

## Improving Health through Nutrition: No Quick Fix

By Michael Wagner, BA, LMT, CFT

*You must have realistic expectations about how long it takes to reverse the effects of poor health habits*

When recommending dietary supplements to persons with health deficiencies, one of the most common questions we'll hear is, "How fast will this stuff work?" If we can help steer people away from the "quick fix" mentality and, instead, adapt realistic expectations for realizing improved health through nutrition, I believe we've performed a great service. That's because the restoration of genuine optimal health takes time and patience the quick fix mind set will never allow.

True, there are exceptional cases, especially with exceptional supplements or unique circumstances. Some people begin a dietary supplement regime and realize amazing results. But they are exceptions. And although certain symptoms may have subsided, the body very often has a lot more healing to accomplish over the long term.

To assist consumers of dietary supplements to "stay the course" and not quit their program prematurely because they "weren't seeing anything" we need to educate them. Not only about the supplements in their regime, but about their own body and how nutrition supports the body to effect improvements in overall health. To this end, I've found seven principles worth remembering and passing on to those people we wish to see benefit from nutritional supplements and programs.

1) With nutrition, we are not suppressing or manipulating symptoms as with pharmaceuticals. We are not treating conditions as with herbology. We are simply giving the body what it needs to heal itself and rebuild itself anew and this takes time.

When correcting nutritional deficiencies, while we won't see instant improvements in most cases, we will be promoting true and lasting healing. Pharmaceuticals may sometimes "work" instantly, yet never address underlying causes and possess unwanted side effects. Contrary to popular thinking, drugs don't heal anything. Only the body can do that—when it gets what it needs.

In Optimum Sports Nutrition, Dr. Michael Colgan explains why patience is the key:

*A principle of nutrition you need to know is physiological dynamics. Unlike drugs, nutrients do not have rapid effects. No quick fix. The business of nutrition is to build a better body. That has to wait on Nature to turn over body cells. A blood cell lasts 60-120 days. In 3-4 months your whole blood supply is completely replaced. In 6 months almost all the proteins in your body die and are replaced, even the DNA of your genes. In a year all your bones and even the enamel of your teeth is replaced, constructed entirely out of the nutrients you eat.*

This time course is well illustrated by the course of deficiency diseases. If I remove all the vitamin C from your diet, within 4 weeks blood vitamin C will drop to zero. But, you will see no symptoms of disease at 4 weeks. You will have to wait until enough of the healthy cells have been replaced with unhealthy cells. It is another 12 weeks before the symptoms of scurvy start to ravage your body.

*So when you implement an optimum nutrition program, don't expect to see rapid results. In one of our studies at the Colgan Institute, runners were supplemented to try to improve their hemoglobin, hematocrit, and red blood cell count. But after one month of supplementation, there was no improvement at all. After 6 months, however, all three indices were significantly increased.*

*Think of it this way: If you take a neglected houseplant and start feeding and watering it, the leaves may perk up a bit from the improved nutrition. But you have to wait for the old leaves to die off and new leaves to grow before you get a really healthy plant. It is the same with a human body. When you start feeding it better, you have to wait on physiological dynamics of the body to grow new, improved cells in the improved medium. After 18 years in sports nutrition, the shortest program we will give any athlete is six months. With patience, nature can do its work and produce its miracles.*

2) We are all unique. Individual biochemistry's are affected by diet, lifestyle, drug usage, stress, fitness level, genetics, toxins, etc. It's inevitable, therefore, that some persons will respond more rapidly than others to improved nutrition. If you're not experiencing results as fast as you'd like, it could be a factor of any number of things. It might be that the body has priorities other than the one upon which you're focusing. For example, you may want to lose body fat while your body may want to lose a tumor you don't even know you have. Give your body permission to have its own priorities and timetable.

3) Positive health changes can be occurring without you “feeling something”. Research studies utilizing blood tests, bone density and body fat measurements, etc. confirm this. Improved health begins on the molecular and cellular levels. Latter, this may translate into the alleviation or disappearance of specific symptoms and conditions.

The already healthy or symptom-free person, especially persons with abundant energy, might take note: Your health benefits from optimal nutrition tend to come in the form of your body’s correcting sub-clinical problems—depletions, imbalances and toxic build-ups that haven’t yet become clinical conditions or “felt” diseases. In other words, in optimizing and maintaining health, remember “feeling healthy” really only means “feeling symptom free”. Actor Michael Landon was “feeling great” on National TV: three months later he died of cancer. Virtually everyone can benefit from improved nutrition since, simply by living, toxins accumulate within our bodies, the body wears out and chronic degeneration slowly settles in. Giving the body what it needs to stay healthy can minimize the ravages of modern living and optimize health.

4) The greatest health benefits of improved nutrition may well come in the latter years of life. Regardless of the rate your current health challenge is improving, continued optimum nutrition just makes good sense, since the greatest benefits may be experienced in your senior years. While others are painfully shuffling around nursing homes and tending to medicine schedules, you might be enjoying your summers on the Colorado River and winters in Hawaii. Is this the benefit you want? Learn what your dietary supplements can do for you. Then make an educated choice.

5) If you experience a “correcting crisis” while on an optimal nutritional program, stay the course—its working! When your body begins cleaning out toxins, metabolic wastes, parasites, candida die-off and the like, you may experience uncomfortable symptoms. Because you may feel worse before you feel better, it’s important to read the articles and books which address this phenomenon so you can better understand this process. The correcting crisis, when understood, is a clear indication that your improved nutrition program is truly working and leading you to improved health.

6) Licensed health care practitioners still make educated guesses as to how long it might take to see a specific health improvement using nutrition. Admittedly an imprecise science, but as a starting point, a holistic medical doctor uses the following formula: For a specific health improvements, figure three months, then add one additional month for each year the chronic condition has existed. For example, a

chronic condition of 5 years might be expected to see a good improvement within 8 months, provided the body, mind and spirit of the patient gets everything it needs. Experience with nutraceuticals largely indicates the longer the consumption, the greater the benefit.

7) As one very prestigious medical doctor has well stated, dietary supplements ought to carry the warning: “Not to be taken on an empty spirit.” The human mind and spirit are powerful beyond measure. They can easily override any optimal health plan. They must therefore be in alignment with the healing process. Sometimes the individual dealing with it poorly understands the non-physical causes of ill health. If long term attempts to achieve better health bring minimal or no results, there may be a deeper reasons that need exploration. Caroline Myss’ works, including [Why People Don’t Heal](#), or the works of Bernie Siegel, M.D. might be a good starting point. Tend to your thinking; nurture your spirit.

Staying mindful of these *seven principles of nutrition* and healing will hopefully keep all of us out of the trap of quick fix thinking and help allow us to create the time and patience to achieve true healing and enjoy lasting optimal health.