



● Learn your food responses and you may be able to improve your health.

Why Diets Don't Work

Because your body's biochemistry is unique, you need to tap into your food instincts and learn what works – for you. **BY TANYA WYATT**



It just doesn't add up. For years now, we've heard the same advice: eat lots of wholegrains, fruits and veg; reduce saturated fat; increase "good" fats; limit red meat and stick to leaner cuts.

● Yet, over this same period, obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic life-style diseases have raced to new highs. If you've stuck to the standard, food-pyramid formula with lousy results, you won't find it hard to fathom: the formula must be flawed. That's because no diagram can determine what you should be eating – only your genes can do that.

GET INTO YOUR GENES

● Over the centuries, genes – bequeathed to you by your ancestors – adapt to specific regions. They arrange themselves according to what kinds of foods are available when. If, for example, there's a steady supply of animal/fat-based foods, they'll learn to make the very best of these.

But then, since few of us have forebears from a single geographical source, they mix and blend. It's complex stuff. The gist of it is that, contrary to what the much-vaunted formula would have you believe, you might actually thrive on a low- or no-grain diet.

In fact, if you want quick, sustainable fat loss, try cutting out *all* grains (even the whole ones). We know regulating blood sugar is key to controlling health and weight. Grains – with their high carb (starch) content – break down too quickly, causing blood-sugar spikes (especially in those whose ancestors ate a lot of meat or fat). High blood-sugar levels lead to high body fat and diseases such as type 2 diabetes. (Read Tim Noake's *Challenging Beliefs* for more on this.)

The good news is, whatever your forefathers' dietary quirks, you can tune into your ancient food instincts to improve your health. The aim is to forget what you think you know about "fat foods" and get to the point where your food choices feel natural, easy and guilt-free. To achieve this, you have to experiment and keep careful records. The end result – ideal weight, better energy levels and emotional well-being – will make it all worthwhile.

1/ LEARN YOUR FOOD-RESPONSE LANGUAGE

● Do you ever feel sleepy or lethargic after a meal? Or get hungry an hour after eating and can't stop snacking once you start? These responses are your body's way of saying it didn't like what you last ate – that the ratios of fat, protein and carbohydrate weren't right for you. Too much protein and fat tends to lead to depressive symptoms, while too much carbohydrate will leave you "wired".

If you feel great after every meal (without artificial stimulants like coffee), don't do this step. For everyone else, keep a record of what you eat. Create three columns with the following headings: Satiety, Emotions and Energy. Within an hour of eating, note positive or negative responses with their accompanying descriptors:

- **Satiety:** Do you feel satisfied (positive)? Do you crave something sweet or a snack (negative: too much carbohydrate)? Are you full but still hungry (negative: too much fat/protein)?
- **Emotions:** Do you feel mentally clear and able to focus well (positive)? Do you feel down, sluggish or apathetic in any way (negative: too much fat/protein)? Are you anxious, obsessive, angry or irritable (negative: too much carbohydrate)?
- **Energy:** Do you feel energised (positive)? Are you jittery, shaky or nervous (negative: too much carbohydrate)? Do you feel sleepy or lethargic, or crave tea or coffee (negative: too much fat/protein)?

QUICK FIX If you establish you've eaten too much fat and/or protein, immediately consume a small amount of carbohydrate such as a carrot or half an apple. This should help to pick you up.

Do the reverse if you think you've eaten too much carbohydrate. Eat some protein like a boiled egg or a chunk of cheese, which will bring you down. This technique should help you overcome sweet cravings that may arise from an incorrectly balanced meal (also see step 3).

2/ WATCH YOUR PATTERNS

● Do you struggle to eat so much as a slice of toast for breakfast but feel ready to scoff down the entire contents of the kitchen cupboard at 6pm?

We all have different appetite patterns throughout the day. If you can get a sense of yours before a meal, you won't need to do as much assessing and damage control after eating. If your appetite is light, aim to eat more carbs than fats and/or proteins. Reverse this if you have a big appetite. Split a page into three columns and give each a heading – Breakfast, Lunch and

You Tell Us

Kirsten Brackenridge, xx
hair stylist,
Port Elizabeth
"It was mind-blowing to understand that it was carbs that were causing my weight to stick. I'd always assumed it was dietary fat that made me fat. Although [the theory] made sense, it was still tough to shift my mindset and 'allow' myself to eat so much more fat and protein.
"The hardest part was taking grains out of my diet (I'm not a big fruit person). But when I started to lose weight without any hunger or cravings, I was motivated to continue. I'm now able to tell when I've had a 'bad' meal, which happens less and less these days."

Dinner. Underneath the relevant heading, and before eating, describe your appetite and then try to eat accordingly.

Keep a daily record for a month and you'll find a pattern emerging. This'll make meal planning easier. (Menstruation will probably throw things out of whack, so you need a full month.)

3/ GET TO THE ROOT OF YOUR SWEET TOOTH

● You may think you have a sweet tooth but this is really a sign your fuel mix is incorrect. It's your body's way of calling for nutrients that were lacking when last you ate. Cravings can be managed by increasing quality fats and proteins, and cutting down on carbs.

Every time you have a craving for something sweet, look at your last meal. Was it high in carbs? If so, eat some protein and/or fat and wait 15 minutes. The craving should diminish.

In the future, try the same meal again, but increase the protein and fat content, or reduce the carbohydrate content, and observe the results. Being free of sweet cravings is remarkably empowering. **!**

● **KNOW MORE** PE-based metabolic typing advisor and holistic lifestyle coach Tanya Wyatt is a member of the SHAPE advisory board. See thehappybody.co.za

Give Your Food Instincts A Healthy Nudge

➔ **CARBS** Vegetables and a small amount of fruit – not grains – are the healthiest carbohydrate choices. Steer clear of all sugary drinks.

➔ **FATS** Good-quality fats include cold-pressed seed-, nut- and vegetable oils. They also include saturated fats like butter

and coconut fat, and even the fat in meat from naturally reared animals.

➔ **PROTEINS** Opt for grass-fed meats and offal; naturally raised and unmedicated chickens; naturally raised fish from clean waters; raw nuts and seeds; and whole milk products.

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