



FOUNDATIONAL HEALTH



WELCOME

I invite you to explore the following pages to learn about six foundations of health from a Nutritional Therapy point of view. Knowledge is power. Empowering you with the understanding of what contributes to health and wellness. Let the discovery begin...

Gayle



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Nutritional Therapy

FOUNDATIONS

NUTRIENT-DENSE DIET

Eating a properly prepared, nutrient-dense, whole food diet provides the fuel and essential building blocks the body needs to maintain health and balance. (Nutritional Therapy Association [NTA], 2021). While we are all bio-individual, a general guideline to follow is to include a combination of protein, fats and carbohydrates (fiber rich sources) in our meals, these are called macronutrients. The balance of these macronutrients will vary from person to person, however, an emphasis on obtaining nutrients from wild-caught/pasture-raised sources and local/organic farmers helps provide your body with key vitamins and minerals for health. Each macronutrient provides elements for cellular health and in proper combination can help with feeling satiated, providing balanced energy and improving overall well-being. The first foundation of health begins with what you feed the beautiful person you are! Focusing on whole foods, as close to the earth as possible and in wide variety is a great starting point. As we discover the next foundations, you will begin to see how these all fit together to support optimal health.





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DIGESTION

The importance of eating a nutrient-dense diet is closely aligned with the function of digestion. This foundation focuses on our body's ability to properly break down, absorb and utilize the nutrients it's given. Digestion starts in the brain and moves downward in the body; something we call "North to South". Habits, lifestyle, food choices, and internal/external stressors all can have an impact on the digestive process. There are several organs and systems involved in digestion including the brain, mouth, stomach, small intestine, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, and large intestine (colon). These organs/systems work synergistically and play specific roles to effectively provide our cells with the vital energy and nutrients needed to function. It is easy to see how involved this process can be and where things may go wrong! Some simple strategies you can incorporate to begin optimizing your digestive health include:

- Taking 3-5 deep breathes before eating which allows your body to enter a calm state, activating your parasympathetic system which is essential for digestion, think "rest & digest"
- Taking your time to chew your food to the consistency of a smoothie, which allows enzymes in your saliva to begin breaking down carbohydrates and fats

Optimizing digestion is a key foundation to overall health and well being.





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BLOOD SUGAR REGULATION

Balance is the key word to remember when it comes to blood sugar. Stable blood sugar levels provide consistent energy, enable metabolic flexibility, and reduce stress on the body (NTA, 2020). The central nervous system plays a key role in creating this balance. The pancreas, adrenal glands, body fat, liver and muscle are all involved in this intricate dance. The quality of food, macronutrient balance, stress load and sleep hygiene all can impact blood sugar balance. Our bodies have created an energy storage system and a backup system when energy is needed. However, our food choices and lifestyle habits may impact our ability to effectively utilize this storage system. This is where blood sugar dysregulation can occur creating a fight or flight response in the body. This can lead to symptoms like weight gain, lethargy after meals, cravings and irritable feelings. Empowerment is key! We can empower ourselves by focusing on ways to support our blood sugar through macronutrient balance (yes to protein, fat and carbs), optimizing nutrients containing vitamins and minerals integral to blood sugar balance (proper digestion) and incorporating lifestyle factors to reduce stress, increase activity and enhance sleep (think mindfulness, meditation and movement). The importance of blood sugar regulation is paramount to overall health.



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FATTY ACIDS

Fat is our friend. It's a bold statement, I know. For many of us who are all too familiar with the 1990's "fat-free revolution", this may bring up a whole host of feelings. The truth of the matter is our bodies require fat for a myriad of functions which include:

- Slow-burning energy source
- Building blocks of cell membranes
- Hormone production
- Absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E & K
- Creating a protective lining for internal organs
- Increasing satiety

Of course, the type of fat we consume is important as not all fats are created equal. Highly processed, refined industrial oils are difficult for the body to use and do not provide the necessary nourishment needed. It's important to mention there are two specific types of polyunsaturated fats called Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) that the body is unable to make on its own but are required. Therefore, we must get them from nutritional sources. They are Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. The consumption of these fats, in appropriate ratios (ideal ratio is 2:1 Omega 6 to Omega 3) is integral in controlling inflammation in the body. Sources of Omega 3 fatty acids include wild-caught fish & oils like salmon, sardines, anchovies, cod; egg yolks, walnuts and fermented soybeans (natto). Sources of Omega 6 fatty acids include nut & seeds like pistachios, pumpkin and sunflower; cold-pressed oils from blackcurrant, evening primrose, sunflower, sesame and flaxseed. Including nourishing fats in our diet is of utmost importance as it helps to support our joints, brain health, skin and hormone production.

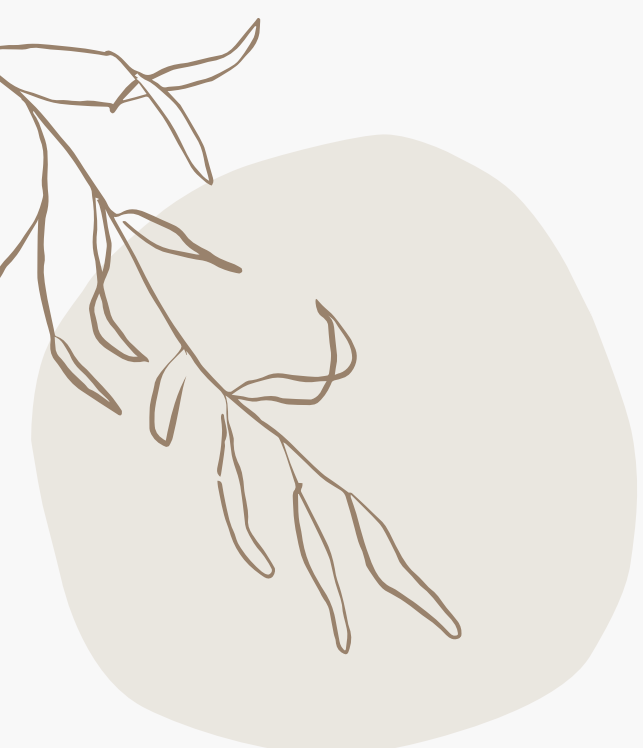


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MINERALS

Minerals are in a classification of nutrients called micronutrients because they are required in small amounts in the body. But do not let the term “micro” or “small” fool you because minerals are critical to our health. We cannot produce minerals in the body and must get them through food. Minerals help to contract and relax muscles, regulate tissue growth, maintain proper nerve conduction and provide structural and functional support, to name a few roles. Of particular importance, is the mineral calcium. It is the most abundant mineral in the body and is integral to the composition of the body’s skeletal system (NTA, 2020). Key sources of calcium include seafood like shellfish, salmon, sardines; vegetables and legumes like broccoli, cauliflower, peas, beans; blackstrap molasses; nuts and seeds like sunflower and sesame seeds (tahini), almonds, brazil nuts, hazelnuts; fruits like citrus, figs, raisins, dried apricots; and dairy products like kefir, whole milk, yogurt, cheese. As you can see the list is abundant. What is important to note is we often consume enough calcium but we are missing the working agents which allow the body to absorb it. For calcium to work properly, we need the following:

- Proper hormone function
- Hydration (water and electrolytes)
- Balance with other minerals
- Fats
- Vitamins (like vitamin D)
- Effective digestion (sufficient stomach acid)






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HYDRATION

Water is the most important nutrient in the body -- we can survive roughly 8 weeks without food, but only days without water. Water makes up 55 - 60% of our total body mass (NTA, 2020). It is important for improving oxygen delivery to cells, lubricating joints, removing wastes, supporting the digestive process and regulating body temperatures to name a few functions. Since water cannot be stored, daily intake is imperative. Electrolytes (hello to the minerals sodium, potassium, magnesium & calcium) are needed for proper water absorption. The amount of water we need to stay hydrated is bio-individual and varies based on different factors like age, activity levels, environmental conditions and underlying disease/conditions. Our body does provide some cues to signal the need for hydration like thirst, but it's important to note that thirst signals decline as we age - helpful for us to know! A better tool to determine hydration, is urine color. This is not a precise science but more of a reference, with the general goal for pale yellow/straw colored urine. It's worth noting the consumption of certain foods, medications and vitamins may impact the color. Some key water intake tips to consider:

- Drink water first thing after waking in the morning
- Grab a glass of water when feeling tired, hungry, stressed or having difficulty concentrating
- Invest in a good quality water bottle and sip from it throughout the day
- Nourish yourself with high water containing fruit & vegetables (cucumbers, celery, lettuce, spinach, melon, strawberries)



Hydration is the final piece of the foundational puzzle. Working on improving each of these foundations can help support our overall health.

Hi, I'm Gayle

I'm passionate about making nutrition less complicated. In essence, helping people simplify food choices, understand what it means to nourish oneself, and pay attention to the body's signals.

My philosophy is one of simplicity; small changes create significant lifestyle shifts over time.

Interested in working with me?
Contact me at gayle@gssnutrition.com or visit www.gssnutrition.com

Gayle Stamer is not a dietitian, physician, or other licensed healthcare professional. The information included here is NOT intended as medical advice, nor is it intended to replace the care of a qualified health care professional. This content is not intended to diagnose or treat any diseases.

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