

Why Nutrition And Why Now?

Four Convincing Ways To Answer, Even When Patients Don't Ask These Questions Out Loud

by Dr. Bill Hemmer



Recommending nutrition in your chiropractic practice is not the same thing as keeping a display of supplements that you rarely open. Nor is it the same style of practice as the chiropractic nutritionist, whose focus is almost exclusively on nutrition. If you are going to move from passive sales or no-sales of nutritional supplementation into a practice where chiropractic is central but nutrition is always recommended, then preparation is in order. Beyond the questions of which products, which conditions and which nutritional assessments, is the most important question of all: "What am I going to tell my chiropractic patients?"

You see the "why and why now" behind chiropractic and nutrition may seem pretty self-explanatory to you. But if you cannot explain it to your patients in only a few seconds, then your expansion into nutrition is not going to be as effective as it could be. Expanding your nutritional practice involves learning how to recommend nutrition in an easy and effective way from day one.

Here are four ways to help make your transition into nutrition as successful as possible. Use them and make them your own based on the needs of the patient in front of you.

The ex-skeptic: The quality of nutrition science has gone up, and the quality of soil content has gone down.

Because you are a chiropractor many of your patients assume that nutrition was a part of your schooling, and that you have a whole closet of supplements at home. Patients who think that popping natural products is just part and parcel of what you do may be surprised to learn that your tastes are a bit more discriminating. You do not just believe in any vitamin that comes from a store shelf.

In fact, if you tended to believe in nutrition less than you do now, this is a great opportunity to share your experience with patients who share some nutritional skepticism:

"Some people think that just because I'm a chiropractor that I believe all nutrition is great. In fact, it isn't. There are many companies whose product quality is questionable because they don't hold themselves to any kind of standard. (So, I don't recommend their products.) But over the last couple decades nutrition science has improved in quality and safety. Nutrition is now being recommended by doctors who thought it was just a placebo a few years ago. Nutrition is now a part of my practice because of these improvements in quality and in sci-

ence. Nutrition is also important because the quality of our food continues to go down. Due to mass-farming methods and soil erosion, our fruits, vegetables, and meats just don't have the same nutrients that they used to have years ago. And that's been proven. Some supplementation is necessary."

The testimonial: My diet is not the best. Let me tell you what I do about it.

There are three kinds of nutritional patients. The first are those who tune-out and ignore your warnings about the food industry. They are numerous in the general population, but are slightly rarer in a chiropractic office. They may not care if their food is killing them or making them feel sick and unhealthy. The second are those who are angry, inspired, and never want to go back to processed food again once they understand the dwindling quality of our food supply. They are rare in the general population, but more numerous in the chiropractic population. These nutritional purists will not constitute the majority of your patients, and when they do appear, you may find them doing more research into nutrition than you do.

The third kind of patient fits in that big mushy middle, and they will love your nutritional recommendations. They feel guilty eating pro-

cessed foods. They idealize organic vegetables, and free range meats. They want to make healthier choices, but are very pragmatic about their lifestyle and the need for convenience foods. They want to eat better, but need direction and some coaching. Most of these patients are aware there is a problem, but are not sure how big it is, or what the solution might be.

Identify these patients and open your nutrition conversation with:

“You know, my diet isn't the best sometimes. I can miss breakfast. I like pizza a little too much. Some days I can't find five to nine vegetables in my refrigerator. But that doesn't mean I don't care about

options often creates a confusion that robs your patients of the nutritional products that can truly help them. In order to cope with the amount of information, many patients simply begin treating symptoms with a shotgun approach or by searching for that magic bullet — the single product that contains everything they believe is essential.

Nearly every single one of your current patients is taking some sort of supplement for reasons that they do not completely understand. What a great opportunity. Here is your chance to say:

“I see you are taking fish oils, a multi-vitamin, baby aspirin, and something for your prostate. I

them naturally inclined to care about the health of their bones, their joint capsules, their ligaments, and their nervous system. At the very least it should help them to care about pain and inflammation.

If you are dealing with someone who wants to get out of your office as soon as possible, or keep their spine intact for as long as possible, then you have an opening for some key nutrition:

“I believe that with chiropractic and nutrition, I can help patients live a better quality of life. But let's start with what's most important to you. You're worried about some failing discs and the pain you're in. So am I. These are usually problems that have a chiropractic solution. But they are also problems that have a nutrition solution too. With chiropractic we are going to help your spinal alignment, motion, and flexibility. With nutrition we're going to help address the inflammation, and support the health of the ligaments, muscles, and joints holding your spine in place. Does that sound like a good idea?”

To run a successful chiropractic practice that incorporates nutritional recommendations is not the same thing as running a successful nutrition exclusive practice. Nor is it the same as running a practice where nutrition is an afterthought. By combining both nutrition and chiropractic you have to be a chiropractic expert who can communicate enough about nutrition to help your patients to the level of your ability and nutritional training. Not knowing enough about nutrition is a genuine concern, but it is not where many doctors' struggle. They struggle in explaining “why nutrition, and why now.” Now you have four convincing ways to answer those questions, even if your patients never voice them out loud.

About The Author — Dr. Bill Hemmer is a Logan graduate and practices in Tuscola, IL. Contact him at DrBill@real-lifewellness.com.

Interest in nutritional supplementation, nutritional health, and food as medicine has increased.



my health, or my nutrition. I think my health is too important to miss out on any of the vital nutrients my body needs. That's why I take and I recommend a handful of nutritional supplements that help me get what I need on those days when I can't eat right. I would like to make a few recommendations from the products that I trust based on your needs right now. So, even if you are having a bad day, you can get what your body needs. Does that make sense?”

The teacher: You seem confused; let me help.

Interest in nutritional supplementation, nutritional health, and food as medicine has increased. So have patient's options in products, protocols, and nutritional gurus on the Internet. The new interest and new

would love to help you fine-tune some of what you are taking. I believe there might be other supplement options that also help address some of your chiropractic problems as well. After all, this is about whole body health. Most people find that my recommendations can also help answer some of the questions they have about the products they are already taking. Does that sound fair?”

The appeal to pain: You care about your spine. That's why I care about your nutrition.

If your patient is not a nutrition skeptic, a budding wellness patient just looking for coaching, or a current consumer of nutritional products, they are at least one thing — a chiropractic patient. And as a chiropractic patient that should make