

Leyla Weighs In: Why see a nutritionist?

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CELEBRATING NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

You already have a regular doctor, right? Like a primary care practitioner, general practitioner or internist? But did you know there are many benefits that you may not be aware of to *also* having a nutritionist?

First, qualified nutritionists are collaborators in your healthcare. They know that one diet does not fit all, and that you have a unique biochemistry which requires a personalized approach.

An astute doctor will refer their patient to a qualified nutritionist for implementing diet and lifestyle changes first, before dispensing any prescription medication. That's because the doctor knows those changes will not have the side effects of powerful medication. They are indeed seeking to "First Do No Harm" with their patient.

Too often I've seen patients who started with one drug, suffered some side effects, then were given another drug to allay the side effects of the first one, then a third drug for the side effects of the second one...and so on. Where does it end? This common scenario actually has a diagnosis of its own: Polypharmacy.

A qualified nutritionist can provide critical information about the possible or probable cause(s) of your symptoms or condition, based on a thorough health history coupled with sound scientific research. Based on that info, they can offer more holistic and better tolerated options for your care that your doctor may not be aware of.

A nutritionist can recommend tests to uncover nutritional deficiencies and other metabolic abnormalities related to your symptoms that, again, your doctor either may not be aware of, or didn't have the time to do a really deep dive with regard to your concerns. Moreover, a nutritionist will be a sleuth in finding any nutritional deficiencies caused by the medications you are taking and ensure repletion of those critical micronutrients.

A nutritionist can offer non-drug modalities like therapeutic nutrition and appropriate supplementation—called Medical Nutrition Therapy—to target the cause of your complaints.

In no way should a visit with your nutritionist be construed as or substitute for medical advice. Please note however, unless your doctor is credentialed in nutrition, they are not the nutrition experts. That's why the ideal approach, in my opinion, is the pairing of medical and nutrition care.

This Chinese proverb says it best:

The patient who does not pay attention to diet is wasting the physician's time.

To your health!