

# Nutrition

The study of the effect of diet on the body

**N**utrition focuses on the interaction of the diet with the body, and how this impacts on health, wellbeing and development. It also includes factors that determine food choice, including the quality and quantity of dietary intake. Nutrition therefore encompasses a broad range of disciplines, from sociology and psychology through food production and food science to biochemistry, molecular biology, chemistry and physics.

## Why is nutrition important?

Our diets and the nutrients they provide directly impact growth and development in childhood, and mental and physical health throughout our lives. Under or overconsumption and/or habitual high or low intake of certain nutrients or food groups can

Food choices directly affect development, health and wellbeing

affect the risk of many chronic conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and cancers. Many people in developing countries have inadequate intake of energy or specific nutrients such as vitamin A – still the major preventable cause of blindness worldwide.

## How do I get into nutrition?

The recommended route is through studying a degree in nutrition or one of the specialist areas within the field, such as public health nutrition, sport and exercise nutrition or dietetics. Many will choose to specialise during postgraduate study. Appropriate courses are accredited by the Association for Nutrition (AfN).

## Where can I work?

The broad range of fields includes: academia or research organisations (basic science through to public health); health promotion within the NHS or local authorities; charities or non-governmental organisations; policy development working for the Department of Health, the Food Standards Agency (in Scotland and Northern Ireland) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; the food industry and retail sector developing new products or resources or being involved in policy and strategy; agriculture (including animal nutrition, plant science and the food chain); sports nutrition; science writing or freelance consultancy.

## Where can I find out more?

The Nutrition Society hosts regular conferences and publishes four journals on various aspects of nutritional science, including the *British Journal of Nutrition*, and *Public Health Nutrition*.

● [www.nutrition society.org](http://www.nutrition society.org)

AfN is the voluntary regulator for qualified nutritionists. It promotes nutrition and public health and maintains a register of individuals who are qualified in nutritional science and agree to uphold professional and ethical standards through a code of conduct.

● [www.associationfor nutrition.org](http://www.associationfor nutrition.org)

