipids, and Sterols 89

Lipids in the Body and in Foods	90
The Chemist's View of Fats	92
The Triglycerides	92
The Essential Fatty Acids	96
The Prostaglandins	98
Processed Fat	98
Fat Digestion	100
Phospholipids: Lecithin	102
The Sterols: Cholesterol	103
Transport of Lipids: Lipoproteins	105
Chylomicrons: From the Intestinal Cells	105
VLDL and LDL: From the Liver	106
Storage and Release of Body Fat	107
HDL: From the Body Cells	107
Atherosclerosis and the Lipoproteins	107
The Fats in Foods	108
Fatty Acids and Cholesterol in Foods	111
Artificial Fat: Sucrose Polyester	115
SELF-STUDY: Examine Your Fat Intake	116
HIGHLIGHT A: Nutrition and Cancer	117
HIGHLIGHT B: Nutrition and Atherosclerosis	123

5 Protein: Amino Acids 133

The Chemist's View of Protein	134
Amino Acid Structure	134
Amino Acid Sequence	135
Folding of the Chain	136
The Completed Protein	137
Enzymes: A Function of Protein	137
A Closer Look at Enzyme Action	138
Other Roles of Protein	140
Fluid and Acid-Base Balances	140
Antibodies and Hormones	142
Transport Proteins	143
Blood Clotting	144
Connective Tissue	144
Visual Pigments	144
Protein Quality	145
Nitrogen Balance Studies	146
Measures of Protein Quality:	
1. Chemical Scoring	147
2. Biological Value	149
3. Net Protein Utilization	150
4. Protein Efficiency Ratio	150
Protein-kCalorie Malnutrition	151
Kwashiorkor	152
Marasmus	153
Adult PCM	154
Recommended Protein Intakes	155
Protein in Foods	157
SELF-STUDY: Evaluate Your Protein Intake	160
HIGHLIGHT: Vegetarianism	161

6 Digestion, Absorption, and Transport 167

Digestion	168
Anatomy of the Digestive Tract	169

The Involuntary Muscles and the Glands	172
The Process of Digestion	174
Absorption	177
Anatomy of the Absorptive System	177
A Closer Look at the Intestinal Cells	179
Release of Absorbed Nutrients	181
The Circulatory Systems	182
The Vascular System	182
The Lymphatic System	186
Regulation of Digestion and Absorption	187
Stress and Digestion/Absorption	188
Common Digestive Problems	193
The System at Its Best	197
HIGHLIGHT: Nutrition and the Brain	199

7 Metabolism: Nutrient Transformations and Interactions 203

Starting Points	204
Building Body Compounds	205
Breaking Down Nutrients for Energy	205
Glucose	206
How Fat Enters Into Metabolism	208
How Protein Enters the Metabolic Pathway	209
Disposal of Excess Nitrogen	210
Putting It All Together	212
The Economics of Feasting	212
The Economics of Fasting	214
The Low-Carbohydrate Diet	216
The Protein-Sparing Fast	216
Moderate Weight Loss	217
Metabolism During Exercise	218
HIGHLIGHT A: Nutrition and Fitness	222
HIGHLIGHT B: Alcohol and Nutrition	230

8 Energy Balance and Weight Control 239

Energy In: The kCalories in Food	240
Energy Out: The kCalories the Body Spends	242
Government Recommendations	242
Diet Record Method	242
Laboratory Methods	243
Estimation from Metabolism and Activities	243
Energy Balance: Weight Loss and Gain	247
Definition of Obesity	247
Body Composition	250
The Problem of Obesity	253
Causes of Obesity	254
Development of Obesity	255
Hunger and Appetite Regulation	256
Set-Point Theory	257
Environment and Behavior	261
Inactivity	262
The Treatment of Obesity	262
Diet	263
Exercise	265
Behavior Modification	268
Treatments of Obesity: Poor Choices	271
The Problem of Underweight	273
SELF-STUDY: Practice Diet Planning	279
HIGHLIGHT: Eating Disorders and Society	281

9 The Water-Soluble Vitamins: B Vitamins and Vitamin C 289

The B Vitamins: Coenzymes	291
Metabolism, Assessment, and Interdependence	295
B Vitamin Deficiencies and Toxicities	299
Requirements and Food Sources	304
B Vitamin Relatives	313