

MISCELLANY

Your Nutrition Can Be Important to a Healthy Golf Course

By **Clark Rowles**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nakama Golf Club

Over the past 25 years I have read numerous articles in trade journals pointing the way to successfully manage a golf course. From anthracnose to zero turn radius mowers, advertisers have suggested equipment and products that can help get to that end. All of this reading has made it apparent just how much stress superintendents put themselves under to achieve perfection on a golf course.

Missing from all of my reading has been any suggestion that the most significant factor in all of this is the individual; the literature has rarely addressed our needs as human beings.

Conferences and seminars have been another great source of information for me; I have listened to speakers lecturing on what is needed to perform our jobs to the standards demanded. A lot of advice has been given, but the question "what if we don't have the energy to do any of it?" has not been addressed.

We all know that proper diet and nutrition can "do the body good." Or do we? I believe if we paid as much attention to our bodies as we do turf, most of us would perform at a higher level. The demands of our profession sometimes do not permit us to have a regular regimen of diet and exercise, so what do we do? Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired?

The most obvious thing we should not do is start off the most important time of the day with a 32 ounce soda and a cigarette, which too many of us do. There are a lot of us who try to start the day properly and also try to exercise on a regular basis. But the reality is that the diet portion of this equation is not lived up to often enough.

Did you know that of the eleven published diet plans most widely used today, none of them provide the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) for thirteen vitamins and minerals? Did you know that in a 3,000-calorie diet you still do not receive the nutrients your body needs? The



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reason for these shortcomings is that our foods are often over-processed. So what can we do?

I believe the answer is simple – do for ourselves exactly what we do for turf. We supplement turfgrass nutritional needs, and we should do the same for our bodies. There are 16 elements essential for turf whereas 26 elements are essential for human life.

Discussions about the food chain and the circle of life are part of any education that includes botany or biology classes. Often lost is attention to how this information relates to our own well-being. Today much of the food we eat is grown with attention to the plant's needs, but little regard seems to be given to our nutritional needs as the consumer.

The New England Journal of Medicine suggests that cavemen actually had a superior diet than those of us today. Why? They didn't eat processed foods. Nutrients from the grain an animal consumed are transferred to us in the meat. Today, it has been estimated that roughly 50% of all the nutrients that go into food production are lost by the time the food arrives at our table.

Such facts require us to educate ourselves on what it is that our body truly requires on a daily basis. Several years ago the government established the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for vitamins and minerals. In 1993 that was changed to the Reference Daily Intake (RDI). RDIs represent an average need for adults and children (above the age of four). The main flaw in RDIs is that the amounts suggested are levels necessary to prevent nutrient deficient diseases such as scurvy (vitamin C) or rickets (vitamin D), and they do not take into account an individual's needs. Currently, terms such as Optimum Daily Intake (ODI) or Optimal Nutrient Intake (ONI) are used and they address nutritional needs based on one's environment, health and lifestyle. And this is where the debate starts.

As we age our bodies go through changes, and our nutritional needs change. Yet, the 1993 guidelines do not recognize those nutritional changes. Research over the past 20 years has started to draw conclusions on the relationship between nutrition and health and longevity. Some of that research has concluded that if we took optimal levels of just certain vitamins (A,C,E) several billions of dollars in health cost could be saved annually.

From a personal standpoint, I started looking at supplements over three years ago because I seemed to be experiencing more winter colds. Two of the previous four years I came down with pneumonia. I turned 40 at about the same time and realized that physically I wasn't what I used to be. There were other factors involved, too. I was getting less exercise. My diet had changed to accommodate the eating habits of my children, and a more hectic lifestyle with their activities all factored in. As much as we tried to eat the right foods, more often than not it just didn't work.

So I began looking at supplements to give my body what it was not getting from my diet. The education phase started by researching what was available as supplements. I soon found out that all kinds of different formulas were available, and some were definitely better than others. I needed to find out exactly what it was I should be taking and why, and cost factors needed to be considered. I then chose the brand and formula that best aligned with my personal needs.

Since I have been taking supplements, the colds I used to get that lasted for a week or more now only last a day or two. I generally just feel better. I am no longer sick and tired of being sick and tired! My oldest son two years ago missed 13 days of school due to illness (colds, strep throat, etc.) For the past two years he has been on supplements and has seen a significant reduction in the amount of time missed. Coincidence? I do not think so. I am convinced that his body is getting what it needs for growth without jeopardizing his defense mechanisms, which he needs for being in contact with 600 students on a daily basis.

I hope that as people read this, they will consider that maybe there is something to supplements and the benefits I believe they offer. I cannot help recall a recent article by Dr. Frank Rossi in a recent issue of Golfweek's Superintendent News, titled "Health concerns persist for superintendents," and wonder if supplements would provide us the protection to guard against the health concerns he discussed.

After all, don't we all want to live long and healthy life, and enjoy the fruits of our labor? ♣



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