The Electric Life
Master Nutrition & Wellness Guide

Heal Indy, Live Electric

A holistic nutrition & nervous-system guide

Letter from Dr. Alec

At Electric Life Chiropractic, we believe healing happens from the inside out.
Nutrition, movement, rest, and community connection are the daily inputs that allow your nervous system to regulate, repair, and thrive.

This guide was created for the **Naptown community** — for families, athletes, artists, and movers across **Indianapolis and the Circle City** — to help you understand how food fuels your body's ability to adapt and heal.

When your nervous system functions clearly, your body doesn't just feel better — it *works* better. Every heartbeat, breath, and muscle contraction depends on the quality of the fuel you give it.

Take this as a living resource. Highlight it. Revisit it. Share it with a friend. And remember:

Healing Happens Here. Heal Indy. Live Electric.

Electric Life Chiropractic | *Naptown Heals* | *Circle City Heals*

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- Hydration is essential for nervous system function.

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Protein builds and repairs tissues, carbs energize, and fats regulate hormones and brain health.
- Protein: 20–30% daily intake.
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- Fat: 20–35% daily intake.

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Micronutrients (vitamins & minerals) fuel brain, immunity, and metabolism.
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Calories = body's energy currency.
- BMR = baseline energy needs.
- TDEE = daily burn with activity.
- Adjust for maintenance, fat loss, or muscle gain.

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Whole food, Mediterranean, Paleo, Keto, Plant-Based, Carnivore.
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- Food is information for your nervous system.
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- Quality > quantity.
- Start small, build momentum.

Healing is not linear — consistency creates transformation.

Section 1: Foundations of Nutrition

Why Nutrition Matters

Nutrition is more than just “fuel.” Every bite of food you take influences how your cells function, how your nervous system communicates, and how your body adapts to stress and healing. Food provides the raw materials that become your muscle fibers, neurotransmitters, hormones, immune cells, and even the electrical energy that flows through your body.

When people struggle with fatigue, poor focus, stress, or slow recovery, nutrition is often at the root. That’s why building a strong foundation matters: before any advanced diet or fitness program, you must first understand the basics of how your body uses food.

The Building Blocks: Macronutrients & Micronutrients

Your body runs on two categories of nutrients:

- **Macronutrients** (“macros”) are needed in large amounts: **proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.** These provide calories (energy) and building materials.

- **Micronutrients** are vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that don’t give energy directly but are essential for nearly every cellular process.

Think of it like constructing a house: macros are the wood, bricks, and concrete, while micros are the screws, wiring, and plumbing that make the house livable. Both are required for strength and resilience.

Calories: Your Energy Currency

A **calorie** is a unit of energy. The food you eat contains potential energy that your body converts into movement, healing, and mental focus.

- **Proteins** = 4 calories per gram

- **Carbohydrates** = 4 calories per gram

- **Fats** = 9 calories per gram

- **Alcohol** = 7 calories per gram (not a nutrient, but it does provide energy)

Understanding calories is important, but equally important is where those calories come from. A 500-calorie fast-food meal will impact your body very differently than a 500-calorie meal of lean protein, vegetables, and healthy fats.

Hydration: The Forgotten Nutrient

Water makes up about 60% of your body and is essential for:

- Electrical signaling in your nervous system
- Muscle contractions and performance
- Joint lubrication and spinal disc health
- Detoxification and digestion

Dehydration, even at mild levels, reduces focus, increases stress on the nervous system, and slows recovery. A good baseline is to drink **half your body weight in ounces of water per day** (example: 180 lbs → 90 oz of water). More may be needed if you exercise or sweat heavily.

Nervous System Connection

Your nervous system is the “master controller” of all body functions, and nutrition directly supports its performance:

- **Glucose (from carbs)** powers your brain and nerves.
- **Essential fatty acids (from fats)** insulate nerve fibers and improve communication.
- **Amino acids (from proteins)** build neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and GABA.
- **Micronutrients** like magnesium, B vitamins, and zinc help regulate stress and electrical signaling.

When nutrition is lacking, the nervous system often shows it first—through fatigue, mood swings, poor focus, or stress overload.

Key Takeaways

- Nutrition is the foundation for healing, growth, and nervous system regulation.
- Both macronutrients and micronutrients are essential—think building blocks + wiring.
- Calories matter, but food quality matters more.
- Hydration is just as important as food.
- Your nervous system relies on steady nutrient supply for energy, mood, and resilience.

Section 2: Macronutrients – The Big Three

Macronutrients (“macros”) are the **primary nutrients your body needs in large amounts** to function, heal, and perform. They provide energy (calories) and the raw materials that build your cells, hormones, neurotransmitters, and tissues. The three main macronutrients are **proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.**

2.1 Protein – The Builder

What It Is

Proteins are made of amino acids, the “letters” that spell out every structure and signal in your body. Your muscles, enzymes, immune cells, and neurotransmitters are all built from protein.

Why It Matters

- Builds and repairs muscle and connective tissue
- Creates neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin
- Supports immune function and hormone production

- Helps regulate blood sugar and satiety (feeling full)

Complete vs. Incomplete

- **Complete proteins** have all 9 essential amino acids (eggs, meat, fish, dairy, soy, quinoa).
- **Incomplete proteins** are missing one or more (beans, rice, nuts, seeds, most veggies). Combining them (like beans + rice) creates a “complete” profile.

Nervous System Connection

Amino acids like tryptophan, tyrosine, and glutamine are precursors to neurotransmitters that regulate mood, focus, and stress resilience. Without adequate protein, nervous system signaling falters.

How Much You Need

- General health: **0.8–1 g per kg of bodyweight**
- Active individuals: **1.2–2 g per kg of bodyweight**
- Muscle building/recovery: **1.6–2.2 g per kg of bodyweight**

💡 **Quick Tip:** Distribute protein evenly across meals (20–40g per meal) for best absorption.

2.2 Carbohydrates – The Energizer

What They Are

Carbs are your body’s **primary energy source.** They break down into glucose, which fuels muscles and the brain. Stored glucose (glycogen) is what powers endurance and high-intensity activity.

Types

- **Simple Carbs:** quick-digesting, fast energy (fruit, honey, sugar).

- **Complex Carbs:** slow-digesting, longer energy (whole grains, beans, starchy veggies).
- **Fiber:** indigestible carbs that feed gut bacteria and regulate digestion.

Nervous System Connection

Your brain runs primarily on glucose. Steady carb intake helps maintain focus, memory, and mood stability. Sudden spikes and crashes (from processed carbs/sugars) stress the nervous system and can trigger fatigue or irritability.

How Much You Need

- General health: **45–55% of total calories**
- Athletes/high activity: **50–65% of total calories**
- Low-carb/keto: **<10% of total calories** (specialized use, not for everyone)

💡 **Quick Tip:** Choose whole, fiber-rich carbs for nervous system stability and long-lasting energy.

2.3 Fats – The Hormone & Brain Fuel

What They Are

Fats are dense sources of energy and vital building blocks for hormones, brain tissue, and nerve insulation (myelin).

Types

- **Saturated Fats:** (butter, coconut, meat) – stable, good in moderation.
- **Unsaturated Fats:** (olive oil, avocados, nuts) – heart-healthy.
- **Omega-3s:** (salmon, chia, flax) – anti-inflammatory, crucial for brain and nervous system.
- **Trans Fats:** (processed foods) – harmful, should be avoided.

Nervous System Connection

Your brain is about **60% fat.** Omega-3 fatty acids (EPA/DHA) improve mood, memory, and protect against neurodegeneration. Fats also regulate hormones like testosterone, estrogen, and cortisol.

How Much You Need

- General health: **20–35% of total calories**
- Athletes/recovery: focus on omega-3s + monounsaturated fats
- Avoid trans fats and limit heavily processed oils

💡 **Quick Tip:** Every meal should contain some healthy fat to support hormones and keep you full.

2.4 Putting It Together – Macro Balance

Here's a starting framework for daily intake (adjust based on goals):

- **Protein:** 20–30% of calories
- **Carbs:** 40–55% of calories
- **Fats:** 20–35% of calories

👉 Example (2,000 calories/day for an active person):

- Protein: 150g (600 cal)
- Carbs: 250g (1,000 cal)
- Fat: 70g (630 cal)

Key Takeaways

- **Protein builds.**
- **Carbs energize.**
- **Fats regulate.**
- A balanced intake supports not just muscle, but also **nervous system health, mood, and recovery.**

Section 3: Micronutrients – The Hidden Powerhouses

What Are Micronutrients?

While macronutrients (proteins, carbs, fats) provide calories and structure, **micronutrients** are the “spark plugs” that make everything run. They don’t provide energy directly, but they activate enzymes, regulate hormones, and keep your nervous system and immune system balanced.

Deficiencies in key vitamins or minerals often show up as fatigue, brain fog, mood swings, or slower recovery — subtle signs that the nervous system is under stress.

3.1 Vitamins

Fat-Soluble Vitamins (stored in the body’s fat and liver)

- **Vitamin A** – vision, immune system, skin health (carrots, sweet potatoes, liver)
- **Vitamin D** – calcium absorption, bone strength, nervous system signaling (sunlight, fatty fish, egg yolks)
- **Vitamin E** – antioxidant, protects nerve cells, skin repair (nuts, seeds, avocado)
- **Vitamin K** – blood clotting, bone health (leafy greens, fermented foods)

Water-Soluble Vitamins (not stored, must be replenished daily)

- **Vitamin C** – collagen formation, immune defense, antioxidant (citrus, peppers, berries)
- **B-Complex (B1–B12)** – nervous system support, energy metabolism, neurotransmitter production (whole grains, eggs, leafy greens, meat, beans)

3.2 Minerals

- **Calcium** – bones, muscle contraction, neurotransmitter release (dairy, greens, fortified milks)
- **Magnesium** – relaxation, nerve conduction, sleep support (nuts, dark chocolate, spinach)
- **Zinc** – immunity, wound healing, DNA repair (meat, shellfish, pumpkin seeds)
- **Iron** – oxygen transport, focus, energy (red meat, lentils, spinach)
- **Potassium** – fluid balance, heart rhythm, muscle function (bananas, potatoes, beans)
- **Sodium** – nerve signaling, hydration, blood pressure regulation (salt, broth, seaweed)

3.3 Antioxidants & Phytonutrients

Beyond vitamins and minerals, colorful fruits and vegetables provide **phytonutrients** (plant chemicals) and **antioxidants** that protect the body against oxidative stress.

- **Polyphenols (berries, tea, cocoa)** – brain health & inflammation control
- **Carotenoids (carrots, tomatoes, leafy greens)** – vision, skin, immune strength
- **Sulforaphane (broccoli, kale)** – detox support, cellular repair

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3.4 Nervous System Connection

The nervous system is especially sensitive to micronutrient status:

- **Magnesium + B-vitamins** calm the stress response and support neurotransmitter production.
- **Omega-3s + Vitamin D** improve mood regulation and protect against depression.
- **Iron + Vitamin B12** prevent fatigue and support concentration.
- **Antioxidants** protect brain tissue from oxidative damage and aging.

3.5 Quick-Reference Chart: Key Micronutrients

Nutrient	Role in the Body	Nervous System Impact	Best Food Sources
Vitamin D	Bone strength, calcium absorption	Supports nerve signaling, mood	Sunlight, salmon, egg yolks
Vitamin B12	Red blood cells, DNA synthesis	Neurotransmitter production, focus	Meat, fish, dairy, fortified foods
Magnesium	Muscle/nerve relaxation, enzyme support	Calms stress response, aids sleep	Nuts, spinach, dark chocolate
Iron	Oxygen transport, energy	Prevents fatigue, supports focus	Beef, lentils, spinach
Zinc	Immunity, wound healing	Neurotransmission, brain repair	Shellfish, pumpkin seeds, beef
Vitamin C	Immune function, collagen synthesis	Protects brain from oxidative stress	Citrus, peppers, berries
Omega-3s (EPA/DHA)	Anti-inflammatory, cellular fluidity	Improves mood, memory, cognition	Salmon, flax, chia seeds

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Key Takeaways

- Micronutrients don’t provide calories but are essential for nearly every system in the body.

- Deficiencies often show up as subtle nervous system symptoms like fatigue, poor sleep, or mood swings.
- Eating a **colorful, whole-food diet** is the best way to cover your micronutrient needs.
- Targeted supplementation can help, but food is the foundation.

Section 4: Calories & Energy Balance

What Is a Calorie?

A **calorie** is a unit of energy. It represents the amount of energy your body gets from food and uses to fuel every single process — from breathing and thinking to repairing muscles after a workout.

Think of calories like **currency**:

- If you spend more than you earn → you're in an energy deficit (weight loss).
- If you earn more than you spend → you're in an energy surplus (weight gain).
- If you balance the two → you maintain your current weight and energy levels.

Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

Your **BMR** is the number of calories your body needs to stay alive at complete rest — basically, what it takes to run your brain, heart, lungs, and nervous system.

Factors that affect BMR:

- Age (slows with age)
- Sex (men usually have higher BMR due to muscle mass)
- Muscle mass (muscle burns more energy at rest)

- Genetics

💡 **Why it matters:** If you eat fewer calories than your BMR for long periods, your body will enter “conservation mode” and your nervous system will sense stress, lowering energy, mood, and recovery ability.

Total Daily Energy Expenditure (TDEE)

Your **TDEE** is the total number of calories you burn in a day, including:

- **BMR** – baseline energy needs
- **NEAT** – non-exercise movement (walking, chores, fidgeting)
- **EAT** – exercise activity (workouts, sports)
- **TEF** – thermic effect of food (calories burned digesting food)

This gives a more realistic view of how many calories you need to maintain your current weight and performance.

Energy Balance & Goals

1. **Maintenance:**
   Calories in = calories out → weight stays the same.
2. **Deficit (Fat Loss):**
   Calories in < calories out → body burns stored fat for energy.

- Deficit range: 300–500 calories/day below TDEE.
- Nervous system note: Extreme deficits increase stress hormones (cortisol), disrupt sleep, and may slow recovery.

3. **Surplus (Muscle Gain):**
   Calories in > calories out → body has extra energy to build muscle.

- Surplus range: 200–400 calories/day above TDEE.

- Nervous system note: Works best with resistance training; excess surplus can lead to fat gain.

Macronutrient Calorie Breakdown

Each macronutrient provides energy differently:

- **Protein:** 4 calories/gram → building & repair
- **Carbohydrates:** 4 calories/gram → quick energy for brain & muscles
- **Fats:** 9 calories/gram → long-lasting energy, hormone & nerve support
- **Alcohol:** 7 calories/gram → provides energy but no nutritional value

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Nervous System Connection

Your nervous system is **highly sensitive to energy balance**:

- In deficit: body shifts into stress mode → fatigue, poor focus, irritability.
- In maintenance: nervous system thrives → stable energy, mood, and recovery.
- In surplus: when paired with training, nervous system adapts positively → growth, strength, improved resilience.

Example: Calculating Calorie Needs

1. **Step 1 – Find BMR**
   Use a formula (like Mifflin-St Jeor) or an online calculator.
   Example: 180 lb (82 kg) moderately active male → BMR ≈ 1,800 calories/day.
2. **Step 2 – Multiply by Activity Level (TDEE)**

- Sedentary (x1.2)

- Lightly active (x1.375)
- Moderately active (x1.55)
- Very active (x1.725)
- Athlete (x1.9)

Example: 1,800 x 1.55 = **≈2,800 calories/day**.

3. **Step 3 – Adjust for Goals**

- Fat loss: 2,300–2,500 calories/day
- Maintenance: 2,800 calories/day
- Muscle gain: 3,000–3,200 calories/day

Key Takeaways

- Calories are the body's energy currency.
- BMR = baseline needs, TDEE = full daily burn.
- Deficit → fat loss, surplus → muscle gain, maintenance → balance.
- Nervous system thrives with balance, but extreme deficits or surpluses cause stress.

Section 5: Types of Diets

There are countless diets out there, and the truth is — no single approach works for everyone. Your nervous system, metabolism, activity level, and lifestyle all influence how you respond to different foods. The key is finding a way of eating that supports your **long-term health, performance, and recovery.**

Here's a breakdown of the most common diet approaches:

5.1 Whole Food Eating

Focus: Minimally processed foods like lean meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.

- **Pros:** Balanced, nutrient-dense, sustainable long-term.
- **Cons:** Requires some planning, may feel "basic" compared to trendier diets.
- **Nervous System Note:** Steady energy and micronutrient supply → optimal brain and nerve function.

5.2 Mediterranean Diet

Focus: High intake of vegetables, fruits, olive oil, fish, whole grains, legumes, nuts; moderate dairy and poultry; limited red meat.

- **Pros:** Strong research for heart health and longevity.
- **Cons:** Can be higher in carbs, not always ideal for low-carb goals.
- **Nervous System Note:** Rich in omega-3s and antioxidants → supports anti-inflammatory brain health.

5.3 Paleo Diet

Focus: Foods presumed to be eaten by our hunter-gatherer ancestors — meat, fish, eggs, veggies, fruits, nuts, seeds. Avoids grains, dairy, and processed foods.

- **Pros:** Encourages whole, nutrient-rich foods; often reduces inflammation.
- **Cons:** Can be restrictive; may limit beneficial foods like legumes or dairy.

- **Nervous System Note:** High in healthy fats and protein → stabilizes blood sugar and reduces nervous system stress.

5.4 Ketogenic Diet (Keto)

Focus: Very low carb (5–10%), moderate protein, high fat. Forces body into ketosis (using fat for fuel).

- **Pros:** Can help with fat loss and blood sugar regulation; may improve mental clarity for some.
- **Cons:** Difficult to sustain long-term; risk of nutrient deficiencies; not ideal for high-intensity athletes.
- **Nervous System Note:** Ketones can fuel the brain efficiently, but low carb can stress some nervous systems if not carefully managed.

5.5 Plant-Based / Vegan Diet

Focus: All plant foods — vegetables, fruits, legumes, grains, nuts, seeds. Avoids all animal products.

- **Pros:** High in fiber, antioxidants, and phytonutrients; supports heart health.
- **Cons:** Can be low in protein, vitamin B12, iron, and omega-3s if not planned properly.
- **Nervous System Note:** Needs careful supplementation (B12, DHA, iron) for optimal nerve and brain function.

5.6 Carnivore Diet

Focus: Exclusively animal foods — meat, fish, eggs, limited dairy.

- **Pros:** High protein, high satiety, often reduces digestive issues for some.
- **Cons:** Extremely restrictive; lacks fiber, antioxidants, and many micronutrients.
- **Nervous System Note:** Short-term can feel stabilizing (removing irritants), but long-term micronutrient gaps may affect nervous system resilience.

Choosing the Right Diet for You

Instead of chasing fads, ask:

1. Does this diet provide enough **protein, micronutrients, and healthy fats** for my body?
2. Can I sustain this long-term without added stress?
3. Does it support my **nervous system** with steady energy, recovery, and mental clarity?

💡 **Pro Tip:** Most people thrive on a **flexible, whole-food-based approach** with occasional adjustments depending on their goals (performance, fat loss, recovery).

Key Takeaways

- Diets are tools — not magic solutions.
- The “best” diet is one you can sustain that supports energy, health, and nervous system balance.
- Look for nutrient density, balance, and sustainability over extremes.

Section 6: Fasting & Intermittent Fasting

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is the practice of **voluntarily going without food** for a set period of time. While it's become popular in recent years, fasting isn't new — it has been practiced for thousands of years across cultures for spiritual, health, and survival reasons.

Modern research shows fasting influences metabolism, cell repair, and even nervous system regulation. But like all tools, it must be used wisely.

6.1 Why People Fast

- **Metabolic Health:** Improves insulin sensitivity, helps regulate blood sugar
- **Fat Loss:** Creates a calorie deficit without strict tracking
- **Cellular Repair:** Stimulates autophagy (cell cleanup and renewal)
- **Mental Clarity:** Some report sharper focus during fasts
- **Longevity:** Early research suggests fasting may extend cellular health and lifespan

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6.2 Types of Fasting

Intermittent Fasting (Most Popular)

- **16:8 Method:** Fast for 16 hours, eat in an 8-hour window (e.g., noon–8 pm).
- **5:2 Method:** Eat normally 5 days per week, reduce calories (500–600) on 2 non-consecutive days.
- **Alternate-Day Fasting:** Rotate fasting and eating days.

Extended Fasting

- **24-hour fasts** (once or twice per week) or multi-day fasts.
- **Note:** These should only be done under medical guidance, as they can stress the body if not approached correctly.

6.3 Benefits of Fasting

- Supports fat metabolism and weight control
- Encourages cellular repair and reduces inflammation
- May improve brain function and mental clarity
- Simplifies eating schedule and reduces decision fatigue

6.4 Risks & Considerations

- May cause irritability, low energy, or headaches in beginners
- Not suitable for children, pregnant women, or people with a history of eating disorders
- Can disrupt hormones if overused, especially in women
- Extended fasting can lead to nutrient deficiencies if not managed carefully

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6.5 Nervous System Connection

- **Short-term fasting** can boost alertness by activating the sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight response).
- **Chronic or excessive fasting** can over-stimulate the stress response, leading to fatigue, sleep disruption, and slower recovery.
- Balanced intermittent fasting (like 16:8) often supports nervous system health when paired with good sleep, hydration, and nutrient-dense meals.

Key Takeaways

- Fasting is a powerful tool, but not a magic fix.
- The 16:8 intermittent fasting method is the most practical and sustainable for many people.
- Benefits include fat loss, improved insulin sensitivity, and cellular repair.
- Risks include stress on the nervous system, hormone disruption, and nutrient deficiencies if not balanced with proper nutrition.
- Fasting should **support your nervous system, not stress it further** — listen to your body.

Section 7.1 – Gut Health

Why Gut Health Matters

Your gut isn't just a digestion machine — it's often called the **"second brain."** Within your intestines lives a massive ecosystem of bacteria, fungi, and microbes (the gut microbiome). These organisms play a critical role in breaking down food, absorbing nutrients, producing vitamins, and even regulating your nervous system.

In fact, the gut and brain are connected by the **gut-brain axis**, a two-way communication system that directly links digestion, mood, immune function, and stress response.

Gut Health & the Nervous System

- **Neurotransmitter Production:** Around 90% of serotonin (the "feel-good" chemical) is made in the gut.
- **Stress Connection:** A stressed nervous system can slow digestion → bloating, constipation, or IBS.
- **Feedback Loop:** Poor gut health increases inflammation, which can irritate the nervous system and affect focus, energy, and mood.

Keys to a Healthy Gut

1. Fiber

- Feeds beneficial gut bacteria (prebiotic fiber).
- Improves bowel regularity.
- Found in fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains.

2. Probiotics

- Live beneficial bacteria that support gut balance.
- Found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, and kombucha.

3. Prebiotics

- Fibers that act as “food” for probiotics.
- Found in garlic, onions, asparagus, leeks, bananas, and oats.

4. Diversity

- A wide variety of plant foods (fruits, veggies, legumes, herbs, spices) → diverse microbiome = stronger immune and nervous system resilience.

5. Limit Irritants

- Processed foods, artificial sweeteners, excessive alcohol, and chronic stress can disrupt gut health.

Practical Tips

- Aim for **25–35g of fiber daily** (gradually increase if you’re not used to it).
- Include a **fermented food** with at least one meal each day.

- Hydrate well — water helps fiber do its job.
- Eat a **rainbow of colors** weekly (goal: 30 different plants per week).

Key Takeaways

- Gut health and nervous system health are deeply connected.
- Fiber, probiotics, and diverse whole foods are the foundation of a healthy gut.
- Chronic stress and poor diet can create a “gut-brain imbalance” that shows up as digestive issues, fatigue, or mood swings.

Section 7.2 – Hydration Strategies

Why Hydration Matters

Water is often overlooked in nutrition, but it is arguably the **most important nutrient** of all. Your body is about 60% water, and every cell, tissue, and organ depends on it to function. Without proper hydration, even the best diet won’t work the way it should.

Hydration & the Nervous System

- **Electrical Conduction:** Water and electrolytes conduct the electrical impulses that keep your nervous system firing.
- **Stress Response:** Dehydration activates stress hormones (cortisol), making the nervous system feel “on edge.”
- **Focus & Energy:** Even mild dehydration (1–2%) decreases concentration, memory, and reaction time.
- **Recovery:** Water cushions joints, supports spinal disc hydration, and flushes out waste products after workouts.

How Much Water Do You Need?

A good baseline:

- **Half your body weight in ounces per day** (example: 180 lbs → 90 oz water).
- Increase intake if:
    - Exercising/sweating heavily
    - Spending time in hot or dry environments
    - Consuming caffeine or alcohol

Electrolytes: The "Spark" in Hydration

Electrolytes are minerals dissolved in fluid that maintain balance, nerve conduction, and muscle function.

- **Sodium** – maintains fluid balance, nerve signaling
- **Potassium** – supports muscle contraction, heart rhythm
- **Magnesium** – calms nerves, prevents cramps
- **Chloride** – helps regulate fluid levels

💡 **Tip:** Coconut water, mineral water, bone broth, or a quality electrolyte mix can help replace what's lost through sweat.

Practical Hydration Tips

- Start the day with **16–20 oz of water** before coffee or food.
- Carry a water bottle and sip throughout the day.
- Flavor with lemon, cucumber, or herbal tea if plain water feels boring.

- During intense workouts, aim for **16–24 oz water per hour of activity.**

Key Takeaways

- Hydration is essential for energy, focus, and nervous system balance.
- Drink half your body weight in ounces daily, adjusting for exercise and environment.
- Don’t forget electrolytes — they keep your nervous system firing smoothly.

Section 7.3 – Inflammation & Anti-Inflammatory Living

Why Inflammation Matters

Inflammation is the body’s natural response to injury, infection, or stress. Short-term (acute) inflammation is protective — think of a swollen ankle healing after a sprain. But when inflammation becomes **chronic**, it silently damages tissues, stresses the nervous system, and contributes to conditions like heart disease, arthritis, and even anxiety or depression.

Nutrition & Inflammation

Pro-Inflammatory Foods (limit or avoid):

- Refined sugars and processed carbs (white bread, soda, pastries)
- Industrial seed oils (canola, soybean, corn oil)
- Fried and ultra-processed foods
- Excessive alcohol

Anti-Inflammatory Foods (eat more of):

- **Fatty fish** (salmon, sardines, mackerel) → omega-3s calm inflammation
- **Olive oil & avocados** → monounsaturated fats for heart & brain health
- **Leafy greens & cruciferous veggies** (spinach, broccoli, kale) → antioxidants & detox support
- **Berries & cherries** → rich in polyphenols and vitamin C
- **Spices** (turmeric, ginger, cinnamon) → natural anti-inflammatory compounds
- **Nuts & seeds** (walnuts, chia, flax) → omega-3 and magnesium support

💡 **Tip:** Think “eat the rainbow.” Each color of fruit or vegetable brings unique antioxidants that help your nervous system fight stress.

Lifestyle & Inflammation

- **Sleep:** Poor sleep raises inflammation markers (CRP, cortisol). Aim for 7–9 hours.
- **Stress Management:** Chronic stress keeps the nervous system in “fight or flight,” driving inflammation. Breathing practices, mindfulness, and chiropractic care help regulate balance.
- **Movement:** Regular low-to-moderate exercise reduces inflammation. Overtraining, however, increases it — balance is key.
- **Recovery:** Rest days, stretching, mobility work, and bodywork (massage, chiropractic, yoga) allow the body to heal.
- **Community & Connection:** Isolation increases stress hormones. Supportive relationships buffer inflammation through the nervous system’s social regulation.

Nervous System Connection

The nervous system and inflammation are tightly linked. Chronic stress keeps the body inflamed, while chronic inflammation irritates the nervous system. This creates a cycle of fatigue, brain fog, and slower healing. Breaking the cycle requires balancing **both lifestyle and diet.**

Key Takeaways

- Inflammation is normal in the short term but harmful when chronic.
- Diet plays a big role: eat more omega-3s, greens, berries, and spices; limit processed foods.
- Lifestyle is equally important: prioritize sleep, stress regulation, movement, and recovery.
- Nervous system balance is the “switch” that tells the body whether to stay inflamed or heal.

Section 7.4 – Supplements

Why Supplements?

Supplements aren’t a replacement for food, but they can **fill in gaps**, especially in today’s world where stress, busy schedules, and soil depletion make it hard to get everything from diet alone.

The right supplements support the body, brain, and nervous system — but the wrong ones (or poor-quality versions) are a waste of money.

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1. Performance & Recovery

Goal: Support exercise, strength, endurance, and faster recovery.

- **Creatine Monohydrate** → improves strength, power output, and even brain health.
- **Protein Powder (Whey, Plant-Based Blends)** → convenient way to meet daily protein needs.
- **Electrolytes (Sodium, Potassium, Magnesium)** → maintain hydration and prevent cramps.
- **Beta-Alanine** → buffers lactic acid, supports endurance.

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2. Brain & Nervous System Health

Goal: Support focus, mood, stress resilience, and nerve signaling.

- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids (EPA/DHA)** → reduce inflammation, improve mood, protect brain tissue.
- **Magnesium (glycinate, citrate, or threonate)** → calms the nervous system, supports sleep.
- **B-Complex Vitamins** → critical for neurotransmitter production and energy metabolism.
- **L-Theanine (from green tea)** → promotes calm focus without drowsiness.
- **Vitamin D3 + K2** → regulates mood, nerve signaling, bone and cardiovascular health.

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3. Immunity & General Wellness

Goal: Strengthen defenses and improve resilience.

- **Vitamin C** → antioxidant, supports immune system and collagen formation.
- **Zinc** → key for immunity and wound healing.
- **Probiotics** → promote gut health (and therefore immune strength).
- **Vitamin A** → protects skin and mucous membranes (the first barrier to infection).
- **Elderberry / Echinacea** (seasonal support) → help shorten duration of colds.

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4. Anti-Inflammatory & Recovery Boosters

Goal: Reduce chronic inflammation and support healing.

- **Turmeric/Curcumin (with black pepper for absorption)** → powerful anti-inflammatory.

- **Collagen Peptides** → joint, tendon, and skin health.
- **CoQ10** → supports energy production and protects cells from oxidative stress.
- **Resveratrol** → antioxidant that supports cellular health and longevity.
- **Ashwagandha** → adaptogen that balances stress response and nervous system regulation.

Key Takeaways

- Supplements are tools, not replacements for a nutrient-rich diet.
- Focus first on **whole foods, hydration, sleep, and lifestyle**, then add supplements where needed.
- Look for **high-quality, third-party tested** products to ensure purity and potency.
- Choose based on your goals: performance, brain/nervous system, immunity, or inflammation.

👉 That wraps up **Section 7: Special Nutrition Considerations** ✅

Next, we'll move into **Section 8: Practical Application** — where we'll give patients tools like:

- Grocery shopping guide
- Meal planning & prepping basics
- Sample meal plans (muscle gain, fat loss, balanced lifestyle)
- Snack swaps & quick reference charts

Section 8.1 – Grocery Shopping Guide

Why It Matters

Healthy nutrition starts **before food ever hits your plate** — it starts at the store. If you fill your kitchen with nourishing, whole foods, making healthy choices becomes effortless. This guide will help you stock up on the essentials for protein, energy, recovery, and nervous system health.

🥩 Protein (Build & Repair)

- Chicken breast, thighs
- Ground turkey, lean beef, bison
- Fish: salmon, tuna, cod, sardines
- Eggs & egg whites
- Greek yogurt, cottage cheese
- Tofu, tempeh, edamame
- Lentils, beans (black, kidney, chickpeas)
- Protein powder (whey or plant-based blends)

🍚 Carbohydrates (Energy & Brain Fuel)

Complex Carbs

- Brown rice, quinoa, oats
- Sweet potatoes, white potatoes
- Whole grain bread, wraps, pasta
- Beans, lentils

Fruits (quick energy + micronutrients)

- Berries (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries)
- Bananas, apples, oranges, pears
- Grapes, cherries, pineapple

Vegetables (fiber + antioxidants)

- Leafy greens: spinach, kale, romaine, arugula
- Cruciferous veggies: broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts
- Peppers, carrots, cucumbers, zucchini

🥑 Healthy Fats (Hormones & Nervous System)

- Avocados
- Olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil
- Nuts: almonds, walnuts, cashews
- Seeds: chia, flax, pumpkin, sunflower
- Nut butters (natural, low-sugar)
- Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines)

🧂 Pantry Staples (Flavor & Function)

- Herbs & spices: turmeric, cinnamon, garlic, ginger, basil
- Bone broth
- Low-sodium broth/stock

- Apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar
- Canned beans & tomatoes (low-sodium)

🥤 Hydration & Recovery

- Water (still or sparkling, mineral water if possible)
- Coconut water
- Electrolyte packets (low sugar)
- Herbal teas

🛒 Shopping Tips

- Shop the **perimeter of the store** (produce, meat, dairy) — most processed foods live in the middle aisles.
- Read labels → look for short ingredient lists, minimal added sugar, and healthy oils.
- Stock up on **frozen fruits & veggies** for quick meals — just as nutritious as fresh.
- Build your cart with this balance:
    - ½ fruits & veggies
    - ¼ protein
    - ¼ carbs + healthy fats

Key Takeaway

If you keep **nutrient-dense foods** in your kitchen, you'll naturally make healthier choices. Think in terms of **protein + color + healthy fats** every time you shop.

Section 8.2 – Meal Planning & Prepping Basics

Why Meal Planning Matters

Even with the best grocery list, healthy eating often falls apart when life gets busy. **Meal planning and prepping** remove the daily stress of "What should I eat?" and help you stay consistent with your nutrition goals.

Step 1 – Start with Your Schedule

Look at your week ahead:

- Which days are busiest? (those need grab-and-go meals)
- When will you have time to cook?
- How many meals will you eat at home vs. on the go?

📍 **Tip:** Plan for at least 2–3 "repeat meals" during the week to simplify shopping and reduce decision fatigue.

Step 2 – Build Balanced Meals

Each meal should include:

- **Protein** (muscle & nervous system repair)
- **Color** (fruits/veggies for micronutrients)
- **Smart Carbs** (steady energy)
- **Healthy Fats** (hormones & brain health)

💡 Think: *Protein + Color + Carbs + Healthy Fat*

Step 3 – Batch Prep Basics

- **Cook proteins in bulk**: grill chicken, bake fish, or cook ground turkey/beef.
- **Prep complex carbs**: make a pot of rice, quinoa, or roasted potatoes.
- **Wash & chop veggies** ahead of time for salads or stir-fries.
- **Snack packs**: portion nuts, fruit, or Greek yogurt for grab-and-go.

Step 4 – Storage & Tools

- Invest in glass containers or bento-style boxes.
- Label meals by day if you want extra organization.
- Store fresh produce separately to avoid sogginess.
- Freeze extras if you won't eat them within 3–4 days.

Step 5 – Stay Flexible

Meal planning should **reduce stress, not create it**. If you're tired of a food, swap it. If you have an unplanned meal out, adjust the next day. Consistency > perfection.

Example Weekly Meal Template

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack	Dinner
Mon	Overnight oats w/ Greek yogurt & berries	Chicken, quinoa, broccoli	Apple + almond butter	Salmon, sweet potato, spinach

Tue	Veggie omelet + avocado	Turkey chili + brown rice	Greek yogurt + nuts	Beef stir fry + mixed veggies
Wed	Smoothie (protein, spinach, banana, flax)	Tuna salad wrap + carrots	Hummus + peppers	Chicken, roasted potatoes, asparagus
Thu	Oats + protein powder + blueberries	Leftover salmon + salad	Trail mix	Turkey burger + sweet potato fries
Fri	Cottage cheese + fruit + walnuts	Lentil soup + side salad	Protein shake	Shrimp + quinoa + zucchini
Sat	Scrambled eggs + avocado toast	Grilled chicken Caesar salad	Apple slices + peanut butter	Steak + roasted veggies
Sun	Protein pancakes + berries	Leftovers	Mixed nuts	Family dinner / flex meal

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Key Takeaways

- Meal planning = less stress + more consistency.
- Cook proteins, carbs, and veggies in bulk for easy mix-and-match meals.
- Keep meals simple but balanced → protein + color + carb + fat.
- Flexibility keeps it sustainable long-term.

Section 8.3 – Sample Meal Plans

Plan 1: Balanced Lifestyle (≈ 2,200 calories)

Good for maintenance and overall wellness.

- **Breakfast:**
  Veggie omelet (3 eggs, spinach, mushrooms, peppers) + ½ avocado + 1 slice whole grain toast
- **Snack:**
  Greek yogurt (1 cup) + blueberries + 1 tbsp chia seeds

- **Lunch:**
  Grilled chicken (5 oz) + quinoa (1 cup) + steamed broccoli

- **Snack:**
  Apple + 2 tbsp almond butter

- **Dinner:**
  Salmon (6 oz) + roasted sweet potatoes (1 cup) + asparagus

- **Evening Option:**
  Herbal tea + a handful of walnuts

Plan 2: Fat Loss (≈ 1,800 calories)

Focus: Slight calorie deficit, higher protein for satiety.

- **Breakfast:**
  Protein smoothie (1 scoop protein, spinach, frozen berries, unsweetened almond milk)

- **Snack:**
  Hard-boiled eggs (2) + carrot sticks

- **Lunch:**
  Turkey burger (no bun) + large salad (greens, cucumbers, peppers, olive oil & lemon dressing)

- **Snack:**
  Cottage cheese (½ cup) + sliced strawberries

- **Dinner:**
  Baked cod (5 oz) + cauliflower rice (1 cup) + roasted Brussels sprouts

- **Evening Option:**
  Chamomile tea

Plan 3: Muscle Gain (≈ 3,000 calories)

Focus: Calorie surplus, more carbs for performance & recovery.

- **Breakfast:**
  Oatmeal (1 cup cooked) topped with banana, 2 tbsp peanut butter, and 1 scoop protein powder mixed in

- **Snack:**
  Turkey & hummus wrap (whole grain tortilla) + grapes

- **Lunch:**
  Grilled chicken (6 oz) + brown rice (1.5 cups) + roasted broccoli

- **Snack:**
  Greek yogurt (1 cup) + granola + mixed berries

- **Dinner:**
  Sirloin steak (7 oz) + baked potato (1 large) + green beans

- **Evening Option:**
  Protein shake + almond butter sandwich on whole grain bread

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Key Takeaways

- **Balanced lifestyle** = steady energy, sustainable long-term.

- **Fat loss** = slightly fewer calories, more lean protein + veggies for fullness.

- **Muscle gain** = extra calories, especially from carbs, to fuel growth and recovery.

- Each plan keeps nervous system health in mind with steady nutrients, hydration, and colorful foods.

Section 8.4 – Snack Swaps & Quick Reference List

Why Snack Swaps Matter

Snacking is often where healthy eating falls apart. The goal isn't to never snack — it's to **upgrade your snacks** so they fuel your body, brain, and nervous system rather than stress them out.

Here are some simple swaps you can make today:

Sweet Cravings

- Swap **candy** → for **fruit + a few dark chocolate squares**
- Swap **ice cream** → for **frozen Greek yogurt + berries**
- Swap **sugary cereal** → for **overnight oats with cinnamon & fruit**

Crunchy Cravings

- Swap **chips** → for **air-popped popcorn or roasted chickpeas**
- Swap **crackers** → for **veggie sticks + hummus**
- Swap **pretzels** → for **almonds, cashews, or pumpkin seeds**

Drinks

- Swap **soda** → for **sparkling water with lemon or fruit slices**
- Swap **energy drinks** → for **green tea or matcha**
- Swap **frappuccino** → for **iced coffee with almond milk**

Quick Grab-and-Go

- Swap **granola bars (sugar-heavy)** → for **protein bar with clean ingredients**

- Swap **doughnut/pastry** → for **banana + peanut butter**
- Swap **cheese crackers** → for **apple slices + string cheese**

Nervous System-Friendly Snacks

- **Magnesium-rich options** (dark chocolate, pumpkin seeds, almonds) → calm stress response
- **Protein + carb combos** (Greek yogurt + fruit, turkey roll-ups + veggies) → steady blood sugar & mood
- **Hydration snacks** (cucumber slices, watermelon, oranges) → prevent fatigue & brain fog

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Key Takeaways

- Snacking is fine when it fuels recovery, focus, and steady energy.
- Swap processed snacks for options that combine **protein, fiber, and healthy fats**.
- Nervous system thrives on **steady energy, hydration, and nutrient-rich foods** — not sugar spikes and crashes.

Section 9 – Lifestyle & Nervous System Integration

Why Lifestyle Matters

Nutrition lays the foundation, but your **lifestyle is the environment** where that foundation is built. What you eat interacts with how you sleep, move, breathe, and connect with others. If one

piece is out of balance, the nervous system senses stress, which affects digestion, metabolism, and even your relationship with food.

Sleep: The Master Reset

Sleep is when your body repairs, detoxifies, and restores energy. Without it, even perfect nutrition won't be fully absorbed or utilized.

- Poor sleep increases hunger hormones (ghrelin), making junk food more tempting.
- Deep sleep is when growth hormone is released, supporting muscle recovery and fat metabolism.
- Nervous system regulation during sleep restores balance between "fight or flight" and "rest and digest."

Nutrition + Sleep Tip: A protein + complex carb snack (like Greek yogurt + berries) before bed can stabilize blood sugar and support deeper sleep. Magnesium-rich foods (pumpkin seeds, spinach, dark chocolate) also improve sleep quality.

Stress: The Invisible Nutrient Drain

Chronic stress burns through nutrients like magnesium, vitamin C, and B vitamins at a faster rate. It also raises cortisol, which can:

- Disrupt digestion and gut health
- Increase sugar cravings
- Slow muscle recovery

Managing stress is as essential as eating well. Breathing exercises, mindfulness, time outdoors, and chiropractic adjustments all help reset the nervous system so your nutrition works for you instead of being burned up in "survival mode."

Movement: The Nutrient Multiplier

Food fuels movement, but movement also improves how food is used. Exercise increases insulin sensitivity, meaning your body uses carbs more efficiently for energy and muscle repair instead of storing them as fat.

- Strength training increases your protein needs but also amplifies muscle growth when nutrition is on point.
- Cardio improves circulation, delivering nutrients to every cell.
- Mobility and recovery practices keep joints healthy and reduce inflammation.

💡 **Tip:** Pair post-workout carbs (fruit, rice, potatoes) with protein (chicken, fish, whey) for optimal recovery and nervous system calm.

Community & Connection: The Missing Link

Food is rarely just food — it's social, cultural, and relational. Sharing meals with family or community reduces stress hormones, boosts oxytocin (the "connection" hormone), and helps the nervous system feel safe. Isolation, on the other hand, increases inflammatory markers and disrupts eating patterns.

Eating in community also helps reinforce healthier habits, as shared meals tend to be more balanced and intentional than solo snacking.

Bringing It All Together

Nutrition doesn't exist in a vacuum. The way you eat is influenced by:

- How well you sleep
- How you handle stress
- How much and how often you move
- Who you connect with at mealtimes

When these elements are aligned, your nervous system stays balanced — and balanced nervous systems digest, absorb, and utilize nutrients more effectively.

Key Takeaways

- **Sleep** restores hormones and nervous system balance.
- **Stress** depletes nutrients; regulation is essential for digestion and energy.
- **Movement** multiplies the benefits of good nutrition.
- **Community** makes food healing on a relational level.
- Nutrition is the foundation, but lifestyle is the environment where healing and performance thrive.

Section 10 – Closing: Nutrition as a Lifelong Practice

The Big Picture

Nutrition is not about perfection — it's about consistency and awareness. The foods you choose each day send signals to your body and nervous system. Some choices tell your system to grow, repair, and thrive. Others tell it to stress, slow down, and conserve.

The goal of this guide wasn't to give you rigid rules, but to equip you with **principles, tools, and confidence** to make better choices for yourself, your family, and your future.

Key Principles to Remember

1. **Food is fuel — and information.** Every bite communicates with your body and nervous system.
2. **Balance the macros.** Protein builds, carbs energize, fats regulate. You need all three.
3. **Micronutrients matter.** Vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants are the hidden spark plugs that keep everything running.
4. **Hydration is non-negotiable.** Water and electrolytes keep your brain, muscles, and nerves firing.

5. **Quality > quantity.** A calorie from whole food supports healing; a calorie from processed food stresses the system.

6. **Lifestyle shapes nutrition.** Sleep, stress, movement, and community determine how your body uses food.

Nutrition + Nervous System = Resilience

When your nutrition is aligned with your nervous system, you experience:

- More energy throughout the day
- Faster recovery from stress and workouts
- Better focus, mood, and mental clarity
- Stronger resilience to life's challenges

This is not about diets, restrictions, or quick fixes. It's about creating an environment — inside your body and in your life — where your nervous system feels safe, fueled, and supported.

A Loving Reminder

You don't have to do it all at once. Start small: drink more water, add protein to breakfast, eat one extra serving of veggies, or swap one snack a day. Small steps build momentum, and momentum creates transformation.

Remember: **healing and health are not linear.** Some days you'll feel on track, others less so — and that's okay. What matters most is that you come back to these principles again and again.

Final Thought

Nutrition is a lifelong practice. It's not about being perfect; it's about being present with your body, listening to its signals, and nourishing it with intention.

When you fuel your body well, you don’t just build muscle or lose weight — you build **resilience, energy, and longevity**. You give your nervous system the resources it needs to help you heal, adapt, and thrive in every season of life.

Your health is your foundation. Protect it. Nourish it. Live it.