

Preface

Nutrition is one of the most important factors that impact health in all areas of the lifecycle. Pregnant women need adequate food and health care to deliver a healthy baby who has a good birth weight and a fighting chance for survival. In many regions of the world, the infant mortality rate is very high, meaning that many infants will not live to see their first birthday. Breastfeeding is the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants, because breast milk contains many immunologic agents that protect the infant against bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Yet, less than 40 percent of infants worldwide are exclusively breastfed (no other food or drink, not even water) for the first four months of life. Children need adequate nutrition to develop and grow to their full potential.

Malnutrition, both undernutrition and overnutrition, is at an all time high, with close to one-third of the world's children suffering from it. The number of undernourished people in the world continues to increase because of little or no progress to reduce poverty. Thousands of children die daily from hunger and its effects, even in technologically advanced countries. Without adequate nutrition, a person's cognitive ability is diminished, which adversely affects their ability to get a good paying job and contribute to their local economy. Paradoxically, childhood and adult obesity in many parts of the developed world are also near epidemic proportions. There are 300 million obese people in the world. In the United States, about 34 percent of Americans are overweight and 30.5 percent are obese.

Life expectancy has increased in many countries and the population of older adults is growing at an unprecedented rate in the United States and other technologically advanced countries. In the United States the average life expectancy is 70, while globally, the average rose to 67 years in 1998, up from 61 in 1980. These countries are unsure of how they will provide adequate health care for this growing segment of the population. Cardiovascular disease (coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke) and cancer are top killers in many countries and HIV/AIDS continue to ravage our societies, taking individuals in the productive years of their lives.

Arrangement of the Material

Nutrition and Well-Being A to Z is a two-volume set that provides timely information on the personal, cultural, and global issues that affect (or have an impact on) health and nutritional status. Users will find detailed coverage of topics covered in general nutrition, food science, and personal and

family courses. This encyclopedia explains fundamental concepts such as amino acids, cutting-edge ideas such as functional foods, social issues such as food insecurity, and political issues such as bioterrorism.

The set was also designed to meet consumer needs. Users will be able to spot a quack health-care provider, discriminate between reliable and unreliable health claims, as well as understand the role of government in keeping food safe. The set also profiles individuals who have made a social, historical, or scientific impact on health, nutrition, and food trends. Most entries are written from a global perspective, and dietary patterns from different regions of the world are discussed. Many professional health organizations are described.

The information in *Nutrition and Well-Being A to Z* is clearly presented and easy to find. Professionals in the field of nutrition, dietetics, food science, agriculture, medicine, health education, and public health wrote with the student in mind. Students and teachers can use the set to reinforce classroom topics on food, nutrition, and health, and to expand discussions on special or new topics. The extensive use of illustrations enhances the learning of the material. Entries are arranged alphabetically and an extensive cross-referencing system encourages the user to further explore other entries. All topics in a volume can be found in the index at the back of the book.

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