Questions about nutrition — Top 5 FAQs
We thought we’d share five of the most frequently asked questions we get about nutrition and healthy eating. These represent what’s hot on the topic of “you are what you eat.”

What should I focus on to control my weight?
The war on obesity is all about reducing calories. We eat foods that are mixtures of the four calorie-yielding nutrients: carbohydrate, protein, fat and alcohol. Should you emphasize or eliminate one for weight control? That argument has been going on a long time and will likely continue as people search for the most effective weight-loss diet. In the meantime, if you want to control your weight, remember it’s calories that count.

Are all carbs evil?
No. Carbs run the spectrum from simple sugars to complex indigestible fibers. The trouble comes from refined grains and simple sugars, which can play havoc with blood sugar and triglyceride levels, body weight, tooth health and inflammation. Humans seem to have an innate preference for sugar over other foods, and we scoop it up and guzzle it down.

Higher fiber carbs, on the other hand, offer some health benefits. They are slowly broken down in the gut. This slows absorption of sugar, which makes diabetes easier to manage. Fiber in the gut also links with cholesterol, which helps control cholesterol levels. Fiber provides fuel for intestinal bacteria, which may play a role in cancer protection and immune function. Not to mention that roughage improves regularity. Fiber fills you up, making dieting a bit easier.

Bottom line: Switch to whole grains.
Is eating gluten-free risky?
At this time the only recognized reason to go gluten-free is if you have been diagnosed with celiac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis. There are some inherent risks in going gluten-free, so make sure your doctor agrees it's appropriate for you. Because a gluten-free diet excludes many grains it can be lower in fiber and higher in simpler carbohydrates, which can lead to any of the risks described above. Whenever you have a restricted diet, you need to stay in touch with your doctor. Another important point: Don’t stop eating gluten before being tested for celiac disease — it makes the diagnosis more difficult.

What is the Modified Atkins Diet used for other than weight loss?
The focus of the Atkins Diet is on production of ketones and their role in control of weight and appetite. However for quite some time an extreme ketogenic version of the diet has been effective in certain types of epilepsy that is resistant to full control with medication. Think of the Modified Atkins Diet as the “lite” version of the traditional ketogenic diet (where all foods are weighed, and proteins and carbs are severely limited). More research is needed on effectiveness of the Modified Atkins Diet, but it may mean better quality of life for those with this type of epilepsy.

What should I eat for eye health?
Age-related macular degeneration is a major cause of blindness. There are hundreds of substances called carotenoids (which the body converts to vitamin A). However, focus is on lutein and zeaxanthin — found abundantly in the lens and macula of your eyes. Foods rich in these carotenoids, certain antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids — but not supplements — have been shown to lower risk for cataracts and macular degeneration. Eat more green leafy veggies and more fatty fish.

Find more valuable nutrition information at the MayoClinic.com, Nutrition-Wise blog.
Numbers of American are changing up their overall diets. There are several dietary options to choose from. One more common and popular change is to eat a more plant-based diet.

Vegetarian diet: How to get the best nutrition

A well-planned vegetarian diet is a healthy way to meet your nutritional needs. Find out what you need to know about a plant-based diet.

The Vegetarian Diet Pyramid
A healthy diet takes planning, and a food pyramid can be a helpful tool. The vegetarian pyramid outlines food groups and food choices that, if eaten in the right quantities, form the foundation of a healthy vegetarian diet.

Getting adequate nutrition
The key to a healthy vegetarian diet - like any diet - is to enjoy a variety of foods. No single food can provide all the nutrients your body needs. The more restrictive your diet, the more challenging it can be to get all the nutrients you need.

Getting started
If you're not following a vegetarian diet but you're thinking of trying it, here are some ideas to help you get started:

• **Ramp up.** Each week increase the number of meatless meals you already enjoy, such as spaghetti with tomato sauce or vegetable stir-fry.

• **Learn to substitute.** Take favorite recipes and try them without meat. For example, make vegetarian chili by leaving out the ground beef and adding an extra can of black beans. Or make fajitas using extra-firm tofu rather than chicken. You may be surprised to find that many dishes require only simple substitutions.

• **Branch out.** Scan the Internet for vegetarian menus. Buy or borrow vegetarian cookbooks. Check out ethnic restaurants to sample new vegetarian cuisines. The more variety you bring to your vegetarian diet, the more likely you'll be to meet all your nutritional needs.

http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/vegetarian-diet/HQ01596

“The food you eat can be either the safest and most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison.”

~ Ann Wigmore ~
Coffee and Health

By Mayo Clinic preventive medicine specialist, Donald Hensrud, MD

Coffee has a long history of being blamed for many ills — from the humorous “It will stunt your growth” to the not-so-humorous claim that it causes heart disease and cancer. But recent research indicates that coffee may not be so bad after all. So which is it — good or bad? The best answer may be that for most people the health benefits outweigh the risks.

Recent studies have generally found no connection between coffee and an increased risk of cancer or heart disease. Why the apparent reversal in the thinking about coffee?

Earlier studies didn’t always take into account that known high-risk behaviors, such as smoking and physical inactivity, tended to be more common among heavy coffee drinkers at that time.

Newer studies have also shown that coffee may have benefits, such as protecting against Parkinson’s disease, type 2 diabetes and liver cancer. And it has a high content of antioxidants. But this doesn’t mean you should disregard the old maxim “Everything in moderation.” Although coffee may not be very harmful, other beverages such as milk and juice contain nutrients that coffee does not. Also, keep in mind that coffee accompaniments such as cream and sugar add fat and calories to your diet.

Finally, heavy caffeine use — on the order of four to seven cups of coffee a day — can cause problems such as restlessness, anxiety, irritability and sleeplessness, particularly in susceptible individuals.

Shoulder Stretch

Standing or sitting for long periods of time can take a toll on your muscles. To prevent or reduce stiffness and pain, try simple office stretches throughout the day.

Start by stretching the back of your shoulder:
• Place one hand under your elbow.
• Lift your elbow and stretch it across your chest. Don't rotate your body as you stretch.
• Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. You’ll feel tension in the back of your shoulder.
• Relax and slowly return to the starting position.
• Repeat the stretch with the other arm.

Muscles tensed?
Need a break in your work day?
Visit the link below for a helpful short video on workplace stretches.
Your body will thank you!

http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/shoulder-stretches/MM00710