



Deep Dive into
Nutrition
and Health Coaching



Content

1 Executive Summary ↗

2 What Is Optimal Nutrition? ↗

3 Why Nutrition Matters ↗

4 Optimal Nutrition Helps With... ↗

5 Nutrition in the U.S. ↗

6 How Health Coaches Can and Do Help ↗

7 A Health Coach is not... ↗

8 A Health Coach is... ↗

9 A Health Coach May Support a Client by: ↗

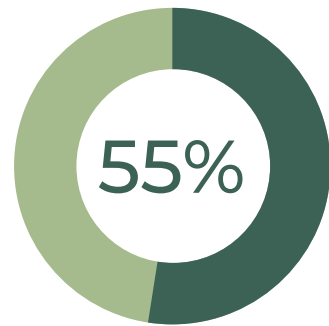
10 The Science of Health Coaching ↗

11 Recent Studies ↗

12 About YourCoach ↗

Executive Summary

■ Data:



55% of coaches on the YourCoach platform specialize in Nutritional Support

Poor nutrition is one of the leading causes of early death and disease across the globe. In the U.S. alone, almost half (46%) of adults have a poor-quality diet, categorized by a categorically high amount of processed foods, added sugars, and unhealthy fats. Poor diet is undoubtedly connected to a greater risk of developing chronic disease, including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, as well as having long-term consequences on holistic mental and physical wellbeing.

We released this deep dive into Nutrition in honor of National Nutrition Month to shed light on the impact of health coaching in achieving optimal nutrition habits and subsequently mitigating risk factors like chronic disease and all-cause mortality.

While health coaches cannot provide nutrition plans, they can and do help clients make the right dietary choices with guidance from nutritionists and dietitians, as well as the overall patient care team, where it really counts, beyond the doctor's office. Health coaches can be key to ensuring that dietary balance is tailored to an individual's lifestyle and disposition and that the behavior change is lasting and not fleeting.

The current compendium of research strongly suggests that health coaching is invaluable in improving behavior change relative to nutrition, helping clients achieve goals related to eating habits, weight loss, weight management, stress and pain management, emotional health, and resulting in improved overall quality of life.

What Is Optimal Nutrition?

Healthy eating is all about achieving balance. This requires that we incorporate nutrient-rich foods into our diets that complement one another—each consisting of highly necessary macronutrients (fat, protein and carbohydrates) as well as micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) that together bolster our immunity, promote healthy growth and development, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and so much more.



Our diets may look very different depending on a variety of demographic factors like our geographic location or socioeconomic status. However, nutrition experts are constantly pioneering educational tools to help us understand what optimal nutrition should look like depending on what's available to us. Scientists at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, for example, developed a helpful visual aid with guidance on how to strike a nutritional balance with each meal. [*The Healthy Eating Plate*](#) is just one of many representations for what the typical ratio of vegetables to fruits to whole grains and proteins should be for each meal.

What Is Optimal Nutrition?

Harvard Healthy Eating Plate



My Plate by ChooseMyPlate.gov

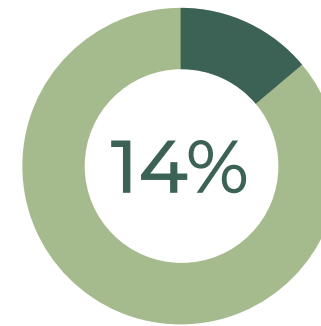


Why Nutrition Matters

In a 2018 longitudinal study published in *[the New England Journal of Medicine](#)*, scientists analyzed data from roughly 74,000 people between the ages of 30 and 75, collected over two decades. During that time, they examined their diets and lifestyle habits, tracking any key changes over time.

Changes in diet quality were assessed using different scoring systems, including the Alternate Healthy Eating Index (AHEI), which was developed by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health. The Index is used to evaluate how healthy a person's diet is based on 11 components, giving higher scores to healthier foods.

■ ■ Data:




Researchers found that people with consistently high diet scores were up to **14%** less likely to die of any cause during the study period than those with consistently poor diets.

This study undoubtedly supports how critically important nutrition is for achieving optimal health and wellbeing. Results suggest that a 20% increase in diet score—indicating a healthier diet— is associated with an 8% reduction in mortality and a 7-15% drop in the likelihood of dying from heart disease, which is *[the leading cause of death in the U.S.](#)*


Why Nutrition Matters

In another recent study, published in the journal *PLOS Medicine*, researchers found that adopting a healthier diet could add up to 13 years to one's lifespan.

Key findings include:




A 20-year-old who switched from the typical Western diet focused on red meat and processed foods to an optimal Mediterranean-style diet (and stuck with it) could add on average of 11 to 13 years to their life expectancy.



A 60-year-old who made this switch could boost their life expectancy by up to 8 years, and an 80-year-old could gain about 3.4 years.

Insight: Young adults in the United States can add more than a decade to their life expectancy by changing from a typical Western diet, as described above, to one that includes more legumes, whole grains and nuts, and less red and processed meat (typically classified as a Mediterranean diet).



A new optimized diet should include a substantially higher intake of whole grains, legumes, fish and vegetables and a reduced intake of red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages and refined grains.

**Optimal Nutrition
Helps With...**

Optimal Nutrition Helps With...

Reducing the risk of chronic disease

No single food or nutrient will prevent illness, but an optimal diet can help reduce the risk. Evidence from studies shows that a healthy diet can decrease the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. In a [2014 study](#), researchers found that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables reduced the risk of the gastrointestinal tract and colorectal cancers.

Boosting the immune system

A diet that includes a variety of whole, minimally processed foods can provide essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that are important for immune function. For example, vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, and selenium are all important for immune function and can be found in a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other whole foods. A study published in [the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#) found that micronutrient deficiencies, such as low levels of vitamins A, C, and E, can impair immune function.

Optimal Nutrition Helps With...

Improving gut health

A study published in *Nutrition and Food Science Technology journal* found that a diet that is high in fiber and low in saturated fat can help support a healthy gut microbiome, which *plays important roles* in metabolism and digestion.

A 2019 review noted that plant foods are rich in specific nutrients that can increase levels of beneficial bacteria and decrease harmful strains of bacteria to support gut health.

Maintaining a healthy weight

Nearly half of all U.S. adults will be obese by 2030, the *latest study* predicts. Evidence from studies suggests that a balanced and varied diet can help maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of obesity.

Studies showed that a diet that is high in fiber can help promote weight loss and a diet that is low in added sugars and refined carbohydrates can *improve metabolic health*.

Optimal Nutrition Helps With...

Supporting mental health

Evidence suggests a close relationship between diet and mood. 2016 research found that diets with a high glycemic load may trigger increased symptoms of depression and fatigue.

A literature review of studies concluded that a Mediterranean-style diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats can help improve mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety.

Getting better sleep

Certain nutrients, such as magnesium, calcium, and B vitamins, have been shown to support healthy sleep. A healthy diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can improve sleep quality and duration. A 2016 study published in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine found that eating less fiber, more saturated fat and more sugar is associated with lighter, less restorative, and more disrupted sleep.

Nutrition in the U.S.

A recent study in The Lancet suggests that poor diet is responsible for more deaths worldwide than any other risk factor, including smoking and genetics.

In the U.S. poor diet is exceptionally widespread. Almost half (46%) of the adult population is identified as having a poor diet with not enough fish, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and beans, and too much salt, sugar-sweetened beverages and processed meats.

Data:



Almost half (46%) of U.S. adults have a poor-quality diet.



More than half (56%) of U.S. kids have a poor-quality diet.



What's more, a recent study reveals that dietary issues are only exacerbated among children in the US: 56% consume foods that are categorically considered to be unhealthy. Significantly, the majority of dietary deficiencies were caused by eating too few healthy foods rather than eating too many unhealthy foods for both adults and children.

Nutrition in the U.S.

According to the [CDC](#), there's a stark need for improvements to the American diet. Recent data shows:

9 in 10 

9 in 10 adolescents and adults do not eat enough fruits or vegetables.

9 in 10 

Americans consume too much sodium.

9 in 10 

young people aged 2 to 19 years consume at least one sugary drink on any given day.

In September 2022 President Biden and key senior officials hosted the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#) to address food insecurity and diet-related diseases, with a response of over \$8 billion in private- and public-sector commitments. These commitments range from philanthropy and in-kind donations to investments in new businesses and integrating nutrition into health care. \$2.5 billion will be invested in start-ups pioneering solutions to hunger and food insecurity, while over \$4 billion will focus on philanthropy to improve access to nutritious food, promote healthy choices, and increase physical activity.

Data:



A recent study [shows](#) that half of the U.S. population will be obese by 2030.

Nutrition in the U.S.

The harmful effects of poor nutrition might include but aren't limited to:

Obesity

A diet that is high in processed and high-fat foods, added sugars, and excess sodium can lead to weight gain and obesity



Cardiovascular disease

A diet that is high in saturated and trans fats and sodium can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks and strokes



Mental health and well-being

A diet that is high in processed foods and added sugars can lead to mood swings, depression, and anxiety



Weak immune system

Poor nutrition can weaken the immune system, making it harder for the body to fight off infections and illnesses



Malnutrition

Malnutrition is a condition that occurs when the body doesn't receive enough essential nutrients and can lead to stunted growth, a weakened immune system, and increased risk of infections



Type 2 diabetes

A diet that is high in refined carbohydrates and added sugars can increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes



Osteoporosis

A diet that is low in calcium and vitamin D can increase the risk of osteoporosis, a condition that causes weak and brittle bones



How Health Coaches Can and Do Help

Health coaching uses an evidence-based approach that can be leveraged to manage, prevent or improve ongoing health conditions and support overall health and wellbeing. At the heart of health coaching is a holistic approach, which considers the person as a whole, rather than focusing on an individual illness or health concern.

This holistic approach is necessary and relevant when working with clients to achieve optimal nutrition. As shown above, an individual's dietary choices can be highly impacted by many factors—from their socioeconomic status to where they live, to their emotional wellbeing and various ongoing health conditions. Health coaches can help clients understand how their lifestyle may impact their dietary choices and support them with small changes to help them improve their nutrition long term.



How Health Coaches Can and Do Help

A health coach is trained to bring out the best in you

A certified Health Coach is a trusted partner and mentor who empowers individuals to both identify and achieve their health goals, including ones related to nutrition. Health coaches encourage and support their clients every step of the way by using science-backed, behavior-driven lifestyle modification techniques.

Although health coaches work alongside patient care teams to help clients enact health change day-to-day, it's important to understand their scope of practice



A Health Coach is **NOT** ...



A health coach is NOT a Nutritionist or Dietitian

Health coaches can help clients establish action plans for generalized healthy eating behaviors, whereas nutritionists and dietitians can prescribe meal plans and give specific nutritional advice to clients according to their medical needs or goals.



A health coach is NOT a Doctor

Health coaches can not diagnose or prescribe. Health coaches are integral members of the health and care team and work with patients in helping them reach their health & wellness goals and adhere to a plan prescribed by their doctor.



A health coach is NOT a Personal Trainer

While health coaches encourage physical activity, they focus on many other aspects of a person's wellbeing including emotional and mental wellness. They do not typically create fitness regimens in the same way that personal trainers do. However, some health coaches do hold fitness certifications and can help those who are seeking both a health coach and a personal trainer.



A health coach is NOT a Therapist

Health coaches don't need to be therapists or psychologists, and great coaches don't try to mimic what a mental healthcare professional does. These professionals can complement one another and often work together.

Hint: [*Demystifying Health Coaching: Unpacking the Differences Between Dieticians, Nutritionists & Health Coaches*](#)

A Health Coach **is** ...

- ✓ A highly skilled and certified professional
- ✓ Knowledgeable in human behavior, motivational techniques and health outcomes
- ✓ A change agent helping clients set and achieve health goals and build new habits
- ✓ Trained in helping a client maintain a positive and healthy mindset while working towards health and wellness goals by focusing on their strengths



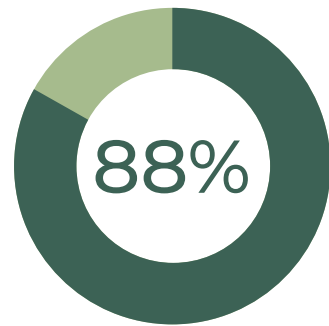
A Health Coach May Support a Client by:

- ✓ Collaborating with a client to create an action plan that aligns with their preferences, goals and wellness needs
- ✓ Providing education and resources on healthy food choices, meal planning, and portion sizes
- ✓ Encouraging clients to try new foods, cooking methods, and recipes to expand their food choices
- ✓ Identifying and addressing common barriers to healthy eating, such as emotional eating, lack of time, or limited access to healthy foods



The Science of Health Coaching

■ Data:



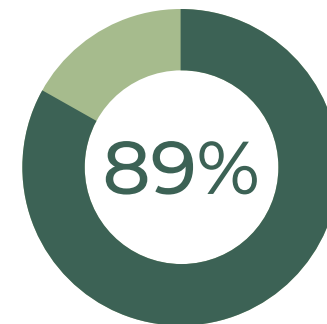
According to a [compendium of research in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine](#), 88% of studies claim health coaching is effective in changing nutrition behavior and 87% of studies show a positive effect on weight reduction and/or BMI.

Analysis of studies on health & wellness coaching supports just how valuable health coaching can be in improving behavior change when it comes to nutrition and exercise with other positive outcomes (e.g., disease management, quality of life, medication adherence), including psychological variables such as self-efficacy and satisfaction.

A study published in [the Global Advances in Health and Medicine](#) with intentions to estimate the impact of telephonic health coaching on health outcomes in a high-risk population found significant improvements in stress levels, healthy eating, exercise levels, and physical and emotional health, as well as in readiness to make a change.

During the study, participants with conditions such as depression, congestive heart failure, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, osteoporosis, asthma, and low back pain, were invited to participate in a telephonic health coaching intervention addressing the whole person and focusing on motivating health behavior changes.

■ Data:



After the first 6 months of the program, 89% of participants met at least one goal.

These results suggest that health coaching is an effective approach for changes in physical activity, eating habits, stress management, emotional health, sleep, and pain management, resulting in improved overall quality of life regardless of condition. Health coaching helps maintain positive shifts in activation levels and readiness to change among participants.

The Science of Health Coaching

Changes in Health Status and Quality of Life Measures Pre- and Post- participation in Health Coaching (N=1082)

Aspect of Health	% Positive Change	Aspect of Health	% Positive Change
Decrease in wanting eating habits to change	18.3	Decrease in high levels of stress	11.9
Increase in limiting fat in foods most of the time	12.8	Decrease in high levels of relationship stress	5.9
Decrease in wanting physical activity level	16.3	Increase in good relationship health	9.2
Increase in being very satisfied with physical activity level	20.9	Increase in self-rated good physical health	11.6
Decrease in pain interfering with normal activity	10	Increase in self-rated good emotional health	15.4
Increase in sleeping well	10.6	Increase in self-rated good social health	7.5
Decrease in loss of interest in doing things most of the time	8.1	Increase in self-rated good spiritual health	6.4

^aP< .001

Source: Lawson KL, Jonk Y, O'Connor H, Riise KS, Eisenberg DM, Kreitzer MJ. The impact of Telephonic Health Coaching on Health Outcomes in a High-risk Population. Glob Adv Health Med. 2013 May;2(3):40-7.

Many recent studies support health coaching as an effective tool for behavior change:

A 2019 study on primary care-based health coaching showed that 12 months of coaching intervention with goals to improve nutrition and exercise behavior change showed a loss of 7.24% initial weight in overweight and obese adults.

A 2021 randomized controlled trial showed that a 6-month health coaching intervention improved the quality of diet and increased daily vegetable intake.

A study of a mobile app-based health behavior change and health coaching program among a large cohort of overweight and obese children demonstrated high participant engagement with coaching sessions, decrease in weight (% BMI) and longer voluntary commitment periods.

Another 2021 study set a goal to test the effectiveness of an intensive obesity treatment program delivered within primary care clinics in Louisiana by trained health coaches. After 2 years, patients who participated in health coaching interventions lost 4.5% more weight, had lower total cholesterol, improved quality of life, self-esteem, fatigue and social functioning compared with participants receiving usual care.

Many recent studies support health coaching as an effective tool for behavior change:

A recent randomized control trial examined the effects of health coaching on weight loss for obese adults. After 12 weeks of working with a personal health & wellness coach, participants archived 16% weight loss compared to 3% in the control group.



We believe that the keystone of this outcome is the addition of a trained health coach to the collaborative care team to administer a high-intensity lifestyle, patient-centered intervention program”, indicated the study conclusion.

Expert opinion

There is growing evidence of the effectiveness of health & wellness coaching for behavior change such as nutrition habits and exercise levels, weight loss, quality of life, self-esteem, and self-acceptance in the last decade, but more definitive research is needed and is ongoing. Future studies need to focus on distinguishing between health coaching and other factors when evaluating successful behavior change, isolating the profound impact health and wellness coaching has on implementing lasting behavior change.

Nutritional Health Solutions

Below is just a small sampling that has been compiled by our friends at HealthXL of digital health, virtual care and digital therapeutic companies delivering solutions related to nutrition

PLATFORM



PERSONALIZATION



NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT



DELIVERY SERVICES



About YourCoach

YourCoach.Health is the only operating system for behavior change, powered by health coaches. Our industry partners entrust us to stand up or augment their health coaching operations utilizing our APIs, widgets and tech-augmented army of validated and credentialed health coaches to surround their existing product or service. We're the premier virtual home for health and wellness coaching, an ecosystem built to empower health coaches while expanding access to their services through our industry partnerships. Join us on the Health Coaching Revolution as we strive to deliver the power of health coaching to the 8.5 billion global population by 2030.



Our mission

By the year 2030 our mission is for the projected 8.5 billion people in the world to have access to Health Coaches, creating even more Happy and Healthy Humans.

Health Coaching
Industry Report V2.0

