

# What is Functional Nutrition?

**Functional Nutrition emphasizes the importance of high quality foods and phytonutrient diversity to address clinical imbalances and move individuals toward the highest expression of health. Advanced nutrition assessment and a thorough Functional Medicine based history leads to a personalized therapeutic intervention created to promote optimal health and prevent diet- and lifestyle-related disease.**

Nutrition is the core modality of Functional Medicine, an integrative approach to health. As defined by The Institute for Functional Medicine, “Functional Medicine is an evolution in the practice of medicine that better addresses the healthcare needs of the 21st century. By shifting the traditional disease-centered focus of medical practice to a more patient-centered approach, Functional Medicine addresses the whole person, not just an isolated set of symptoms. Functional Medicine practitioners spend time with their patients, listening to their histories and evaluating the interactions among genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that can influence long-term health and complex, chronic disease. In this way, Functional Medicine supports the unique expression of health and vitality for each individual.”

## WHY DO WE NEED FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION?

- **The prevalence of complex, chronic diseases is escalating globally**, from heart disease and diabetes to irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, mental illness, rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune disorders.
- **Chronic diseases are diet- and lifestyle-related diseases and require dietary and lifestyle solutions.** A major strength of Functional Nutrition is its focus on the molecular mechanisms that underlie disease, providing the basis for targeted, innovative solutions that can restore health.
- **The current healthcare system fails to take into account the unique genetic makeup of each individual or the ability of food, toxins, and other environmental factors to influence gene expression.** The interaction between genes and environmental factors is a critical component in the development of chronic disease and plays a central role in the Functional Nutrition approach.
- **Most nutrition professionals are not adequately trained** in integrating nutrition assessment at the molecular and cellular levels with emerging research in nutrition and nutritional genomics. These advanced practice skills are essential for preventing and managing today’s chronic disorders.

## WHAT DISTINGUISHES A FUNCTIONAL NUTRITION PRACTITIONER?

The Functional Nutrition Assessment offers an ABCD organizational approach to support the clinical analysis, and it allows for nutrition-related findings and clinical patterns to emerge. From the medical history, physical and laboratory exams, and a diet and lifestyle review, the Functional Nutrition Assessment improves the identification of insufficiencies/imbalances through the PFC-MVP model; representing Protein, Fat/ Oils, Carbohydrates, Minerals, Vitamins, and Phytonutrients.

- **Anthropometrics** help to identify altered body composition patterns and abnormal vital signs
- **BioMarkers** and functional laboratory findings uncover PFC-MVP nutrition insufficiencies and physiologic patterns linked to clinical imbalances
- **Clinical Indicators from the physical exam** identify signs related to nutrition abnormalities that can be further explored through laboratory and functional assessments
- **Diet, Nutrition, and Lifestyle Journals** explore daily or weekly food intake, PFC-MVP assessment, patterns of eating, cravings and habitual foods, and stress eating associations