

Nutritional Medicine

Nutritional Medicine involves the use of a wide variety of substances to restore and optimize health. Of course a solid understanding of appropriate nutrition is the starting point.

Add to this an understanding that some people are allergic or sensitive to specific foods and that some foods or supplements can aggravate health conditions. For example, dairy products and wheat products aggravate phlegm conditions for some people. Lactose and gluten intolerance are common problems.

Functional foods are considered. These are defined as being consumed as part of a usual diet but are demonstrated to have physiological benefits and/or reduce the risk of chronic disease beyond basic nutritional functions.

Dietary supplements have become a standard part of an overall health strategy for many Americans. A dietary supplement is defined under the U.S. Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA) as a product that is intended to supplement the diet and contains any of the following dietary ingredients: a vitamin; a mineral; an herb or other botanical (excluding tobacco); an amino acid; a dietary substance for use by people to supplement the diet by increasing the total dietary intake; or a concentrate, metabolite, constituent, extract, or combination of any of the above.

Over the past few decades, nutraceuticals (combining nutrition and pharmaceutical) have been effectively used by millions of people. Nutraceuticals refer to extracts of foods that have a medicinal effect on human health. Examples of nutraceuticals are resveratrol from red grape products as an antioxidant, soluble dietary fiber products, such as psyllium seed husk for reducing hypercholesterolemia, broccoli (sulforaphane) as a cancer preventative, and soy or clover (isoflavonoids) to improve arterial health. Other nutraceutical examples are flavonoids as antioxidants, alpha-linolenic acid from flax seeds, beta-carotene from marigold petals, anthocyanins from berries, etc. Many botanical and herbal extracts such as ginseng, garlic oil, etc. have been developed as nutraceuticals.