

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Rethink your relationship with food, build lasting habits, and feel empowered to take charge of your own health



urban **health**
everyday nutrition for everyday people

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING THE SAMPLE BOOKLET!

This Sample Booklet contains the first three Lessons, in full, and their accompanying Activities. While the Lessons and Activities are included together in this Sample, the complete course includes both a Student Book (the Modules and Lessons) and a Workbook (the Exercises and Activities).

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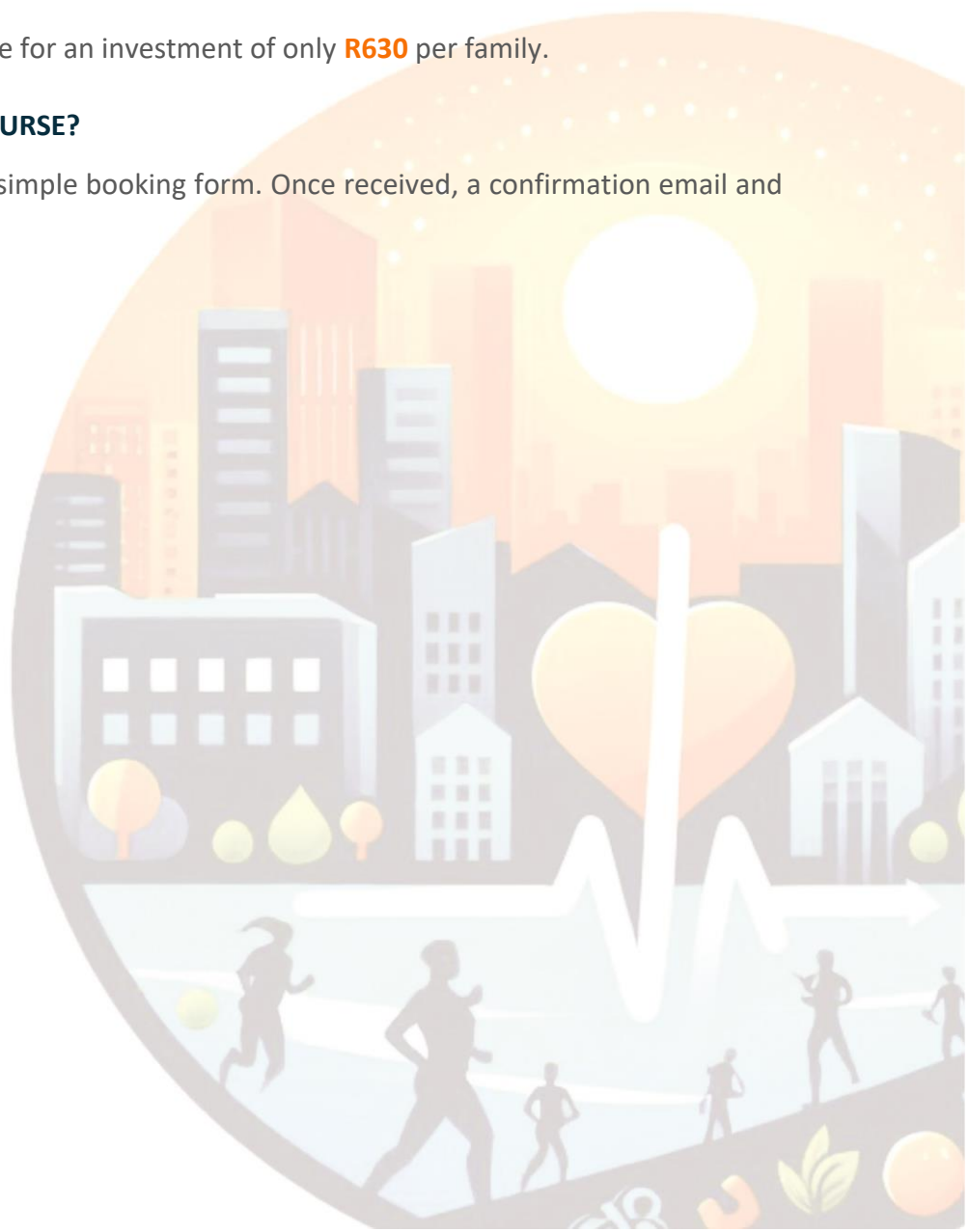
- The Student Book; and
- The Workbook.

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS HEALTH AND WELLNESS?

“Health” is generally defined as a person’s physical condition. It normally means that if you are in good health, you are free from injury or disease. This definition, however, does not adequately describe what we mean by “wellness”. In this Lesson we **define what wellness is**, and we discuss the five kinds of wellness: physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and environmental.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module:

- You are able to clearly define what is meant by “health”;
- You have begun to think about what this may mean for you, personally;
and
- You can define what is meant by “wellness”.



LESSON 1: FOOD IS BUT ONE PART OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

In 1986 the World Health Organisation defined health as:

“A resource for everyday life but not the objective for living.”

That’s not a very good definition. It actually says very little, if anything at all.

So what then is health?



In 2021, Americans spent approximately \$151 billion on vitamins and supplements¹. In the same year, they spent around \$21 billion on protein supplements (like powders and shakes)². You would be forgiven if you thought that all that money, and all of that interest in health, would naturally lead to a population that is, in fact, healthy.

However, in 2023 the Centres for Disease Control said that:

“60% of Americans are now living with at least one chronic condition, and 40% have two or more.”³

A chronic condition is a disease or illness that lasts for a long time, and may worsen as it goes on. Some examples may include high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, heart disease...amongst others.

And if you think this is limited to the USA, UK, Europe, and other so-called “developed nations”, then consider that the Cigna 2023 Vitality Index showed that 60% of South Africans can now be considered overweight, and nine out of ten visits to doctors are for stress-related conditions⁴.

Clearly, something is wrong here.

When you think about “health” ...

...you probably have a picture in your head. It is different for all of us. Perhaps the image is one of an Olympic athlete, or maybe a jacked actor in an action scene. Perhaps it is a fitness influencer on TikTok or Instagram. Perhaps when we bring to mind what we consider healthy we see a friend, or a family member.

Perhaps we see ourselves.

In fact, if really pushed to create a working definition of health, we may simply say that it is someone free from illness or injury. We may think of synonyms like “well-being”, “fit”, “strong”, “trim”, “good condition”, “great shape”, “buff” ...and the list goes on.

And when we think “healthy lifestyle”...

...we might picture vegetables. And this is where many of us stop. At our diet. At what we eat. We think it might be having *this* many fruits per day, or *this* particular vegetable. Because surely the people we consider healthy are eating a certain way.



But what if I told you that what you eat is but one part of what makes a person healthy? If we are to stay with the definition that a healthy person is one “free from illness or injury” then surely there must be more to it than that.

And there is. Because how you eat is one of only five things. Because when I consider whether or not a person is healthy, I look to not only how they eat...

...but also how they move, how they hydrate, how they sleep, and how they manage their day-to-day stress and worries.

Think of it like this: when we are not sleeping well, we are less focused during the day and are much more inclined to make bad decisions about what we eat. When we are not mindful about what we eat, we may simply forget to drink water during the day. When we are not sleeping well and not eating well, it can impact on our emotions. And because our emotions are all over the place, we sometimes don’t feel like doing certain things...like exercise, or movement, or play. When we don’t move, and when we don’t eat well, this can affect our sleep. And when we don’t sleep, we are less focused during the day and are more inclined to...

...you get the idea. It’s a vicious cycle.

So perhaps we should say that a healthy person is “one that looks to all aspects of their overall well-being, takes small and meaningful steps every day to make the right choices, who understands that food, water, sleep, movement and stress management are all linked.”

That's a good place to start.

Now that we have cleared up what we consider to be healthy, let's talk about wellness

Are these not the same thing? We talk about "health and wellness", or "wellness days" at offices, and we usually lump these together into one thing.

But it's not, you see.

Because we can break wellness down into five, quite specific categories, each with its very own set of aspects and principles.

And these are:



Physical Wellness is the ability you and I have to achieve a healthy lifestyle through exercise and being active.

Spiritual Wellness is the ability to seek meaning and purpose in our daily lives.

Emotional Wellness is our ability to express emotions with comfort, and in a healthy manner.

Intellectual Wellness is our ability to learn, to create valuable skills, and to use those skills productively in our lives.

Environmental Wellness is our ability to appreciate our external environment, and improve on its condition.

As we move through the course, we will encounter each of these in their own way and in their own time, gaining more and more understanding of how each one moves us on a daily basis, and we will see just how connected they all are. Health, after all, is a question of balance. When things are not in balance, when one or more things are out of sync...then so are we.

So let's turn to our Workbook and start the process of balance.

ACTIVITY: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Many of us are tempted, when we think of the word “environmental”, to picture lakes and rivers, and koala bears and mountains and plantations and forests. Perhaps when we think of the phrase “Environmental Health” we picture these being clean and pristine. Perhaps we see endangered species flourishing, the rain forests growing back, open-cast mines banned and pollution a thing of the past.

But, actually, that’s not what it means at all. At least not in this context.

Environmental Health relates to your space in the world, what is around you, how you surround yourself and how you create a place and a space that you can be happy in.

Have a look around your own space



Here we are not talking about your city, your town, suburb, village, or street. We are not talking about the area around your home, nor are we talking about areas in the home that everyone uses: bathrooms, kitchens, and the lounge.

Your space is the one you use more than any other. The one you sleep in, dream in, think about the past, and make plans for the future.

Spend some time and look around your bedroom. Are you happy with the way your furniture is arranged? How about the walls? Are there any pictures, or posters? Do your shelves reflect who you believe you are?

When you are comfortable in your own space, when your room is a place you want to be in, it can be an amazing place for your own physical, mental, and emotional health.

Is there anything you want to change? These decisions don’t have to happen immediately.

What’s important is taking the time to fully engage, to see, to hear, to smell. To feel out your environment and ask:

Is this me?

MODULE 1: WHAT IS NUTRITION?

We begin our journey with the very thing that many of us think about when it comes to health: what we eat. To do that we will start by asking what nutrition actually is, and then discuss calories and metabolism. It is important to clear up some of the myths around calories, and get really back-to-basics on metabolism.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module:

- You will have a clear understanding of nutrition;
- Be able to describe exactly what a calorie is; and
- Explain how our body uses the food and drink we take in for fuel.



LESSON 2: WHAT IS NUTRITION?

Simply put, nutrition is the process by which we consume food and drink, absorb the nutrients, and use those nutrients to grow and develop our bodies, and to maintain life.

Can we get any more boring?

So let's flip this and see if we can find another way of opening up what nutrition really is.

Most people operate on auto-pilot



If I asked you what you had to eat for lunch two days ago, would you know? How about yesterday? Perhaps you do know. You'd be surprised at how many people do not.

And I believe the reason for this is that many of us treat food as fuel. When we are hungry, we eat. And when we do eat, we go for quick, we choose easy, we pick something that satisfies *now* in the quickest way possible.

Then, when we do eat, we pay barely a thought to it. We wolf down whatever we have on our plate or in our bowl while watching TV, playing a game, or scrolling social media.

But food is so much more than that

Think about it this way. When we celebrate a birthday, what do we often do? We gather around food. Had a good game? Go out to eat. Accomplished a milestone or a goal? We have our favourite foods.

In fact, food is such a huge part of our lives that it's almost astonishing that we pay so little attention to it. Our habits and our lifestyles are shaped over the years through our families, our cultural upbringing, our religious and spiritual groups, our ancestry, even our geography.

For example, if you grew up in areas like Italy and Greece, you may find yourself eating a diet richer in vegetables, fruits, whole-grains, and olive oil. If you are Roman Catholic you may find yourself eating fish on certain days, and if you are Hindu you may find your diet to be largely vegetarian. Perhaps there are certain days of the week, month, or year when you fast because of a spiritual or cultural holiday.

And, maybe, you eat the way you do only because your family does. That's perfectly fine. But if you think about it closely, does your family not have its own traditions around food? Does Friday night have a certain flavour? Does Christmas Day have a certain smell? If you had to think back to your childhood, is there that one food you can remember your mom or dad making for you when you were ill, or down, or sad? You quite possibly do.



That's because what we eat is a lot more important than we think

It is a lot more important that how many times we chew our food. It is more important than the course your food follows from the oesophagus into the stomach, through the intestines for absorption, into the blood stream and the cells and the muscles.

That's just biology.

And scarcely something we can get excited about.

So, let's begin our journey by seeing exactly what we eat. For that, we will turn to our Workbook and begin an interesting and revealing exercise.

ACTIVITY: COMPLETING A HEALTH JOURNAL



How about we get really, and truly, practical?

For the next three days, starting either today or tomorrow, you are going to complete a Health Journal. Sometimes we call it a Food Diary but its more than just food.

And it is not complicated, it is not a chore, it will take very little time.

Each day, for the next three, you can either write down on a pad, type into a computer, or tap into a phone, information about what you had to eat, how you moved, how you slept the night before, and what your stress levels were like that day.

You do not need to weigh anything, or count anything.

Firstly, why a Health Journal?

Most of us go through life on autopilot. We pay scarce attention to what we eat, most of the time, and a Journal makes us a lot more aware, more mindful, of what we do each day when it comes to our own health. Over time, if we persist, we may find that our priorities change, our outlooks evolve, and our practices go in a different direction. A journal can also be a wonderful source of accountability, holding us to our goals. We can easily see areas that are best for us, and places that require change.

After all, our actions determine our feelings, our feelings our beliefs, our beliefs become our habits and our habits become our lifestyles.

Completing a Health Journal

Every day, simply write down or type in:

- What you had for breakfast, lunch, and dinner;
- What snacks you had today;
- What you had to drink today;
- What movement you did today;
- What your sleep was like the night before; and

- What your stress levels are for the day. Rate this from 1 to 5, with 5 being in crisis mode and 1 being blissfully drifting through your day.

Once you have three days' worth, ask yourself: do you see anything that you believe you could do differently?

Here is an example of what a Health Journal could look like:

Date and Day of the Week
Friday, 19 July
What I had for breakfast
2 slices of sasko honey and oats wholewheat with sliced cheddar cheese
What I had for lunch
Cucumber and carrot smoothie, about 300ml
What I had for dinner
2 roast chicken breasts with Tobasco, each a little bigger than palm-sized, a fistful of coleslaw and about 2 fistfuls of roast potatoes.
My snacks over the day
about a fistful of monkey nuts, some sunflower seeds, a small packet of Big Korn Bites, and a small piece of apple tart.
What I had to drink over the day
4 cups of coffee (black, no sugar) and 2 500ml bottles of water
What activities or exercise I did over the day
20 mins of resistance bands and a 30 minute walk in the evening.
My quality of sleep the night before
slept well, maybe 7 hours, chirpy and awake in the morning.
My stress levels today
Level 3 in the morning, focused and energised. Changed towards evening, maybe Level 4.2 or even 4.4.

LESSON 3: WHAT ARE CALORIES?

Ah, Calories. Yes. This is something we read and hear a lot about. The mysterious Calorie. We hear that *this* particular food contains a lot of Calories and so therefore is “bad” for us and this *other* food contains fewer Calories and so must therefore be “good” for us.

Is this actually true? Does more Calories automatically mean not-so-good and fewer mean somewhat better?

Perhaps before we get into the real nuts and bolts of nutrition, we should first dispel some of the myths and misconceptions. Let’s start with the elusive and oft-misunderstood “baddy” of food: the Calorie.

A Calorie (with a capital C) is, actually...

...only a unit of measurement.



No doubt you know what a unit of measurement is, but let’s do a quick refresher with an example or two. When we measure our weight (it’s actually mass but why split hairs), we use the kilogram. When we measure the distance from one point in a town or city to another, we may use kilometres. If you are American or English, you’d be thinking in miles. A pen may be measured in centimetres, a bug in millimetres, a liquid in litres or a solution in millilitres. The possibilities are endless.

And, in exactly the same way, a Calorie is only a unit of measurement. It is no more and no less mysterious than that.

What it measures is the amount of energy that a food contains

When we eat something, what we eat contains a certain amount of energy. That energy is used in our bodies as fuel. At the macro level, we use energy for movement, whether our normal day-to-day movements such as walking, fidgeting, writing, standing, sitting and even, yes, exercise. At a micro level, however, our bodies also use energy for all the things we don’t see nor think of: breathing, the beating of our hearts, the contraction and expansion of muscles, the neurons firing in our brains.

Like all forms of energy, such as sound or light, mechanical, nuclear, or radiation, Calories have their own: chemical. And this is expressed in our bodies as heat. In fact, it takes one Kilocalorie (Kcal) to heat 1 gram of water by 1°C. So it actually *is* energy. And it is only a unit to measure that energy.

In Lesson 4 we will look at how that energy is actually used, and how it works. For now, though, let's stay with the humble Calorie and have a look at some common items you might find around the house.



In South Africa, we don't use the Calorie to describe the energy in food

Instead, we use the Kilojoule (kJ). If you look at the nutritional label on a 500g box of chocolate ProNutro, you will see that the Energy in a 100g serving is 1487 Kilojoules. The 'Per serving' amount is 743 Kilojoules.

What is a Kilojoule? Again, it is only a unit of measurement. It only measures the amount of energy in the food that our body can use.

And if you take 743kJ and divide it by 4.18, you get 178Kcal. So there are 178 Calories in a single, 50g serving of chocolate ProNutro.

And now you know.

So let's get practical again. It's time to turn back to our Workbook...and raid the kitchen.

ACTIVITY: LEARNING TO READ THE NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION ON A FOOD LABEL

Go and grab something from your kitchen cupboard or pantry. Make sure it's a box or a packet of food, such as cereal, rice, pasta, whatever you like.

Then, look around until you find the nutritional information, and the ingredients list.

Now, for this activity we are going to look at only the nutritional information. Learning to read the ingredients list will come in another lesson, later on.

TYPICAL NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION (AS PACKED)				
1 Serving = approximately 5 tablespoons = 50g				
		per 100g	per Serving	% NRV**
Energy	(kJ)	1487	783	
Protein	(g)	18.8	9.4	17
Glycaemic carbohydrate	(g)	48	24	
of which total sugar	(g)	25.7	12.9	
Total fat	(g)	6.6	3.3	
of which saturated fat	(g)	1.4	0.7	
Dietary fibre**	(g)	12.9	6.5	
Total sodium	(mg)	330	165	
Vitamin A	(µg)	540	270	30
Vitamin B (Thiamine)	(mg)	0.7	0.4	30
Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)	(mg)	0.8	0.4	30
Vitamin B3 (Niacin)	(mg)	9.6	4.8	30
Vitamin B5 (Pantothenic Acid)	(mg)	3.0	1.5	30
Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine)	(mg)	1.0	0.5	30
Vitamin B7 (Biotin)	(µg)	18	9	30
Vitamin B9 (Folic Acid)	(µg)	240	120	30
Vitamin B12 (Cyanocobalamin)	(µg)	1	1	30
Vitamin C	(mg)	60.0	30.0	30
Vitamin D	(µg)	9	5	30
Vitamin E	(mg)	9.0	4.5	30
Vitamin K	(µg)	72	36	30
Calcium	(mg)	530.0	265.0	20
Iodine	(µg)	90	45	30
Iron	(mg)	5.4	2.7	15
Magnesium	(mg)	252.0	126.0	30
Selenium	(µg)	33	17	30
Zinc	(mg)	6.6	3.3	30

* Nutrient reference value for individuals 4 years and older, per single serving
** Method of analysis: ADAC 985.29.

As an example, I have chosen a 500g box of chocolate ProNutro. I have chosen this one because it is one of the longest lists you will ever find. And the nutritional information part of the label looks like this.



It may not be all that obvious to you right now, but it is divided into two sections: macronutrients and micronutrients.

In Module 2 we will discuss macronutrients in-depth, and in Module 3 we will talk about micronutrients. So, you don't need to know what these are in any detail right now.

Macronutrients are your proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Because you need these in large quantities, you can see that the label notes them in grams (g). Micronutrients, on the other hand, you need in small quantities: milligrams (mg) and micrograms (µg). These are the vitamins and minerals in the food item.

For today, and for this Activity, we are only going to look at the first section and concern ourselves with the Energy, the Proteins, the Glycaemic Carbohydrates, and the Fats.

Why? Because we are going to calculate the Calories in a single serving

Let's use my 500g box of ProNutro as an example.

Firstly, find the Energy information. We can see from our label that it is 743 Kilojoules per 50g serving. From the Lesson, you know that in South Africa we use the Kilojoule and not the

Calorie, when we talk about Energy. So, if you take 743kJ and divide it by 4.18, you get 178Kcal. So there are **178** Calories in a single, 50g serving of chocolate ProNutro.

Now, let's take it one step further.

What I didn't mention in the Lesson is that there is another way to calculate the Calories in a food item. It is by looking at the amount of protein, carbohydrates, and fats it contains.

And to do that we use the following measurements:

- 1 gram of protein contains 4kCal (or kilocalories)
- 1 gram of carbohydrates contains 4kCal
- 1 gram of fats contains 9kCal

Now, if we do the maths on this, we can see that a single service of chocolate ProNutro would be:

- 9.4g of protein in a single serving x 4kCal = 37.6kCal
- 24g of carbohydrates in a single serving x 4kCal = 96kCal
- 3.3g of fats in a single serving x 9kCal = 39.7kCal

When we add these up, we get **173.3kCal** for a 50g serving of chocolate ProNutro.

Now hold on. When we calculated it using the Energy amount (kilojoules to kilocalories) we got 178. When we calculate using the macronutrients we get 173.3. Why is there a difference?

It's because the total Energy has taken the micronutrients – the vitamins and minerals – into account as well. Which is something we don't do when calculating using macronutrients. You can decide which you feel is the most accurate. In reality, it does not really matter.

Now, try this for yourself

Take the item you took from your cupboard or pantry, and go through this exercise for yourself. Calculate the amount of calories in that item using both the Energy and Macronutrient methods, and see how it stacks up!

REFERENCES, SOURCES, CITATIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

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