



## High Performance Foods That Make You Live Life to the Full

By Dr Peter Holsman

### Introduction:

There is no such thing as a diet suitable for everyone. What follows are some useful generalisations which you can test out for yourself with the help of a food and symptom diary. The current epidemic of obesity is a clear indication that many people have poor food choices.

### WHY OBESITY IS A GROWING EPIDEMIC

Developing a “middle aged spread” used to be the way that many people thought about being overweight. It was simply something that happened as people slowed down and got older. A few grey hairs and thinning scalp hair completed the picture of contentment in middle age. We now know that obesity is a major health risk accounting for more an estimated 7% of Australia’s health burden, second only to smoking at 12 %.

Times have changed and the number of people who are overweight or obese is escalating. Changes are evident in infants and obesity is now a common problem in children with 30 % being classified as overweight or obese.

The average waist circumference of American adults has increased by 5 cm in the last decade. Newly planned Boeing aircraft need larger seats, as do restaurants, cars and trains. At least 5% of U.S. adults have a BMI of more than 40.

Almost three million Australians are obese with a BMI of more than 30. The number of obese Australians has doubled in the last 25 years. Research estimates that half of Australian children will be obese in the year 2035.

### ***Some reasons why you would want to avoid obesity like the plague include:***

- Heart disease, liver disease (fatty liver), diabetes, arthritis, depression, dementia

- Wanting to get out of bed easily in the mornings
- Earn more money. The U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research in 2005 showed that obese workers earn significantly less per hour. The gap in pay starts out modestly when people are young, but widens over time. Money is a powerful influence for most of us. I suggest that you use this motivation for positive changes.

### ***How do you know if you are overweight or obese?***

Start by measuring yourself. There are two easy techniques:

**Body Mass Index** is a measure of body fat based on weight and height that applies to both adult men and women. It is calculated from the ratio of weight squared (multiplied by itself) divided by height.

BMI categories:

Underweight = < 18.5

Normal weight= 18.5 – 24.9

Overweight= 25 – 29.9

Obesity = BMI of 30 or greater.

### **Waist to hip ratio**

This measurement has been shown to be better than BMI at predicting how obesity relates to heart attack risk. A recent study (Lancet 2005; 366: 1640 – 49) showed that BMI substantially underestimated the grave consequences of obesity and risk of heart attacks.

People in the top 25% of the range are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack as those in the lowest quarter, even after adjustment for age, sex (men are at greater risk) and smoking.

Waist measurement alone can also be used to predict obesity related disease and mortality. Obesity has been defined as more than 102 cm in men and 88 cm in women, and overweight as greater than 94 cm in men and 80 cm in women. Accurate and consistent measurement is crucial. Put your index finger at the top of your hip and your thumb at the bottom of your ribs. Then take the tape and measure in the centre of those points while breathing out.

So have a look at yourself in a mirror and if you see that your belly is hanging over your waist line, then it is definitely time to take preventive action.

### **SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF A STAGNANT STOMACH:**

If you want more energy in your life, or you like the thought of blowing out 100 candles on your centenary Birthday Cake, you need to check out the health of your gut.

The first principle starts with checking out the symptoms of your digestive system.

Is it healthy and working well or in trouble?

Ask yourself if you have any of these symptoms of digestive problems: Indigestion, heartburn, nausea, reflux, feeling full or bloated, diarrhoea and constipation?

Severe or frequent symptoms are a warning that your digestive system is not working well. A poorly functioning stomach cannot absorb nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals well. It also means that toxins build up, resulting in increased tiredness and poor concentration.

A lot can be learnt from simply looking at the different shapes.

You can see how tummy shapes influence a person's posture.

A person carrying a big belly in front of them always has a bad posture and is prone to recurrent back pain. Treatment with physiotherapy, chiropractic or osteopathy will generally give only temporary relief as a large belly will again drag the spine out of shape.

Those of you with an interest in bloating can be intrigued by the way gas from fermentation rises, causing bloating to be largely above the belly button.

Whereas constipation or incomplete bowel actions causes the swelling to be lower down, below the belly button.

### **Check out your eating patterns and habits:**

Food and symptoms diaries are a wonderful way to bring patterns and habits to conscious awareness.

Read the following sample from the food diary of a young lady who felt tired and bloated ask yourself how her food choices affected her energy and digestion.

DAY ONE:

Breakfast: toast and vegemite, glass of milk, cup of coffee.

Lunch: Chicken and salad roll, coffee and a glass of water.

Dinner: Nil as she felt too tired and bloated.

When asked about morning and afternoon tea, she replied that she was too busy and did not have time.

Usually people skip breakfast rather than dinner – perhaps you are familiar with this pattern.

Let's look at day two.  
Is it any better?

DAY TWO:

Breakfast: Apple, Coffee

Lunch: Chicken and salad roll, water, coffee

Dinner: Pasta, wine, diet coke

Supper: four glasses of wine

*People who are serious about living to 100 generally need to fine-tune their diet so that it includes a well-balanced supply of the following:*

Carbohydrates (starches) for energy.

Protein to build and repair body tissue.

Essential fatty acids (good fats) for healthy nerves, skin, immune system, hormones and brain.

Vitamins that work as anti oxidants and support the immune system.

Minerals and other nutrients that are critical for many body functions.

Filtered water for hydration , cellular function and detoxification.

**The ground rules for high performance eating are simple:**

**The first part is:**

How to Eat:

Relax , slow down and chew your food well.

*(And to help you become an expert at this, I will now tell you a secret technique taught to rich and famous Europeans at an upmarket spa resort detoxification program. The technique is of chewing on a stale 3 day old bread roll. . One mouthful at a time. And when it is turned into a smooth paste, the patient adds a teaspoon of milk to the paste and mixes it thoroughly. This is the only food they have all day. They do however have plenty of mineral water and herbal teas to drink. )*

Be aware of hunger versus non hunger eating and the influence of emotions.

*(The food and symptom diary is great help.)*

Have most of your starches, such as bread, rice, potato, pasta and sweet corn before 3 pm when you are wide awake and can use the energy best. Starches late at night are much harder for your body to digest.

**Now that you know how to eat, you need to know:**

What to Eat:

The current Australian Guidelines advise each of us to include 5 servings of vegetables, two servings of fresh fruit and an emphasis on whole grain cereals and grains.

People with symptoms of an unhealthy digestion, such as bloating, wind and gas ... will generally do better with steamed; stir fried or baked vegetables rather than salads or raw vegetables that have relatively tough fibre.

Fresh fruit is high in water and nutrients and is most easily digested as a snack on an empty stomach.

Good quality sources of protein include fish, free range eggs and chicken and lean red meat. Ideally the meat is cooked on a grill or BBQ so that the fat, which contains the majority of chemicals, is discarded. Some packaged red meat contains red colouring , so if in doubt , wash it in cold water for five minutes before cooking as this will help remove the red colouring.

Breakfast is often said, and rightly so, to be the most important meal of the day. Have some wholegrain cereal or toast, porridge, free range eggs or a protein shake so that you have plenty of energy that will keep you going until morning tea or lunch time. Some people do well with fruit for breakfast, however many people find that fresh fruit alone gives a temporary energy boost that wears off in about one hour.

A snack such as a sandwich, well chewed seeds or nuts, natural yoghurt or some fruit are great for morning and afternoon tea. This will add to your energy and prevent fatigue due to low sugar levels.

Lunch will ideally be some sandwiches or leftovers from the previous evening's meal. Include some protein such as fish, eggs or meat as they generally increase stamina and helps regulate your blood sugar levels.

Dinner , especially if it is late in the evening will ideally include fish , free range chicken or lean red meat , and steamed or stir fried vegetables as this is easy to digest. Go easy on the starches at night, because potato, pasta, sweet corn and rice are relatively hard to digest at night. Have them in the day time when you are wide awake and need the energy.

This dinner advice is also helpful when eating out at friends or restaurants. Why create gas, bloating or fatigue when you have a choice?

#### WATER:

In terms of liquid refreshments, water is the most important. Water is essential for life, and without it we'd die of dehydration within a few days. Approximately two thirds of your body weight is due to water.

It has been estimated that 65 % of the population are dehydrated. This leads to foggy and unclear thinking, fatigue, headaches, constipation and bladder infections. Drink pure water regularly during the day and see how much better you function when you are well hydrated.

Many people are happy with the quality and taste of tap water, but what does tap water contain and is it ideal? Most of us take water for granted. We use it for drinking, cooking, washing, swimming, gardening and putting out fires. We also use it for flushing toilets and dumping rubbish. Man made toxins such as pesticides, fertilisers and industrial waste residues end up in our water supplies. Water authorities then add up to 50 different chemicals to disinfect and treat water supplies.

Chlorine has been used to disinfect public water supplies since 1904 when Sir Alexander Houston discovered that chlorine destroyed typhoid bacteria. However chlorine has other properties that should cause concern. Think about the effects of chlorine containing household bleaches and ask if you really feel safe drinking it. Chloroform is a by product of the reaction of chlorine and organic matter in water. Chloroform was once used as an anaesthetic but was banned when shown to cause liver and kidney cancer. Your gut contains 70 % of the lymph glands in your body and as such is a vital part of your immune system. It also has a delicate balance of many different micro organisms. Why add an extra chemical load?

Fluoride is controversial. Dentists claim that fluoridation of public drinking water is their biggest success. The anti fluoride campaigners claim it is dangerous and promote a ten year study from 1977 to 1987 , showing that the rate of tooth decay in Brisbane , which does not have fluoride in tap water, equalled that of some fluoridated capital cities and was less than that of Melbourne. . Fluoride has been proven to disrupt enzymes. For example, the tube used to collect your blood test for sugar diabetes contains fluoride to stop your cells using up the sugar before the sample gets analysed in the laboratory. Enzymes are vital for all functions, including proteins, connective tissue, and bones. The side effects of fluoride are generally dose related. In my opinion , until the controversy is resolved , it may be reasonable to focus on healthy food choices and use a toothpaste with fluoride as topical fluoride can act locally on the teeth and has been shown to kill the bacteria in the mouth that cause tooth decay.

Global consumption of bottled water increased by more than 57 % to 155 billion litres in 2004. The environmental impact of this is enormous. Bottled water takes more fossil fuels to transport than tap water, and it also takes 1.5 million barrels of oil each year to make the plastics. This amount of fuel could power 100,000 cars for one year. In addition these bottles can take up to 1000 years to biodegrade.

Your best choice is to buy a water filter that is plugged onto a tap, either as a portable bench top unit or installed under the kitchen sink. The cartridge is usually a carbon or carbon – resin device that is changed every four to six months depending on usage and water quality. Mains water pressure is needed to adequately flush your water of impurities.

Your drinking water is best stored in glass but this may not be practicable due to weight or risk of breaking. Second best is generally a thick, firm coloured plastic bottle that is relatively inert. The thin plastic bottles leach plastics, especially on a warm day, into your water. One of the consequences is chemicals that behave as hormone disruptors, so add health reasons to the environmental ones for minimising their use.

Tea and coffee are fine in moderation. One cup in the morning helps many people kick start their day. They do not help with dehydration and are not a substitute for water.

Herbal teas are a popular option with many people. Green tea has been used as a medicine in China for over 4000 years. Research shows that it has lots of beneficial anti oxidants that may help improve cholesterol levels, arthritis and immune function. Green tea leaves are steamed, whereas black and oolong tea leaves are fermented. Steaming preserves the protective ingredients which is why green tea has the medicinal properties.

Alcohol.... Is not compulsory, but it certainly makes the lives of many people more pleasant. Red wine in particular contains some potent health promoting anti oxidants, one of which is resveratrol. Sweet white wines and champagne have zapped the energy of a number of my patients, perhaps because the sugar content plays havoc with their blood sugar and insulin levels. So if you wake up groggy the next day, it is probably an indication that they do not suit you, or that you over indulged. Spirits, depending on what you mix them with, do not have sugar or preservatives and are an option for many people.

Ten percent of Australians never drink alcohol and another ten percent drink every day of the week. Australians drink an average 7.3 litres of alcohol every year. The National Health and Medical Research Council recommend a maximum daily intake of two drinks for women and four drinks for men as a long term guide. A standard drink is defined as a 30 ml nip of a spirit, a 100 ml glass of wine or champagne, or a middy of beer. In practice, one to two glasses a day of alcohol are fine with most people and alcohol free days are strongly advised.

### **Seven Slimming Secrets**

*Weight loss , specifically fat loss , has been shown to lead to improved energy , physical mobility ,general mood , self confidence and physical health. Here are some tips that will help you succeed. Expect some plateaus in progress as your body adjusts before the next improvement.*

Think about how hungry you are before you start eating. Are you starving, hungry, full or overfull?

Ask your self how your stomach and energy level will feel two hours after the food in front of you.

Use small plates. It is a lot harder to overfill a small plate. If you do go back for more, then it is a conscious decision to eat more, rather than just a habit. Take time to relax to enjoy your food. Eat less if you are upset or tired.

Reduce guilt. People often tell me that they ate a whole packet of chocolate biscuits but did not enjoy or really even taste them. An occasional small quantity of sweets or cake (energy dense food) can be eaten slowly and enjoyed. This is preferable to guiltily gulping down large quantities, much of which will not even be tasted.

Eat breakfast. Starting the day with breakfast gives you plenty of energy for the day ahead, steadies blood sugar levels and switches on your metabolism. Skipping breakfast gives your brain the message that you are “starving” and therefore blocks fat loss.

You have probably heard at least a million times that combining diet and exercise is the best way to lose weight. It's true. Include a minimum of four brisk half hourly walks in your weekly timetable. Ideally you will do best with one hour of medium intensity exercise , such as brisk walking , every day. People who simply eat less without exercising end up with smaller flabbier muscles and a smaller coffin!

Be impressed by better energy and a looser waistline, rather than concentrating on your weight alone. Healthy muscles , good posture and a well toned body composition are your aim.

Be consistent. Dieting consistency appears to be a behavioural strategy that predicts long term weight loss maintenance. People who follow an eating plan consistently are 50 % more successful than those who eat in fits and starts. It seems that making exceptions (excuses) does sets up future failure.

### **How to Enjoy Consistent Energy Throughout the day. - The “Glycaemic index”.**

Will you settle for a quick fix with rebound exhaustion or do you want consistent energy ? The answer is determined by what sort of foods you choose and how much they are refined , cooked or processed. The quality and amount of carbohydrates that you eat will influence the your blood sugar and insulin levels.

The Glycaemic Index (GI) describes the ability of carbohydrate in food to raise blood sugar levels.

Glucose is the standard and has a GI of 100

High GI foods have an index over 70 and include :

White rice	86	Rice Bubbles	87
Dried dates	103	Watermelon	72
Baked potato	85	Boiled potato	101

Low GI foods have an index of less than 55 and include:

Raw cherries	22	Chick peas	28
Dried peas	22	Lentils	29
Cashews	22	Oranges	33

The Glycaemic Index compares equal quantities of available carbohydrate in different foods and how quickly and for how long they affect your blood sugar levels.

The glycaemic load is a function of a food's glycaemic index and its total available carbohydrate content.

For example , an apple will give a gradual release of glucose, whereas drinking the juice of three apples minus fibre , is likely to give you a quick energy fix that is followed by a drop in blood sugar levels with feelings of tiredness , poor concentration and headache.

An apple has a GI of 38% and contains an average of 15 gram of carbohydrate.

The GL of a typical apple is  $0.38 * 15$  equals 6

Higher levels of glycaemic load typically cause increased elevations in blood sugar levels.

Use low Glycaemic Index (GI) foods to help balance your Insulin and Blood Sugar Levels.

The glycaemic response of the whole meal is what counts. In practise , a mixture of foods will usually reduce the Glycaemic Load versus a single food.

Breakfast examples :

A mixture of rice flakes , puffed millet , rice , barley , amaranth

Or make porridge using oats , rice, millet , ..

Lunch examples:

Fish , lean meats , chicken , free range eggs (0)

Sushi (48) , stuffed vine leaves (30)

Thai noodles with vegetables ( 40)

Pasta marinara (40)

A very low GI dinner might include:

Beans , lamb , rice , olive oil and stringy vegetables.  
Adding a low GI food such as beans to the rice effectively lowers the glycaemic effect of the rice. In addition , protein and fat delay stomach emptying , thus helping to “smooth out” the increase in blood sugar levels.

Salads and vegetables with little carbohydrate that can be eaten freely include:  
Carrots , Broccoli , Tomato , Peas , Onions and Salad vegetables.

Snacks :

All snacks must have a low GI as carbohydrates eaten alone have a stronger effect on raising blood sugar levels.

What this means in practice is that foods with a low glycaemic load will improve satiety and weight management , while reducing cardiovascular risk. This is essential information for anyone who has , or wants to prevent diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The simplest way to regularly consume a moderate carbohydrate and low GI diet is to follow the Australian dietary Guidelines and choose the lowest GI foods within a food group.

**You now know the clues and appearances of a healthy long lasting digestive system.**

**The ground rules of How to Eat .. and... What to Eat .. are easily followed.**

**A Diet diary for the next 4 days is the best way to fine tune your digestive health, boost your energy levels and add years of quality to your life.**

**May your next dinner party gathering be memorable for healthy and delightful conversations!**

Clever Quotes :

A high fish intake lowers your risk of coronary heart disease and sudden death. The risk is 40% lower in people eating at least 180g of fish daily versus those eating fish once a week. (Circulation 2006;113:195-202)

Halving the risk of chronic kidney disease can be achieved by drinking three litres of water a day .

“Alcohol : the cause and solution to all life’s problems” (Homer Simpson)

Wondering about a career change?

Weight loss surgery is the fastest growing area of surgical practice in Australia.

Dr Peter Holsman is an accomplished medical practitioner and enthralling public speaker who enjoys helping people stay young and energetic. His entertaining and actionpacked presentations are for every one who wants to get the most out of life and for organisations that want to put life back into their people. For more information visit [www.liveto100.com.au](http://www.liveto100.com.au) or phone Your Health Camberwell on 03 9882 5151.