

Glossary: MNOP

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M

MI (Myocardial Infarct). Heart attack. Lack of oxygen to the heart muscle (myocardium) causes the muscle to die.

Membrane. The protective layer that surrounds a cell (like a skin).

Metabolism. Overarching term which includes all of the chemical reactions that occur in an organism.

Minerals. Inorganic elements, some of which are essential nutrients required in small amounts by the body. Major minerals include sodium (Na), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), chloride (Cl), magnesium (Mg), and sulfur (S). Trace minerals include iron (Fe), zinc (Zn), fluoride (F), molybdenum (Mb), copper (Cu), iodine (I), and manganese (Mn).

N

Neuron. A nerve cell that serves as the basic unit of the nervous system.

Nitrates. These drugs for angina (chest pain) relax blood vessels and increase the flow of blood to the heart. Examples of generic and brand names include isosorbide dinitrate (Iso-Bid and Isonate) and nitroglycerin (Nitro-Bid and Nitrocap).

Noninsulin-Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (NIDDM). More common type of diabetes in which the fat cells resist insulin. Also called Type II diabetes or adult-onset diabetes.

Nutrient Density. The ratio of nutrients to energy that a food provides. More nutrients and fewer calories yields a higher nutrient density.

Nutrients. Substances obtained from food and used by the body for energy, structural integrity, growth, maintenance, and repair of body tissues.

O

Obesity. An excess of body fat; clinically interchangeable with the term "overweight." Quantified by measuring relative weight (RW) and/or body mass index (BMI). The RW is the actual weight divided by the "desirable weight" (derived from "acceptable weight" tables), obesity is considered to be an RW of greater than 120%, morbid obesity as a RW greater than 200%. The BMI, or Quetelet index, is the actual body weight divided by the height squared (kg per m²). This index more closely corresponds to measurements of body fat and better differentiates "overweight" due to an increase in muscle mass from true obesity. Obesity is a BMI of > 27 kg/m²; morbid obesity >40 kg/m².

Osteoporosis. A condition where bones become porous and weak due to mineral loss in older age.

Overweight. An excess of body weight, including all components of body composition (muscle, bone, water and fat). Defined (by the NIH) as a body weight 20% or more above "desirable" weight. Over one third of adult Americans are overweight.

Oxidation: A chemical reaction involving the addition or combination of oxygen with the other reacting material. When fats (or food products containing fats) oxidize, they become rancid, and develop objectionable flavors and odors. Hence oxidation of food fats is to be avoided.

P

Peristaltic Waves. Typical movement of the esophagus, stomach, and intestine is called peristalsis. The action of peristalsis looks like an ocean wave moving through the muscle. The muscle at the beginning of the organ narrows, then the narrowed portion slowly moves down the length of the organ. These waves of narrowing push the food and fluid in front of them through each hollow organ.

Phospholipid. A compound composed of glycerol, two fatty acids, choline, and a phosphate group. Phospholipids are the primary components of cell membranes.

Physiological age. An abstract representation of a person's health and probable life expectancy in terms of age.

Plasma. The liquid part of the blood when the blood does not coagulate. It is obtained by precipitating the blood cells by centrifugation.

Platelets. Small cells in the blood that form clots.

Precursor. Any fatty acid from which derivatives are formed.

Prepackaged meal diets. Commercial weight loss programs which provide the client with prepackaged meals in combination with varying degrees of nutrition education, exercise regimens, and behavior modification. As with VLCD's, these programs offer the advantage of "removing the patient from the food environment," by limiting the patient's choices in regards to shopping, meal planning, and food preparation, and thus may be helpful to some patients who need considerable structure to initiate weight loss. Patients may have difficulty keeping the weight off after making the transition to regular foods. Because these diets contain >800 kcals per day, intensive medical monitoring is not necessary during dieting.

Preservatives. Substances such as antimicrobial agents and antioxidants that are added to foods to inhibit spoilage or maintain desired qualities of the foods.

Protein: A naturally occurring combination of amino acids containing carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and usually sulphur. Protein is one of the essential constituents of all living things and of the diet of animal organisms.



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