



# nutrition wiz

One of Britain's top nutritional experts shares how eating and supplementing the right way can help us live longer, happier lives

By Tracy Rubert

In the late 1970s, Patrick Holford was a psychology student in London who became interested in how nutrition affects our minds and emotions. Less than a decade later, Holford founded the Institute for Optimum Nutrition (ION), Europe's leading school for training nutritional therapists. He has written more than 20 books, including the 1997 best seller *The Optimum Nutrition Bible*, recently expanded and updated. His Web site is [patrickholford.com](http://patrickholford.com).

## How does nutrition affect our mental health?

At ION, we recently completed a survey of 60,000 people, and found that many common health symptoms are related to mental health, including mood swings, PMS, poor memory and concentration, depression, anxiety, and insomnia. Optimum nutrition improves mood, memory, motivation, and energy levels.

## If we are eating a balanced diet, are supplements still necessary?

One of the biggest nutrition lies is that you get all the nutrients you need from a well-balanced diet. People are told to eat a diet that provides the RDAs. But RDAs are not the optimal intakes of nutrients. Here's an example: Two out of five people over age 60 are deficient in vitamin B12,

according to research, and suffer reductions in memory function with brain shrinkage as a result. The amount of B12 necessary to correct the deficiency is around 500 mcg—the RDA is 2.4 mcg.

One critical principle of optimum nutrition, established by Dr. Linus Pauling and others, is that nutrients can actually restore health in amounts much larger than we can consume from food. For example, very high-dose vitamin C is a potent anticancer chemotherapy agent. Chromium at levels of 500 mcg—that's 10 times what you could eat—helps stabilize blood sugar levels in diabetics better than metformin, the most common diabetes drug. Niacin at levels of 1,000 to 2,000 mg (the RDA is 16 mg) lowers cholesterol and raises HDL, the good cholesterol fraction, better than statin drugs. Anyone with cardiovascular problems should be supplementing with 300 mg of magnesium. If magnesium were a patentable, profitable drug, it would be a best seller.

## What nutrients do most people lack?

Few of us get enough B vitamins, especially B12. We also fail to get enough vitamins C, D, zinc, magnesium, chromium, and omega-3 fats.

## You believe homocysteine is the most important health statistic. Can you explain?

A survey found that the best predictor of cardiovascular death in the elderly was homocysteine. It's also the best marker for Alzheimer's and pregnancy problems. It's easy to lower homocysteine with optimal—not RDA—intakes of B6, B12, folic acid, and TMG or SAM-e. ♦

## Quick Takes

### HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

I wake at 5 a.m. and usually write until 8 a.m. Then, on a good day, I do a 16-minute exercise routine called Psychocalisthenics, which is kind of like aerobic yoga, designed to generate vital energy. Then I have breakfast, often oat flakes, ground seeds, and berries with rice milk, or maybe omega 3-rich eggs with smoked salmon and Nairns Oatcakes or Scandinavian-style bread.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO UNWIND?

I often get in my hot tub at the end of the day. And I love movies; I spend my day reading and writing, so watching movies makes a good break. I also found an extraordinary CD, John Levine's Silence of Peace, designed to put you into alpha waves, which is what you need to go to sleep. It really works!

### IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERTED ISLAND AND COULD PICK ONLY ONE NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT AND ONE FOOD TO HAVE WITH YOU, WHICH ONES WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

I'd definitely go for a high-strength multivitamin and mineral. Assuming I'd be able to fish and eat local fruits and vegetables, I might also bring a sack of quinoa—probably the best protein source in the vegetable kingdom.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE GUILTY PLEASURE?

Occasionally, I drink either organic champagne or margaritas. They're both free of yeast, which is a common allergen, and the fresh lime mitigates the damage of the alcohol. At least, that's my story and I'm sticking to it.



