

# 1996 Declaration of Olympia on Nutrition and Fitness

Nutrition and physical activity interact in harmony and are the two most important positive factors that contribute to metabolic fitness and health interacting with the genetic endowment of the individual. Genes define opportunities for health and susceptibility to disease, while environmental factors determine which susceptible individuals will develop illness. Therefore, individual variation may need to be considered to achieve optimal health and to correct disorders associated with micronutrient deficiency, dietary imbalance and a sedentary lifestyle.

Every child and adult needs sufficient food and physical activity to express their genetic potential for growth, development, and health. Insufficient consumption of energy, protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins (particularly vitamins A, C, D, E and the B-complex) and minerals (particularly calcium, iron, iodine, potassium and zinc), and inadequate opportunities for physical activity impair the attainment of overall health and musculoskeletal function.

Balancing physical activity and good nutrition for fitness is best illustrated by the concept of energy intake and output. For sedentary populations, physical activity must be increased; for populations engaging in intense occupational and/or recreational physical activities, food consumption may need to be increased to meet their energy needs.

Nutrient intakes should match more closely human evolutionary heritage. The choice of foods should lead to a diverse diet high in fruits and vegetables and rich in essential nutrients, particularly protective antioxidants and essential fatty acids.

The current level of physical activity should match more closely our genetic endowment. Re-establishment of regular physical activity into everyday life on a daily basis is essential for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. For all ages and both genders the physical activity should be appropriately vigorous and of sufficient duration, frequency, and intensity, using large muscle groups rhythmically and repetitively. Special attention to adequate nutrition should be given to competitive athletes.

The attainment of metabolic fitness through energy balance, good nutrition and physical activity, reduces the risk of and forms the treatment framework for many modern lifestyle diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, osteoporosis, some cancers, obesity, and cardiovascular disorders. Metabolic fitness maintains and improves musculoskeletal function, mobility, and the activities of daily living into old age.

Education regarding healthy nutrition and physical activity must begin early and continue throughout life. Nutrition and physical activity must be interwoven into the curriculum of school-age children and of educators, nutritionists and other health professionals. Positive role models must be developed and promoted by society and the media.



**Major personal behavioural changes supported by the family, the community, and societal resources are necessary to reject unhealthy lifestyles and to embrace an active lifestyle and good nutrition.**

National governments and the private sector must co-ordinate their efforts to encourage good nutrition and physical activity throughout the life cycle and thus increase the pool of physically fit individuals who emulate the Olympic ideal.

The ancient Greeks (Hellenes) attained a high level of civilization based on good nutrition, regular physical activity, and intellectual development. They strove for excellence in mind and body. Modern men, women, and children can emulate this Olympic ideal and become swifter, stronger, and fitter through regular physical activity and good nutrition.