

**Adventures in Food and Nutrition! © 2016**  
**Chapter 2: Nutrients: The Building Blocks of Health—Glossary**

**amino acids.** The smaller units that combine to form proteins

**antioxidants.** Special nutrients and other substances that protect the body's cells from damage that can be caused by oxygen.

**calcium.** A nutrient needed to build bones and teeth, transmit nerve signals, and contract muscles.

**calorie.** A measure of the energy value of food.

**carbohydrate.** A nutrient that provides energy. It is found in every food of plant origin. Sugars, starch, and fiber are types of carbohydrates.

**cholesterol.** A fatlike substance that occurs naturally in the body and is found in foods of animal origin.

**complete protein.** Food of animal origin that contains all the amino acids needed by the body.

**Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs).** A set of guidelines for the amounts of nutrients needed each day.

**dietitian.** A nutrition expert.

**fat.** A nutrient that provides energy. Fats are found in foods of both plant and animal origin.

**fat-soluble vitamin.** Vitamin that dissolves in fat.

**fiber.** A plant-based carbohydrate that humans cannot digest and does not furnish calories.

**foliac acid.** Sometimes called *folate*, this B-vitamin is used to build strong, healthy blood and is needed to fight infections. This vitamin also helps prevent brain and spine birth defects.

**free radicals.** A form of oxygen created when the body burns calories.

**functional foods.** Foods rich in phytonutrients.

**gram.** A measure of weight.

**hydrogenation.** The process that turns an unsaturated fat into a saturated one.

**incomplete protein.** Food of plant origin that contains most, but not all, of the amino acids needed by the body.

**iron.** A nutrient found in red blood cells. Its job is to carry oxygen to body cells and remove carbon dioxide.

**iron deficiency anemia.** A common disease caused by a low intake of iron.

**minerals.** Types of nutrients that are inorganic substances needed in small amounts by the body to function, grow, and repair itself.

**neural tube defects.** Brain and spine birth defects.

**nutrient supplement.** Product used to add nutrients to the diets of people who are sick, injured, or known to have a nutrient deficiency.

**omega-3 fats.** A type of unsaturated fat that provides many important health benefits.

**osteoporosis.** A disease resulting from a lack of calcium in the diet that causes bones to wear away, become brittle, and break easily.

**phytonutrients.** Compounds that work together with vitamins, minerals, and fiber to promote good health.

**protein.** A type of nutrient needed for growth and repair of the body. Proteins are made of amino acids.

**Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA).** Level of nutrient that meets the needs of most (97 to 98 percent) individuals.

**saturated fat.** A type of fat that causes the levels of fats and cholesterol in the blood to rise higher than normal.

**sodium.** A mineral that performs many vital functions, such as maintaining the body's water balance, helping muscles relax, and helping nerves transmit messages to the brain.

**spina bifida.** A condition in which the spine did not close normally during fetal development.

**starch.** A type of carbohydrate stored in plants. It must be broken down by the body before it can be used as an energy source.

**sugar.** A type of carbohydrate that furnishes calories but no other nutrient. It is used by the body as an energy source.

**trans fat.** The type of saturated fat formed by hydrogenation. Small amounts are found in dairy products and some meats.

**unsaturated fat.** A type of fat that does not cause blood fat and cholesterol levels to rise.

**upper limit of safety.** The highest level of vitamins and minerals you can safely take.

**vitamins.** Types of nutrients that are organic substances needed in small amounts by the body to function, grow, and repair itself.

**vitamin C.** A vitamin that helps the body heal wounds and keeps gums healthy.

**water-soluble vitamin.** Vitamin that dissolves in water.

**zinc.** A mineral needed for normal body growth and repair.