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# Wellness Connection Nutrition Interview with Annabelle Shaffer

By Seth Yoder

I recently sat down with Annabelle Shaffer to discuss nutrition and a little bit about what brought her to the field. Annabelle has been passionate about diet since she was a child. Diagnosed with celiac disease at young age and that inspired her to explore new and creative ways to help people overcome dietary restrictions. Annabelle followed her passion to UIUC and graduated in 2019 with her undergraduate degree in Dietetics. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Nutritional Sciences and is working in the Nakamura Lab. Upon the completion of her master's degree, she intends to pursue a medical degree and hopes to ultimately practice lifestyle medicine.

## Question:

Are there common areas of weight gain in men's and women's bodies as they age?

## Answer:

Men are more likely to store fat in their abdominal region (apple shape); women more so in the hips and thighs (pear). This poses more of a risk for men than women because when fat is stored around organs it tends to lead to more health complications.

## Question:

Why does weight loss seem to be harder as you age?

## Answer:

We lose more muscle mass as we age. As a result of losing this muscle mass our energy levels depreciate. The key to maintaining a healthy weight as we age is to keep energy expenditure as high as possible. While it is true most metabolisms slow down with age the hard truth is we can't improve metabolism, but we can have an impact on the amount of physical activity we do.

## Question:

How can a person ensure long-term weight loss success?

## Answer:

What is clear is that each person must design their own diet to fit the unique characteristics of the individual. What is also apparent is that removing a food group, making drastic cuts in calorie intake, and/or developing a diet that relies on meal replacement rarely leads to long-term weight loss. It is recommended when developing any type of diet to include a protein source and fiber source in most meals. The protein will help with building muscle mass and the fiber will help keep you full well after the meal and benefit the body's overall GI health. A good example of this could be a breakfast that includes oatmeal with a cup of Greek yogurt.



Annabelle Shaffer

## Question:

Can drastic, quick weight loss have a negative effect on my health?

## Answer:

Yes, if we are not providing our body with enough calories and protein intake are body will start to search for these source in other places in the body. When the body starts to rob protein from muscle mass energy levels will begin to decline and have an overall adverse effect on weight loss goals.

## Question:

How can I determine the best goals for weight loss

## Answer:

The National Institute of Health (NIH) recommends a person should lose no more than 1-2 pounds a week. The average person needs approximately 2,000 calories a day, in order to lose 1-2 pounds a week that would require a 25-50% reduction in calorie intake. When considering goals for weight loss it is also important to factor in the amount of activity an individual does each week and adjust your calorie intake accordingly. ■