

Uniquely You: Feeding Your Body for Optimal Health



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SONI chart courtesy of [Dr. Michael Murray](#) and [Dr. Joseph Pizzorno](#).

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Uniquely You: Feeding Your Body for Optimal Health

Our bodies are the coolest biochemical machines. We eat food, our bodies break down the food, absorb nutrients from the food, and send those nutrients to cells throughout our organs and tissues. It is this process that keeps us healthy, or keeps us unhealthy—depending on what we eat.

The human body needs certain nutrients in order to be healthy. Many of these you have probably heard of. What you might not be aware of is that each of us has a **unique** need for nutrients. Kind of like we each have a unique set of fingerprints!

We all need vitamin D for example. Some people get enough vitamin D from being in the sunshine. During the winter this can be tough. And then some of us, myself included, need more of it than other people no matter the season!

Vitamin A is another nutrient you have probably heard of. Most people get vitamin A when their body converts beta carotene from vegetables. Some of our bodies are not able to make this conversion, so we need to get our Vitamin A from animal sources.

That is why optimal health is not so simple as eating a healthy diet.

- How do you know if you are like me and need more Vitamin D?
- What other nutrients do you need more of?
- What if you think you are getting lots of Vitamin A because you eat a lot of carrots—but you are one of the many whose bodies can't make that conversion?
- What other nutrients do you need to take in a different way?
- Are you getting enough fat in your diet to think clearly?
- Is your brain protected by getting enough selenium, magnesium and trace minerals to prevent cognitive decline?

You might be wondering why our bodies have different needs. We have been taught that we all pretty much need the same things. OK, maybe we know that most women need more iron than men, but that is about it, or so we thought.

Our epigenetics drive these differences. What is epigenetics? Basically, it is how your genes can change how they are expressed, and then read by your cells. These changes happen all the time and are a natural part of what goes on inside our bodies. The environment we live in, our lifestyle, our general health can all influence how our genes are expressed. That helps us understand why we might have been able to eat a food as a kid but can't now that we are an adult.

Testing your genes is the best approach to **personalized healthcare**, which is what I specialize in. Knowledge is power, as the saying goes. Testing genes gives us tremendous knowledge. If you haven't had yours tested I suggest you take a test from [23andMe](#).

If you want to read more about the power of nutritional genetic testing, please [visit the testing page on my website](#).

The Food and Nutrition Board within the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences created a variety of lists years ago to advise on the amount of certain vitamins and

minerals we need. These dietary standards fall under the umbrella of DRI's, Dietary Reference Intakes, and include the RDA, Recommended Daily Allowance, the EAR, Estimated Average Requirement, AI, Adequate Intake, and UL, the Tolerable Upper Intake Level.

That's a lot of charts! One thing they all have in common is that the various recommendations were based on the amount of certain nutrients needed *to prevent clinical disease*. For example, the recommended daily amount of Vitamin C is what is required to prevent Scurvy—not to be healthy.

That is a very important point to remember, so I will say it again. The health guidelines given to us from the government, including the food pyramids we were all taught as kids, are intended as minimums to prevent disease.

Is that a bad thing? No one wants a disease, after all. But I think it's fair to say we want a lot more. We want **optimal health**. The goals of achieving health and avoiding disease are very different—and will affect how and what you eat!

Preventing disease in your body is like building a basic shelter that keeps you dry and warm, a roof, some walls, maybe a fire.

Is that all you want from your home? Most of us want our home to have a bit more than that! A comfortable bed to sleep in, hot running water to bathe in, a refrigerator to store our food, and an oven and stove to cook it all go into making an optimal home. Not to mention connecting to the internet!

So, what does it take to create optimal health?

The best place to start is the Suggested Optimal Nutrient Intake (SONI) as created by [Dr. Michael Murray](#) and [Dr. Joseph Pizzorno](#).

Now, before I share with you the SONI, I want to stress to you that we are all different! We are genetically different from birth, and remember epigenetics? Even your individual nutrient needs change from day to day based on the level of stress you are under, if you have an illness—or are fighting off a cold—and your exposure to various toxins.

Fortunately the SONI chart is broken down by gender and age, because Drs. Murray and Pizzorno realized that our nutritional needs change as we move through life.

These SONI are a starting point for good health—they reflect what most people need in order to experience optimal health, but they are not the only thing to consider when determining what you need.

Earlier I mentioned that genetic differences play a significant role in your individual nutrient needs. I need loads of vitamin D every day to maintain optimal blood levels and I need preformed vitamin A. So, for me, a plant base multivitamin will not supply my need for vitamin A because plant based vitamins only provide beta carotene. I have to take both beta carotene and preformed vitamin A, from animal sources, for optimal health. Either alone will not meet my needs. It really important for you to [know your needs](#) too.

Let's review what you have already learned:

- Your body needs certain nutrients in order to be healthy
- Your individual nutrient needs may be different from mine, and from those of your parents, siblings, spouse, and children
- RDA and other “nutrient requirements” are based on preventing disease, not creating health
- You know how to have your genes tested so you know your unique nutrient needs
- You know the SONI chart provides a start for optimal health for most people

So, what is the best way to get the nutrients your body needs?

You want to first try to [get your nutrients from food](#). Unfortunately, unlike in your grandmother’s day even with a healthy diet it’s virtually impossible to meet all your nutritional needs from food alone. A variety of things have reduced the nutritional level in our foods, including nutrient depleted soil, farming practices, shipping practices, cooking methods, toxin exposure, and more.

That means taking a high quality multi-vitamin and mineral formula is important. I recommend the retail brand Enzymatic Therapy. However, if you have an MTHFR SNP (it will be on your genetic test from 23andMe), this brand is not for you.

Other brands I recommend are Metagenics, Integrative Therapeutics, Pure Encapsulations, and Designs for Health (this is the brand I take).

The SONI chart below shows the recommended values for adults only. Children have different nutrient needs. Let me know if you need values for children and I’ll be happy to provide them for you.

Nutrient	Women age 25 to 50	Women age 51 +	Men age 25 to 50	Men age 51+
Vitamin A	2000 mcg	1800 mcg	2000 mcg	1750 mcg
Beta Carotene	80 mg	80 mg	100 mg	100 mg
Vitamin D3	up to 10,000 IU	up to 10,000 IU	up to 10,000 IU	up to 10,000 IU
Vitamin E as mixed tocopherol	400 mg	800 mg	400 mg	800 mg
Vitamin K	65 mg	65 mg	80 mg	80 mg
Vitamin C	400 mg	1000 mg	400 mg	800 mg
Vitamin B12	2.0 mcg	3.0 mcg	2.0 mcg	3.0 mcg
Folic Acid (Folate)	1000 mcg	2000 mcg	2000 mcg	2000 mcg
Thiamin (B1)	7.1 mg	9 mg	7.5 mg	9.2 mg
Riboflavin (B2)	2 mg	2 mg	2.5 mg	2.5 mg
Niacin (B3)	25 mg	25 mg	30 mg	30 mg
Pyridoxine (B6)	10 mg	20 mg	10 mg	25 mg
Boron	3 mg	3 mg	2.5 mg	2.5 mg
Calcium	800 mg	800 mg	700 mg	700 mg
Chromium	300 mcg	300 mcg	300 mcg	300 mcg
Copper	1.5-4 mg	1.5-4 mg	1.5-4 mg	1.5-4 mg
Iodine	12.5 mg	12.5 mg	12.5 mg	12.5 mg
Iron	22 mg	20 mg	20 mg	20 mg
Magnesium	450 mg	550 mg	500 mg	600 mg
Manganese	5 mg	10 mg	5 mg	10 mg
Phosphorus	800 mg	800 mg	800 mg	800 mg
Potassium	3 g	3 g	3 g	3 g
Selenium	175 mcg	200 mcg	200 mcg	250 mcg
Sodium	400 mg	400 mg	400 mg	400 mg
Zinc	17 mg	17 mg	20 mg	20mg

Now that you have built your nutrient knowledge foundation, let's keep moving forward towards optimal health and the vibrant life you deserve!

[Schedule an appointment with me](#) to discuss your personalized healthcare need.

In the meantime, stay tuned for more healthy living tips from Living Well Nutrition!

To your health!

Kristy

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