BENKO MANAGEMENT · HEALTH SERIES · BOOK 2



How, What and When to Eat

A simple, natural approach to food, energy and health

Marcel Benko

BENKO MANAGEMENT

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IMPORTANT

This book shares the author's personal experience and opinions. It is for general information only and is not medical advice. It does not replace diagnosis or treatment by a doctor or other qualified health professional.

Talk to your doctor before making major changes to your diet, exercise, fasting or supplement routine, especially if you have a health condition, take medication, or are pregnant or breastfeeding. You are responsible for how you use the information in this book.

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PREFACE

Why This Book

In my first book, I described the seven pillars of natural health. Food is the one people ask me about the most, so this book goes deeper: what to eat, how to eat it and when.

I changed my own eating habits from one day to the next, and I have lived by them ever since. That's why I feel confident sharing them. I don't write as a theorist. I write as someone who tried it on himself and saw the results.

Like the first book, this one is a summary. I've read many books on nutrition, some of them over 400 pages, so you don't have to. I've kept what is simple, what is practical and what has worked for me, and I've left out the rest.

My intention is simple. I want you to live better and to enjoy better physical and mental health. Good food is one of the most powerful tools you have to get there, and one of the cheapest.

You don't need to change everything at once. Pick one idea from this book, make it a habit, then pick the next one.

CHAPTER I

What Your Diet Should Contain

If you want to understand what the best food really is, look at history. Look at how people used to eat.

When people lived from the land, their diet consisted of grains, fruit, nuts and vegetables. Animals were raised at home, on small farms, growing naturally and without routine antibiotics, and meat was fresh.

When you prepare these foods simply and as naturally as possible, they are among the healthiest and most nutritious foods there are. They give you strength, endurance and a clear mind. You will not get the same result from complicated, heavily processed food. Today, research supports this: diets built on whole, minimally processed foods are linked to better health, while diets high in ultra-processed food are linked to obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Many people today get sick simply because they don't understand healthy nutrition and eat whatever is marketed the most. Money plays a role too: not everyone can afford quality food, and cheap processed food is often the easiest option. I won't go deeper into the economics here, but I will say this: simple whole foods like oats, beans, lentils, potatoes, eggs and seasonal vegetables are among the cheapest foods in the store.

Done properly, a change in diet makes your body stronger and more resistant to disease, and gives you more energy for daily life. You will often save time and money too.

For your diet to be complete, it must contain three groups of substances: **building** substances, **energy** substances and **protective** substances.

A) BUILDING SUBSTANCES: PROTEIN

Proteins are the building materials of your body. You get them from legumes, nuts, whole grains, milk, eggs and, of course, meat and fish. I don't eat meat often, but I don't recommend removing it completely or

eating too much of it either. Balance is what matters.

Your body doesn't use protein in the form you eat it. It first breaks it down into amino acids and then builds its own proteins from them. It can't store extra protein, so whatever it doesn't need is burned for energy or stored as fat.

For a long time, enormous importance was placed on protein, especially animal protein. Some people recommend 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight. I train hard and build muscle naturally, and for a while I followed these recommendations. Guess what: I saw no difference between eating 180 g of protein a day and eating 60 g. That's my experience, without steroids or hormones. (If you're planning to take testosterone or anabolic steroids, this book is simply not for you. More about training in another book.)

> How much protein is right for you? Official guidelines recommend at least about 0.8 g per kilogram of body weight per day for adults, which is around 55 to 65 g for most people. Older adults and people who train hard often benefit from more. If you have kidney disease, talk to your doctor about how much protein is right for you.

B) ENERGY SUBSTANCES: CARBOHYDRATES AND FATS

Carbohydrates and fats are your sources of energy. One of the biggest misconceptions in diet programs is that carbohydrates are bad for you. That's simply not true. Natural carbohydrates are your body's main fuel. Many people who cut carbs to almost zero end up tired and reach for energy drinks and caffeine just to get through the day. Many of the people promoting zero-carb diets also sell you the protein powders and energy drinks.

What is bad for you is processed food: refined sugar, soda, cakes, pies and white flour. Natural carbohydrates from whole grains, potatoes, vegetables, legumes and fruit are essential. How much you need depends on your size and how active you are.

You get healthy fats from nuts and seeds such as sunflower, poppy, flax and pumpkin seeds. I personally eat olive oil and avocado every day.

C) PROTECTIVE SUBSTANCES: VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Vitamins and minerals are needed only in small amounts, but they are essential for life. You can eat enough protein, carbohydrates and fat and still be unhealthy if you lack them.

They are found mainly in fruit and vegetables, especially fresh, seasonal ones. Studies suggest that some fruit and vegetables today contain less of certain minerals and vitamins than they did decades ago. That's one more reason to eat a wide variety, choose fresh and seasonal produce, and eat plenty of it. Green smoothies made from spinach, lettuce, parsley or dandelion are an easy way to add more.

Vitamins come in two groups: water-soluble (the B vitamins and vitamin C), which your body can't store for long, so you need them regularly; and fat-soluble (A, D, E and K), which are absorbed with fat and stored in the body. You'll find what each one does, and where to get it, in Annex 1.

Minerals work closely with vitamins. Unlike vitamins, they are not destroyed by cooking. I add a few crystals of Celtic or Himalayan salt to my water because I like it, but to be clear, these salts contain only tiny amounts of minerals other than sodium. Your minerals should come from a varied diet. One mineral deserves special attention: iodine. Natural salts contain almost none, so use iodized salt in your cooking or eat iodine-rich foods such as fish, dairy and eggs. You'll find the main minerals in Annex 2.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Build your diet on simple, whole foods: grains, legumes, vegetables, fruit, nuts and eggs.
- Natural carbohydrates are fuel, not the enemy. Refined sugar and processed food are.
- Eat a wide variety of fresh produce for vitamins and minerals, and use iodized salt.

TRY THIS TODAY

Look at everything you ate yesterday. Circle what came from a factory. Replace one of those items tomorrow.

CHAPTER II

The Main Principles of Eating

A) REGULARITY

Eat when it's time to eat. This is one of the most basic rules of good health. Your body likes regularity.

I personally eat twice a day. Once a week, on a random day, I eat only one meal. And every three months, I do a three-day fast with only water and Celtic salt.

The foundation of good digestion is thorough chewing. Digestion of carbohydrates already begins in your mouth, with an enzyme in your saliva. The better you chew, the less food your body actually needs, because you feel full sooner. If you're not sure what "chewed enough" means, here's what helped me in the beginning: count 60 chews before swallowing.

After you swallow, your stomach mixes the food with digestive juices and then releases it in small portions into the small intestine, where nutrients are absorbed into your blood. Depending on the meal, this takes about two to four hours, longer for heavy or fatty meals.

When your stomach is partly empty, you start to feel lighter, and many people mistake that feeling for hunger. If you keep snacking, your digestive system never gets a break. That's why I give each meal time to be fully digested before eating again. I leave at least four to five hours between meals, and nothing in between, not even fruit or nuts. Personally, I leave about eight hours.

> If you have diabetes, take medication that affects your blood sugar, or are pregnant, talk to your doctor before reducing the number of meals you eat.

If you want to restore your health, train yourself to eat slowly and don't combine too many different foods in one meal. Give your stomach rest, peace and time to recover.

B) SIMPLICITY IN PREPARATION

Prepare your food according to the season and the region where you live. And most importantly, keep it simple. Simple food is more natural and more nutritious, and it gives your body strength, endurance and a clear mind.

Steam or boil vegetables and potatoes, and don't add salt during cooking. Use simple methods like boiling, stewing or baking. They preserve the natural taste of food. Avoid frying. If you use oil or salt, add them after cooking.

Simplicity also means how you eat:

- Chew your food thoroughly so it mixes well with saliva.
- Don't overeat, even when the food is healthy.
- Don't eat in a rush, right before sleep, or when you're stressed or upset.
- Avoid very hot or very cold food.

Drinking with meals. I don't drink during meals, and I prefer to "eat my water" from fruit and vegetables instead. I find that I digest better this way, especially compared with ice-cold drinks. To be fair, research hasn't shown that drinking water with meals harms digestion, so treat this as my personal habit. If you do drink with meals, avoid ice-cold and sugary drinks.

I also prefer to eat fruit at the end of a meal rather than mixed into vegetable dishes. Again, that's what works for my stomach rather than a scientific rule.

C) RAW FOOD EVERY DAY

Include raw food in your diet every day, and the more the better. A simple habit is to start your cooked meal with a portion of raw vegetable salad. Raw vegetables keep more of their vitamins and give you fiber and a feeling of fullness.

Never eat spoiled or moldy food. With soft fruit, bread and leftovers, mold can spread further than you can see, so cutting off the bad part isn't enough; throw them away.

In winter, you can replace fresh produce with frozen, dried or fermented fruit and vegetables.

D) FILL YOUR PLATE WITH PLANTS

You may have heard that some foods make your blood "acidic." In reality, your body keeps your blood's pH within a very narrow range, whatever you eat. But the old advice still points in the right direction: most people eat too much meat, cheese, sugar and refined grain, and too few plants.

Eat more of: vegetables, fruit (including dried), nuts, seeds, potatoes, legumes, and fermented milk products like yogurt and kefir.

Eat less of: red and processed meat, cheese, sugar and sweets, chocolate, white pasta and white bread, and salt.

Watch the preparation: even healthy foods lose their value when you fry vegetables or potatoes, or add sugar to fruit or poppy seeds.

E) MODERATION

True moderation means avoiding harmful things completely and using healthy things wisely. Even healthy food can harm you if you eat too much of it.

Many people create their own health problems through bad habits and then blame everything else. Some can't control their appetite; their thinking becomes slow and they lose both physical and mental strength.

Overeating is one of the biggest problems of our time. So think carefully about your diet and practice self-control. Don't harm your body by overeating.

F) FASTING

Your greatest enemy is uncontrolled appetite. For me, fasting is one of the most powerful tools for resetting both body and mind. It strengthens your willpower and helps you break bad habits, and it gives your digestive system a rest.

Scientists are studying how fasting affects the body, including a natural "clean-up" process in cells called autophagy. Much of this research is still in animals, and fasting is not a treatment for disease. But many people, including me, feel lighter, clearer and more in control when they fast from time to time.

How I do it: for two to three days before a fast, I eat mostly fruit and vegetables. During the fast, I drink water with a little Celtic salt and herbal tea. Afterward, I return to food slowly over about three days. In the first days of a fast you may notice headaches or bad breath. These usually pass, but if you feel dizzy, weak or unwell, stop and eat.

For many people, simply skipping one meal a week, as I do, is a gentle way to start.

> Fasting isn't for everyone. If you have diabetes or another medical condition, take medication, are pregnant or breastfeeding, are underweight, or have a history of eating problems, don't fast without your doctor's guidance. Never use fasting instead of medical treatment.

G) CHANGE GRADUALLY

There are many extreme diets today, but sudden, drastic changes are rarely good for you. If you eat meat every day, don't try to become vegan overnight, just as someone who doesn't run can't suddenly run a marathon. Reduce animal products gradually, starting with meat.

But don't remove them without a proper replacement, or you may weaken your body. Replace meat with whole grains, legumes, nuts and vegetables. Some people give up milk, butter and eggs without replacing them properly, and they end up weak.

It's better to go slowly and succeed than to go too fast and fail.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Fewer, calmer meals with real breaks in between. No snacking.
- Chew thoroughly. Try 60 chews per bite to learn what it feels like.
- Cook simply, eat raw food every day and fill most of your plate with plants.

TRY THIS TODAY

Start your main meal with a small raw salad, and don't eat anything for four hours after it.

CHAPTER III

Sources of Energy

A) GRAINS

Whole grains are a valuable source of energy. You can eat them cooked, baked or sprouted.

When you buy grain products, always look for the word "whole grain." Don't be misled by labels like "multigrain" or "six-grain"; they are often still made from white flour. Whole grains are rich in B vitamins and vitamin E, especially in the germ, and they contain fiber that supports digestion and releases energy slowly. Fiber also helps keep your bowels regular.

Personally, I eat very little bread. I avoid regular bread and pasta and only eat them when they're sourdough. If you eat bread, choose real sourdough or whole-grain bread made from simple ingredients, and avoid soft, sweetened supermarket bread.

If you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, choose naturally gluten-free grains like buckwheat, rice, millet and corn. Even without intolerance, these are worth including regularly. Sprouted grains are another excellent option.

B) NUTS AND SEEDS

Instead of a lot of meat and animal fat, I rely on grains, fruit, nuts and vegetables. Nuts are very rich in healthy fats, protein and minerals like magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and iron, plus B vitamins and vitamin E. Because they are so rich, moderation matters: a handful, about 30 to 50 g a day, is plenty.

I combine nuts with grains or fruit, but I don't overeat them. If your digestion feels off, eating fewer usually solves it.

For oil, I use olive oil for everything and avoid seed oils.

C) LEGUMES

Beans, lentils, peas and chickpeas are an important source of energy and protein. I eat them regularly, ideally several times a week. If beans are hard for you to digest, the solution is proper preparation, not avoidance.

Soak dried beans for 12 to 24 hours and change the water a few times. This removes some of the sugars that cause gas. Cooking them with herbs like marjoram, fennel or oregano also helps. Mild bloating at the beginning is normal and usually disappears as your body adapts.

Combined with grains, legumes give you complete protein and can replace meat: lentils with brown rice, peas with barley, beans with corn. Avoid combining them with fried food. Simple meals like boiled or baked beans with onion work best.

Soy is one of the most complete legumes. I use simple forms like tofu, tempeh and soy milk. It contains valuable minerals, B vitamins and vitamin E.

D) FRUIT

Fruit is one of the greatest natural foods. It's rich in vitamins, fiber and natural sugars, easy to digest and very nourishing. Grapes, apples, peaches, pears, berries and oranges should be on your table regularly. I eat fruit with my meals, especially oranges, and I prefer to eat it at the end of the meal rather than mixed into vegetable dishes.

Only eat fresh, healthy fruit, never spoiled or moldy. If your digestion is sensitive, still eat fruit, just in smaller amounts.

Olives are a fruit too, and rich in healthy fats. Olive oil is the fat I use every day, and in my experience it is far more valuable than animal fats.

E) VEGETABLES

Vegetables are essential for health. They provide minerals, vitamins and fiber. Apart from potatoes, they are not a major source of energy, but your body can't work properly without them.

Preparation matters. The longer you cook vegetables, the more vitamins you lose. Raw is best for many vegetables, and light steaming or short boiling is a good alternative.

Potatoes are rich in starch and easy on the stomach. Boil or bake them; don't fry them. If you reheat them, bake instead of frying.

Everything in your body is built from what you eat, which is why I always put vegetables, fruit, legumes and whole grains ahead of meat.

F) ANIMAL AND PLANT MILK

Milk provides protein, fat and calcium, but many people don't tolerate lactose well. Plant-based options like soy, oat, nut or seed milk can replace regular milk; choose unsweetened ones, ideally with added calcium. Poppy seeds and sesame are also excellent sources of calcium.

I prefer goat milk to cow milk. Many people find it easier to digest. If you buy milk directly from a farm, always boil or pasteurize it first, because raw milk can carry dangerous bacteria.

Cow milk is easier to digest in fermented form, as yogurt or kefir. Use butter sparingly and never fry with it. And remember: milk is not a drink, it's food. Treat a glass of milk as part of a meal.

G) EGGS

Eggs are one of my main sources of protein; I eat them every day. They provide complete protein and vitamin B12, which is especially important if you eat little meat. Choose good-quality eggs, ideally from free-range hens. In baking, they can be replaced with chickpea flour or a starch mixture if needed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Choose real whole grains, and read the label.
- Legumes plus grains give you complete protein without meat.
- A handful of nuts a day, olive oil for cooking, and plenty of vegetables and fruit.

TRY THIS TODAY

Soak a cup of dried beans or lentils tonight and cook them tomorrow with onion and marjoram.

CHAPTER IV

Salt, Spices and Herbs

A) SALT

Your body needs only a little salt, or more precisely, a little sodium. In excess, it becomes harmful.

Too much salt raises blood pressure, causes water retention and puts extra strain on your heart and kidneys. Most people eat far more than they need, mainly from bread, processed meat, cheese, ready meals and snacks rather than from the salt shaker.

Very little added salt is needed, because sodium is already present naturally in food. The World Health Organization recommends less than 5 g of salt a day, which is about 2 g of sodium, for adults.

Instead of refined salt, I prefer natural Celtic or Himalayan salt for taste, and I use iodized salt as well, so I get enough iodine.

B) SPICES AND HERBS

I personally avoid strong, hot spices like pepper and hot paprika, and vinegar-based foods. I find they irritate my stomach, so I use lemon juice instead of vinegar. That's my preference; many spices, such as ginger and cinnamon, are considered healthy for most people.

That said, food should never be bland. I rely on fresh herbs in summer and dried herbs in winter. They add flavor, they're good for digestion, and they let you use less salt. You'll find my favorite herbs in Annex 3.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Keep salt low: under 5 g a day, and watch processed food, where most of it hides.
- Use iodized salt or iodine-rich foods.
- Flavor with herbs and lemon instead of extra salt.

TRY THIS TODAY

Cook one meal without adding salt during cooking. Season it at the table with herbs and a squeeze of lemon.

CHAPTER V

Drinks

Fluids help your body work properly. Your kidneys need enough water to clean your blood. The best drink is simple water.

I drink between meals rather than during them. Water is especially important when you're ill or have a fever. A glass of warm lemon water, with a little honey if you like, is a good option.

If your body lacks water for long, it leads to serious problems.

I don't drink coffee or black tea, apart from an occasional espresso when I go out, and I explain why in the next chapter.

Herbal and fruit teas are good options. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices can be beneficial too, but remember that juice is food, not just a drink, and fruit juice contains a lot of natural sugar. Whole fruit is better than juice, because it keeps the fiber.

Avoid sweet soft drinks. They're full of sugar or sweeteners and chemicals, and they don't help your health in any way. Mineral water can be a good choice, depending on its composition; check the label for sodium.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Water first, between meals, throughout the day.
- Juice is food: whole fruit beats juice.
- Skip soft drinks completely.

TRY THIS TODAY

Replace one sweet drink with a glass of water or herbal tea.

CHAPTER VI

Enemies of Your Health

A) ALCOHOL

Alcohol destroys families, health and lives.

It affects your thinking and your ability to make decisions. The World Health Organization states that no level of alcohol is safe for health. It damages your liver, heart and brain, raises your risk of several cancers, and harms an unborn baby if you drink during pregnancy. It affects not only you, but also the people around you.

B) TOBACCO

Smoking is one of the strongest addictions there is, often harder to break than alcohol. Tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemicals, many of them poisonous, and nicotine affects your whole body. Smoking damages your blood vessels, raises blood pressure and greatly increases your risk of heart attack, stroke and many cancers. Vaping is not a safe alternative.

C) COFFEE AND BLACK TEA

Coffee and black tea contain caffeine. It stimulates you at first, but for many people it leads to a crash later, poor sleep and dependence. That's why I don't drink them, apart from an occasional espresso when I go out. To be fair, research shows that moderate coffee is fine for most healthy adults. But if you need caffeine to function, as my doctor once suggested I should, it's worth asking why you're so tired in the first place.

D) SWEETS, CHOCOLATE AND COCOA

Most sweets are not real food; they are treats. They fill you with sugar, push out real food and weaken your appetite for it. Enjoy them rarely, on special occasions. If you eat chocolate, choose a small piece of dark

chocolate.

E) SUGAR

Refined sugar is harmful, and I'm being polite here. It gives you calories with no nutrients. Excess sugar is strongly linked to weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and tooth decay. The World Health Organization recommends keeping added sugar below 10% of your daily calories, and ideally below 5%.

Use honey sparingly, or get your sweetness from fruit.

F) MEAT AND ANIMAL FAT

Meat is heavy to digest and stays in your digestive system longer than plant foods. Processed meat such as sausages, ham and bacon is classified by the World Health Organization as a cause of bowel cancer, and red meat as a probable cause. Too much meat also burdens your kidneys, raises your risk of gout, and today it often comes from animals raised in poor conditions.

That's why I eat beef once a week and fish once a week, and get the rest of my protein from eggs, goat milk and legumes. You can replace most of your meat with grains, legumes, nuts, vegetables and fruit, and still get everything you need.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Alcohol and tobacco have no safe level. Quitting is the best thing you can do.
- Added sugar is the everyday enemy: keep it as low as you can.
- Eat meat rarely and avoid processed meat.

TRY THIS TODAY

Check the labels of three foods in your kitchen for added sugar, and replace the worst one next time you shop.

CHAPTER VII

Love as a Protection of Health

Now I want you to understand something important. Food is not the only thing that affects your health.

Your mind affects your body. Your emotions, your thoughts and your attitude all have a direct effect on your health. Long-term stress, anger and loneliness are linked to higher blood pressure, weaker immunity and heart disease. I truly believe that emotional pain can turn into physical illness. Envy, jealousy, anger, selfishness, despair and hatred slowly weaken you from the inside.

But the opposite is also true. Love, peace, kindness and patience strengthen your body. They protect your health and give you a strength that no food can replace.

If you want to be truly healthy, you have to take care not only of what you eat, but also of how you think and how you live.

I'm a hugger. I hug people naturally; it's simply part of my character, and it seems to work. Research shows that hugs and warm physical contact can lower stress and make people feel more connected. So I hug the people around me who welcome it: your mom, your sister or brother, a friend, your gym partner, you name it. Try it and see the difference. Just make sure the other person is comfortable with it too.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Your thoughts and emotions affect your body as much as your food does.
- Love, kindness and patience are real protection for your health.
- Warm contact with people you're close to lowers stress.

TRY THIS TODAY

Hug someone close to you for 20 seconds, and tell them why you appreciate them.

CONCLUSION

How I Eat

There isn't much more to say. The idea behind this book was simple: to summarize the books I've read, some of them over 400 pages, so you don't have to read them all yourself, and to share what I've actually tried and what has worked for me.

So I'll keep it simple and tell you what I do: how I eat, when I eat and how much.

> This is my routine, shared as an example, not a prescription. Take what fits your life, and talk to your doctor before making big changes.

WHEN I EAT

I eat twice a day, with about eight hours between meals, and nothing in between.

WHAT I DRINK

I don't drink water or any other fluids during meals. I drink water with a few crystals of salt, at least two hours before and two hours after eating. That's what works best for my digestion.

PROTEIN

I eat beef once a week and fish once a week. Most of my protein comes from eggs, goat milk and legumes.

FAT AND SUGAR

I'm not afraid of healthy fat. For most people, sugar and refined carbohydrates are a far bigger problem than natural fats from olive oil, avocado, nuts and eggs. Your brain is rich in fat and needs healthy fats to work well.

In my opinion, many problems like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease are strongly linked to too much sugar and too little movement, though genetics play a role too. So I keep sugar low and eat it mostly in the form of fruit.

WATER-RICH FOOD

Every meal should contain plenty of water-rich foods. Your body is more than half water, so your food should reflect that. Eat your water. Even if you eat meat or other dry foods, always add fruit and vegetables.

MOVEMENT

Movement is just as important as food. I walk every day, especially after meals, to support digestion.

I hope this simple summary helps you start a new chapter in your life: a life with more energy, better health and more moments of real happiness.

Marcel Benko

PRINT ME

My Eating Day

My rhythm on the left. Plan yours on the right, and adjust it to your own schedule.

TIME	WHAT I DO	MY PLAN
On waking	Water with a few salt crystals, cold shower, stretching, 10 min meditation	
Morning	Nothing to eat. Water only, until 2 hours before my first meal	
10–11 a.m.	**Meal 1.** Raw salad first, then a simple cooked meal with eggs or legumes; fruit at the end. Chewed slowly, no drinks	
After eating	A 10-minute walk	
Afternoon	Water from 2 hours after the meal. No snacks	
5–6 p.m.	**Meal 2,** my last of the day. Vegetables, potatoes or grains, legumes; fish or beef once a week each	
Evening	Walk, warm shower, nothing more to eat. Water with salt before sleep	

My week: one random day with only one meal. Every three months: a three-day water fast (only with your doctor's OK).

ANNEX 1

Vitamins at a Glance

What each vitamin does and where to find it. A varied diet of whole foods covers most needs for most people.

VITAMIN	WHAT IT DOES	GOOD FOOD SOURCES
A	Vision, skin, immune defense	Carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, spinach, kale, apricots, egg yolk, dairy
B1 thiamine	Turns food into energy, supports nerves	Whole grains, oats, legumes, sunflower seeds
B2 riboflavin	Energy, healthy skin and eyes	Dairy, eggs, almonds, mushrooms, leafy greens
B3 niacin	Energy, nerves, skin, digestion	Legumes, peanuts, whole grains, mushrooms, fish
B5 pantothenic acid	Energy and hormone production	Found in almost all foods: whole grains, mushrooms, avocado, eggs
B6	Protein use, nerves, mood	Chickpeas, potatoes, bananas, whole grains, fish
B9 folate	Cell growth and blood formation; vital in early pregnancy	Leafy greens, legumes, asparagus, broccoli, citrus
B12	Nerves and red blood cells	Eggs, dairy, fish, meat. No reliable plant sources: vegans need fortified foods or a supplement
C	Immunity, skin and gums, iron absorption	Peppers, citrus, black currants, rose hips, sea buckthorn, strawberries, broccoli
D	Bones, teeth, muscles, immunity	Sunlight on skin; oily fish, eggs, UV-exposed mushrooms, fortified foods
E	Protects cells from damage	Nuts, seeds, olive oil, avocado, wheat germ, leafy greens
K	Blood clotting, bone health	Spinach, kale, broccoli, cabbage, fermented foods

Women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy are usually advised to take folic acid. If you take blood thinners such as warfarin, keep your vitamin K intake steady and talk to your doctor before changing your diet.

ANNEX 2

Minerals at a Glance

MINERAL	WHAT IT DOES	GOOD FOOD SOURCES
Calcium	Bones, teeth, muscles, nerves	Yogurt, kefir, cheese, poppy seeds, sesame, almonds, kale, calcium-set tofu
Magnesium	Muscles, nerves, energy, heart rhythm	Nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains, leafy greens
Iron	Carries oxygen in your blood	Legumes, pumpkin seeds, eggs, leafy greens, red meat. Vitamin C helps absorb it; tea and coffee with meals reduce it
Potassium	Blood pressure, muscles, fluid balance	Potatoes, beans, bananas, tomatoes, avocado, leafy greens
Zinc	Immunity, wound healing, taste and smell	Pumpkin seeds, legumes, nuts, whole grains, eggs, dairy
Iodine	Thyroid and metabolism; a baby's brain development	Iodized salt, fish, dairy, eggs
Selenium	Thyroid, immunity, protects cells	Brazil nuts (1 to 2 a day is enough), eggs, fish, whole grains
Phosphorus	Bones, teeth, energy	Dairy, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, eggs
Copper	Blood formation, helps your body use iron	Nuts, seeds, whole grains, legumes, mushrooms
Sodium	Fluid balance, nerves, muscles	Naturally present in most foods. Most people get too much, not too little

Supplements can help when there's a real deficiency, but more is not always better: high doses of some vitamins and minerals can be harmful. Ask your doctor for a blood test before taking supplements long-term.

ANNEX 3

My Favorite Herbs

Herbs let you cook with less salt and no hot spices. These are the ones I use most, and how they're traditionally used.

HERB	TRADITIONALLY USED FOR	TRY IT WITH
Anise	Bloating, coughs	Tea, baked goods
Fennel	Digestion, bloating	Tea, salads, fish
Caraway	Soothing the stomach and bowels	Potatoes, soups, cabbage
Marjoram	Digestion, calming the bowels	Beans, lentils, potatoes
Savory	Digestion of legumes; a mild peppery taste	Beans, a substitute for pepper
Coriander	Stomach cramps, digestion	Legumes, rice, vegetables
Basil	Digestion	Tomatoes, salads, pasta
Tarragon	Digestion	Eggs, fish, sauces
Lovage	Digestion, fluid balance	Soups and broths
Sage	Sore mouth and throat, as a gargle	Tea, potatoes, beans
Thyme	Coughs and colds	Tea, vegetables, legumes

Using herbs in cooking is safe for almost everyone. Herbal teas or extracts taken in larger amounts can interact with medication; if you're pregnant, breastfeeding or take regular medication, check with your doctor or pharmacist first. Herbs are not a replacement for medical treatment.

MEET MARCEL

About the Author

MB

Marcel Benko is a General Manager with more than 12 years of experience in the automotive industry and the founder of Benko Management. He leads a business of around 200 people, and he believes none of it would be possible without the health habits described in this book.

At 39, his blood work reads the same as it did nearly 20 years ago: no health issues and no daily pills. He coaches people on nutrition, exercise and healthy daily routines, based on what he has tested on himself for almost two decades.

Want a plan made for you?

After a personal consultation, I prepare a tailor-made diet, workout program and daily routine that fit your life, your goals and your schedule.

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