

EAT RIGHT NOW

Todd Mangum, MD

Part I

Since 1981, in ever increasing numbers, we've been convinced eating a high complex carbohydrate, low fat, low animal protein diet would promote weight loss and improve our health. Just when we were congratulating ourselves on our outstanding compliance, someone had to come along and confuse us with the facts. We are not leaner, more fit or healthier. Over the last 20 years, obesity has increased dramatically along with all the problems associated with it.

Under the weight of this information, the recently constructed food pyramid, which supported these recommendations, is collapsing. Although many still cling to the crumbling guidelines, the well informed agree they need revising. What these revisions should be, however, has spawned more controversy than ever.

So what is a healthy diet? The one that makes you feel good all day long. A diet that makes you feel good is one that you digest comfortably, that doesn't leave you frazzled and craving more after only an ephemeral moment of bliss. It is the one that will either help you maintain or regain vibrant health and well being.

In other words, there isn't just one true diet, which if we all followed religiously would deliver us from our physical and emotional woes. Diets with extremes from almost no fat and protein to nearly all fat and protein have been therapeutic for someone at sometime. There is the Zone diet, the South Beach diet, the Hollywood diet, the Ornish diet and the Schwarzbain Principle diet. Atkins, Pritkin, my kin and your kin all have their own idea of what constitutes a healthy diet.

The benefit of some of these diets might have had nothing to do with the percentage the of fat, carbohydrates or protein. Radical changes to ones diet could eliminate allergenic foods and toxic additives, as well as provide nutrients that were previously deficient. Alternatively, you might have happened upon the diet that is, in fact, right for your genetic makeup and individual metabolism.

If you have no idea how different foods affect you, the first thing you need to do is pay attention. If you have trouble connecting with your feelings you will be unable to determine what foods are right for you. Sadly, we're bombarded with messages that tell us our feelings and emotions are dangerous, irrational and unreliable. Our response is to disconnect ourselves from them. Once disconnected, we're easily manipulated.

If someone asks you how you feel and you say I think I feel such and such, you're disconnected. We don't think our feelings we feel them. Quit reading someone else's opinion of how you're supposed to feel. Stop the mad frenzied search for something to make you feel better and figure out how you simply feel right now.

Whatever diet you're currently following, or interested in, should be evaluated using some fundamental standards. These basic standards will be nearly universal among practitioners of alternative medicine. They will often be completely disregarded

by mainstream Western medicine and its numerous affiliate organizations, like the American Diabetic Association.

A healthy diet first and foremost should consist of unprocessed or minimally processed all natural whole foods. You will have to read the ingredients list. The name of the product essentially means nothing. For instance just because some bread is called whole wheat doesn't mean it's not loaded with other garbage. It doesn't even guarantee it's completely whole. The occasional "whole wheat" gem will be white bread, which has been artificially died brown and dusted with a wee bit of bran to keep it honest.

The "If I can't pronounce it, I shouldn't eat it rule" can be helpful but don't take it too far. You could miss out on quinoa. This means excluding as much as possible all synthetic additives. This includes artificial flavors, colors, sweeteners and preservatives. It should not contain any hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fats which include margarine and vegetable shortening. These fabricated chemicals allow the manufacture's to camouflage inferior and inexpensive ingredients and significantly increase the shelf life of their products. All of these things provide absolutely no nutritional benefit. Most are in fact harmful.

Whenever possible it should also be organic. Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources which enhance rather than degrade environmental quality. This means that the food is grown without the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Natural pesticides and fertilizers are allowed. Organic standards also prohibit the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), radioactive material and sewage sludge at any stage in food production

All animal products should at least meet the free-range standards, which means they have they have not been given hormones to speed their maturation, increase their milk production or fatten them up for the market. The indiscriminate use of antibiotics is also prohibited. Free range and organic standards also prohibit feeding animals their deceased relatives. In addition to meeting the standards for free-range certification, organic certification requires the animals are fed organic food.

With very few exceptions, every diet program recommends consuming abundant fresh vegetables. If the diet being evaluated limits these, it is seriously flawed. Trading a few pounds for constipation is idiotic. Currently the low carb craze is sweeping the nation. Just because you lose weight, however, doesn't mean it's a healthy diet.

Using the increasingly popular Atkins diet as example, apply the above standards and see how many it meets. The Atkins diet has people eating the worst quality animal products humans are allowed to consume. These include commercial bacon, sausage, and all kinds of processed meats full of nitrates, flavor enhancers, hormones and who knows what else. His own line of products routinely uses artificial flavors and sweeteners. None of it is organic.

The extreme restriction of carbohydrates will induce ketoacidosis and can also negatively impact thyroid function in susceptible individuals. This could be considerably stressful for some people.

Following these recommendations ensures the quality of food that you consume will be the best. They will do little, however, to help you decide what specific foods are right for you. In light of a dizzying and overwhelming number of choices how can one even begin to sort it out?

One of the more intelligent approaches has been that of Dr. Loren Cordain, Ph.D. He has written a book called the *Paleo Diet*. The premise of his work states what every zookeeper knows. For an animal not just to survive but to thrive, its diet needs to be, as

close as possible to, the one it ate in the wild. "Feeding a beefsteak to a horse makes as much sense as feeding hay to a lion." He conducted extensive research to arrive at what, for at least 100,000 years, were the most likely foods our Stone Age ancestors ate.

Part II

The Paleo Diet

Part I featured information intended to help you navigate the labyrinth of bewildering, and often contradictory, dietary and nutritional advice, so that you can find a diet that's right for you. With the evidence that the food pyramid was a failure literally sitting right in their laps, Americans are scrambling to find something to replace it.

Low carb is rapidly replacing low fat as the battle cry of those at war with the bulge. With so many people jumping on the Atkin's gravy train, with little knowledge of where it's really taking them, creating a nutritional navigation guide seemed appropriate.

Part I established some basic guidelines that every healthy diet should adhere to. These include eating unprocessed whole foods free of all synthetic additives, colors, flavors and preservatives. Fried foods and foods made with hydrogenated oils both contain mutant trans and fatty acids, which are toxic and best avoided. A cornucopia of fresh vegetables and a kaleidoscopic array of fresh fruits should be the foundation of every healthy diet. Create your diet out of organic foods whenever possible.

If you think all natural and organic food is expensive, the combined costs of its alternative are astronomical. Those cheap grapes might have cost a migrant worker, who was in the fields when the crops were dusted, their health or their life. The hidden costs of commercial food production will have to be paid by someone, either now or later. Is your health, your children's future and the environment worth risking as collateral to finance your groceries? In reality, organic food is a bargain.

The USDA's first two attempts at defining what constitutes a healthy diet failed for numerous reasons. That no single diet exists, which is appropriate for everyone, is one of them. The original four food groups also failed largely because nutrition wasn't even their primary function. Dominated by milk products and beef, the four food groups were simply the result of a successful lobbying campaign cattle ranchers and dairy farmers used to market their wares.

The food pyramid was constructed as reaction to a growing body of evidence, that the four food groups were ill conceived. Animal products and fat were blamed for the failure of the four food groups. With both protein and fat presumed guilty, the food pyramid made carbohydrate heavy grains its cornerstone. No matter how genuine an attempt it was, at creating the ideal diet, its purpose failed. The pyramid was flawed because the diet was based upon the information about what wasn't working, not upon any knowledge of what would.

The conclusion that animal products in general were unhealthy was erroneous and was the result of using domesticated, sedentary, overweight, medicated unhealthy animals. Now we've realized that feeding livestock lots of grains made them fat and unhealthy. Their native diet is a variety grasses not grains. They also need exercise, fresh air and sunlight.

Of course eating these unhealthy animals turned out to be unhealthy for us as well. We also figured out that a large number of people, just like the cattle, gain weight on a diet with lots of grains. Turns out grains were not a large part our native diet either.

If every other animal prospers when fed the foods evolution fine tuned them to eat, why would humans be any different? Discovering the diet we thrived on in the past seems like the best model from which to create a diet we can, at least, survive on in the present. Determining our native diet requires reading the prehistoric archeological records, not the history books, as well as studying the diets of indigenous cultures which have survived from the Paleolithic era into the present.

February's article introduced the work of Loren Cordain, Ph.D. who has done both. Dr. Cordain authored *The Paleo Diet* which summarizes his team's research and proposes a diet based on the results. Dr Cordain analyzed the diets of over 200 of the world's hunter-gatherer communities. To state the obvious, none of them were vegetarians. Wild game dominated the menu garnished with an enormous variety of fruits and vegetables.

After an extensive analysis, which is detailed in the book, he concluded their diet was one of the most varied and nutritious ones that humans have eaten. Coronary heart disease, cancer and diabetes were virtually nonexistent among our Stone-age ancestors. The farther we have strayed from our native diet the more degenerative disease has plagued us

At this point, like clockwork, someone will say "well of course they didn't get these diseases they all died before the age of 30". An average life span is just that an average. It is not the same as potential life span. High infant mortality is what frequently brings the average down. History is full of characters who lived at least as long as we do. Aren't we supposed to be healthier and live longer?

The Paleo Diet is full of information about the diet and how it compares to the Standard American Diet (SAD) of today. It is full of recipes and meal plans. It also has place to order wild game for anyone who's interested...

In a nutshell the basics are as follows

- High Protein
- Fewer Carbohydrates
- High Fiber from vegetables and fruit
- Moderate fat which was rich abundant in Omega 3s, 6s and 9s with some saturated fats.
- High Potassium Low Sodium
- More Alkaline than Acid Foods
- Abundant vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients which give fruits and vegetables their beautiful colors.

The ground rules are of his diet are more specific and are:

- All the lean meats, fish and seafood you feel like eating.
- All the fruits and non-starchy vegetables you can eat
- No cereals
- No legumes
- No dairy products
- No processed foods

Even though Dr. Cordain clearly states the diet of ancestors varied considerably across the globe his dietary rules don't really reflect it. One only needs to look at the Eskimos or the Pima Indians in Arizona to realize, given enough time, how incredibly well some humans have adapted to environments that are extreme. Our potential for adaptability is not the result of the last 10,000 years but instead the last 1,000,000.

This diet won't appeal to everyone nor does it need to. It would be ideal for those with diabetes or metabolic syndrome. (see Part III) It's far healthier than the Atkin's

Many people have adopted vegetarian and vegan diets for numerous reasons. All of them are valid. Presenting the Paleo plan is not intended to wholeheartedly endorse it but present it as an option. It is also one of the more logical foundations upon which to build your version of a healthy diet. The right diet will satiate you and must positively impact your health and wellbeing. It should also reflect your values. Many people may provide you with good dietary advice, but no one else can tell you how you feel. Ultimately, you must be the judge of what diet works for you.

Part III

Metabolic Syndrome

Although repeated studies have shown being only moderately overweight, not just obese, is associated with an increase in numerous medical problems many insurance companies have refused to cover any weight related treatments. Their reason for the denial; weight gain is not a medical problem and weight loss treatments are only for cosmetic reasons. When one specific cause of weight gain called metabolic syndrome was given a formal diagnosis code the medical profession finally acknowledged that even moderate weight gain increases ones risk of developing medical problems.

Metabolic syndrome replaces Syndrome X, reactive hypoglycemia, hyperinsulinemia and insulin resistance as the official name of this condition. Whatever it's been called, progressive practitioners have been identifying metabolic syndrome, and treating it successfully, for years.

Metabolic syndrome is the forerunner of type II diabetes, although many will never progress that far. Although type I and type II diabetes both cause high blood sugars, they are vastly different disorders. Type I diabetes is due to an insulin deficiency. Type II diabetes is the result cells failing to properly respond to insulin. The body responds by producing an ever increasing amount of insulin in order to regulate blood sugars. It is the repeated spikes in insulin, not glucose that cause the problem

Even with adequate exercise people with this condition will find it impossible to lose weight or feel good while consuming high carbohydrates, moderate protein and low fat. For these people this diet will often be a disaster. The excess of carbohydrates, especially refined ones like white sugar and white flour, will constantly throw them into insulin excess with its host of related problems

One clue that may indicate you might have Metabolic Syndrome is a waist to hip ratio greater than 1 for men and .8 for women. For example if your waist is 34 inches and your hips measure 30 your ratio will be 1.13. Another clue is an insatiable craving for carbohydrates, especially once you've started eating them. Although frequently associated with obesity, metabolic syndrome can occur in individuals who aren't considered overweight.

Metabolic syndrome is diagnosed when a patient is found to have an elevated insulin level either while fasting or at any interval during a Glucose Tolerance Test (GTT), which includes insulin. The values considered normal for a fasting insulin level range from 3 to 27. In my experience, an upper limit of 27 is much too generous. Recently, many nationalized standardized labs now use 17 as the upper limit. A metabolic syndrome diagnosis also requires a patient have high blood pressure, elevated fasting cholesterol and/or triglycerides and an inflammatory disorder like arthritis.

If you or your doctor suspects you might have metabolic syndrome or diabetes you should at least have both fasting insulin and glucose levels checked. Checking only blood sugars will fail to identify patients with metabolic syndrome until they're on the verge of diabetes. A 2-hour GTT with insulin levels is definitive for ruling out or diagnosing either metabolic syndrome or diabetes. Any one with a fasting insulin level over 12 and/or a fasting glucose level over 95 should have this test performed.

Caught early metabolic syndrome is one of the most treatable disorders that there is. It really isn't even a metabolic disorder at all, it's a dietary disorder. If you discovered your car was having problems, because you were using premium unleaded when in fact it needed diesel, would you still try to fix the car or simply change the fuel?

Written by Todd A Mangum,MD-- Web of Life Wellness Center A1 , SLC UT 84105