

## Meat and eat with Professor Tim Noakes

Heather Dugmore chews the fat with Professor Tim Noakes, Head of the Exercise Science and Sports Medicine Research Unit at the University of Cape Town.



Heather Dugmore and Border Collie, Blue, on the farm

**F**armers can keep on eating meat but they need to drop the rice and potatoes. That's the word from Professor Tim Noakes who believes that it is not proteins and fats but rather carbohydrates and sugars that are the culprits of ill health and obesity.

The last time I saw Professor Tim Noakes he was tucking into a large pile of lamb at a farmers meeting in the Cape. He'd been invited to talk about rugby, which is rather unusual for him these days when the media is full of articles, conversations, debates and controversy about Tim's 'high-fat, low-carbohydrate, no-hunger eating plan'.

By completely avoiding all sugars, limiting his carbohydrate intake to leafy vegetables (such as spinach and broccoli) and tucking into healthy fats and proteins, he lost 15 kilograms in three months and has never felt better, fitter or stronger in his 63 years.

This has triggered a furor in the medical profession – with some members of the profession condemning Tim's eating plan as dangerous, while others, including several professors of medicine who are on the eating plan, wholeheartedly support his approach.

"I knew it would cause controversy but when I realised I had been wrong about carbs for all these years, I had to speak out," said Tim who only spoke out once he had done an immense amount of research on the subject, as well as testing his findings on himself.

"Two years ago, before I started this eating plan I was getting exhausted running up hills that I could once handle with ease. Plus I kept gaining weight even though I run every day and ate pretty healthily (or so I thought). I was convinced it was middle age spread when it was actually sugar-carbohydrate-wheat-beer spread," said Tim.

On top of all this he was worried about the genetic factor because his father developed diabetes when he was Tim's age, and subsequently had several strokes and lost both of his legs.

"I now recognise that I had been experiencing diabetic symptoms for the past five to ten years. The symptoms included mood swings (I'd have outbursts, which isn't me, I'm a mellow character) and I had this constant fog in my head and couldn't think straight. I now realise the fog was real – it was glucose in the brain, which is directly related to carbs in the diet that cause a foggy effect. In its extreme form this can lead to Alzheimer's, which is, in effect, diabetes of the brain."

Today, he is clear-headed and the portrait of good health at 85.5kgs with a body mass index of 24. "I'm happy to stand next to all those medical people who say this eating plan is wrong and dangerous, and for all of us to take off our shirts and see who is looking well and who is not," challenged Tim who is regularly spotted running 'topless' in the streets of Cape Town.

"I love running without a shirt and now I can. At first I did it in the dark but now I do it in broad daylight and I'm happy to report that I've almost got a six-pack again," he laughed. "I'm running well, eating well and sleeping well. I also no longer have rhinitis and allergic bronchitis – I was having a major attack every three months. It got so bad I was treating it with steroids. Two years later I haven't had a day's illness."

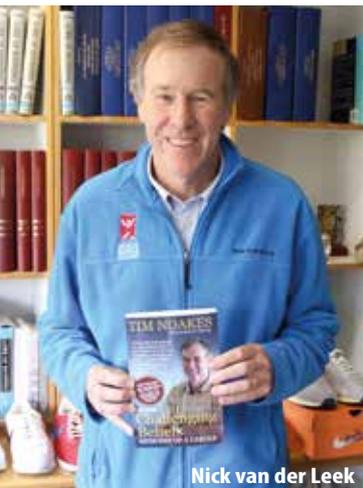
He has also stopped snoring, much to his wife's delight, and his heartburn and irritable bowel syndrome disappeared within a month of starting the eating plan. "Snoring is associated with excessive fat accumulation in the throat," he explained. "Together with heartburn and irritable bowel syndrome they are all due to something in your diet that doesn't agree with you: sugars and carbohydrates."

But is it possible that simply by cutting out sugars and carbohydrates and changing to healthy fats, proteins and leafy vegetables we can prevent diabetes, lose weight and live healthier, longer lives?

"If you are overweight the chances are high that you are carbohydrate intolerant, which means you cannot metabolise carbs properly, hence your body turns them into fat. If you are overweight the chances are equally high that you are addicted to carbs, and the more carbs you eat the fatter you will become, especially as you grow older. The fatter you are, the more prone to diseases like diabetes you become," he replied.

So what exactly are 'healthy' fats?

"The fats in mutton and lamb straight from the veld onto your plate are healthy fats," he explains. "Veld-raised mutton, lamb and any form of veld-raised or natural, organic meat is perfect because it has a high ratio of Omega 3 fatty acids to Omega 6s," said Tim. "As we know, much of our meat comes from feedlots, and this changes the Omega ratios, where you are not getting sufficient Omega 3s, which are healthy fats."



Prof Tim Noakes with his book "Challenging beliefs"



Naturally produced Mutton/lamb and olive oil are healthy fats

To make sure you are getting enough Omega 3's every day, he recommends an intake of 2-3 tablespoons of flaxseed or olive oil a day and four salmon oil capsules – be sure to purchase the best brands. Avocado, almond and macadamia nuts are also full of good fats. Alternatively, there is a meal replacement drink called Lipidsana ([www.lipidsana.co.za](http://www.lipidsana.co.za)) that is high in Omega 3s.

"Full cream milk, yoghurt, cheese are also nice and high in fats, but try to get the home-made or organic variety. The same goes for eggs or meat – free-range is always best," he advised.

But what about cholesterol? Won't this eating plan lead to high cholesterol levels and the risk of cardiovascular disease?

"My cholesterol is nice and high," said Tim. "We hear words like cholesterol and we have been programmed to think that high cholesterol is unhealthy because we don't know there are different kinds of cholesterol. High HDL cholesterol, which is what I have, is healthy, particularly as we get older.

"The medical profession perpetuates these myths and instead of getting to the source of the problem, doctors prescribe a whole lot of pills. Recently a doctor in Caledon wrote to me and said he weighed 120kg four months ago, he had high blood pressure, gout, diabetes, atrial fibrillation, sleep apnoea and high cholesterol - and he was on medication for all of them. After hearing me speak he decided he was carbohydrate intolerant and started on my eating plan. Four months later he is 20kg lighter and off all medication. For him it's a miracle," recounted Tim, adding that not everyone will lose weight as quickly and easily as he did or the doctor in Caledon did, but they will definitely lose weight and become so much healthier if they stick to the eating plan.

By this time Tim was tucking into his second plate of lamb, sprinkling on salt and pepper. "But what about that," I pointed to the salt and pepper. "Isn't it bad for you?"

"A bit of salt and pepper is fine because once you cut your carbs your blood pressure normalises."

Beer, however, which many farmers love, is a no-no for Tim. "I used to drink quite a bit of beer and that puts on weight instantly for me because it's a highly refined carb and it has maltose," he explained. "Now that I am at my correct weight, I can have a glass of wine every now and then, but I make sure I stick to 50 grams of carbs a day maximum. I get these 50 grams from the salad or vegetables I eat and I might have the odd piece of Ryvita. Some people can maintain their weight on 200 grams of carbs a day, but I can't. The more overweight you are the more you need to reduce your carbs."

"And what of all that lamb? Forgive the question, but do you eat that much every day, including the fat?" I asked. "I don't restrict my meat or fish portions at all and I think it's fine to eat this fat," he replied. "But if I eat a lot of meat (and fat), like I'm eating tonight, I probably won't eat again for 24 hours. But as soon as I get hungry I'll eat," he smiled. "That's why it's called the no-hunger eating plan. The fridge is there, just make sure you are eating the right stuff."



Lamb

Come dessert time the table was laden with the most delicious array of treats. "Now *there's* a killer," smiled Tim who is having a major public debate about killer foods this month (December). "The debate will be part of the 100 year celebrations of the University of Cape Town's Medical School," he explained. "They are flying out an epidemiologist from the United States to oppose me. The goal is to shut me up, but I am confident about what I am saying, and we need to get the message across to all South Africans, rich and poor," said Tim, emphasising that the high fat, high protein diet is not just for the rich.

"We need to make cheap protein and fat available to everyone to improve the population's health. We need to get the bone marrow, brains, liver, kidneys; eggs and full cream milk into poor communities and we need to *get rid of the sugar, fizzy drinks, chips and white bread, because that is what is killing people*, rich and poor," said Tim.

"If I look around this room, for example, I can tell you exactly who is carbohydrate intolerant, and there are quite a few. When I look at the politicians, I can tell you the same and Mr Malema is one of them. So I have this in common with him, but the difference is that I know it and he doesn't," laughed Tim as he poured cream into his coffee at the end of the evening, but put his hand up when someone passed him the sugar.

### Checklist Q&A with Tim:

#### Q: What are the main foods to avoid?

A: Sugar (Must be completely removed from your diet)

- All sugary drinks including cola drinks and sweetened fruit juices
- Bread
- Rice
- Pasta
- Potatoes
- Porridge
- Breakfast cereals
- Some high energy fruits like bananas
- All confectionary – cakes and sweets
- Desserts
- Artificial sweeteners and products containing these products (like "diet" colas)

You should also be very wary of so-called 'low fat' options, flavoured yoghurt especially, as many are laden with sugar and are therefore less healthy than the full fat options. In fact you need to check all the foods that you eat. You will be astonished at the number of foods that contain hidden sugar.

#### Q: Is exercise important in this eating plan?

A: Exercise is very important for health in general, but the idea that you can continue eating incorrectly and exercise it off is totally fallacious. Proper nutrition is essential; exercise will help you feel better.

#### Q: What about calories?

A: Stop counting calories and stop looking at the fat or energy content. The calories-in-calories-out theory is a fallacy. There is a high percentage of calories in healthy fats, but these are not the calories that make us fat. It's the carbohydrate calories that make us fat. Check packaging for its carbohydrates and keep these to a minimum – under 50 grams a day.

#### Q: Is your eating plan not very similar to the Atkins diet?

A: It is and Doctor Atkins was spot on but no one wanted to hear what he was saying because the low fat diet and all the associated products was being punted worldwide.

#### Q: What do you snack on?

A: Biltong, cheese, macadamia nuts, almonds – as much as I feel like.

#### Q: Do you prefer butter or margarine?

A: I totally avoid margarine. Butter is wonderful, but try to get homemade or organic butter made from raw milk because as soon as you pasteurise milk you kill off half the value.

#### Q: Which cooking oil do you recommend?

A: Olive oil or coconut oil. The cheap vegetable oils are to be avoided.

#### Q: How did you stop eating sugar?

A: It took me fourteen months to stop eating sugar - I was addicted. Now I can look at sugar and sweets and wonder why I ever wanted to put that rubbish into my body.

#### Q: You've been inundated with enquiries from people. How do you manage to respond to them all?

A: I've responded to everyone who has contacted me, and to make the research more widely available my wife and I are developing a website and starting a research foundation. I will also be bringing out a book at the end of 2013.

#### Q: Where can we read more about your research to date?

A: Look up the Tim Noakes diet or the Tim Noakes study and the 'paleo low carb diet' on the Internet.



Nick van der Leek

"I'm running well, eating well and sleeping well."

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