



The Nutrition Fix

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Have you ever wondered what exactly is in the foods you're consuming? Or perhaps thought about how much you would need each day to keep energy levels constant? How about the amount of energy you burn doing your daily tasks (which I hope consists of

slightly more than stopping your living room couch from hitting the ceiling)? Well, these questions form a part of my profession. And I strive to answer these types of questions as efficiently as possible and in the easiest possible way to understand.

Now while I may not be a qualified nutritionist/dietician (I don't even know the difference between those two), I can confidently tell you that I am well versed on the topic. Hell man - I gotta have at least *some* know-how with regards to what my clients are stuffing their faces with everyday, if I should have *any* hope of getting them to reach their goals! So while training methods are my real area of expertise, nutrition is a very close second to that!

I am a personal trainer currently based in Port Elizabeth. The essence of what I do is to get people into good shape. So my priorities, along with correct nutrition habits, are first and foremost keeping strictly up to date with the best training and exercise methods possible for fat loss, getting fit, getting strong, building muscle... you get the idea. However, this article will focus mostly on a subject that is all too often overlooked when it comes to getting in great shape. Yep you guessed it! Our diet.

Let's just call it our nutrition, because dieting implies something rigid and strict and not fun and boring. Okay! Let's consider nutrition. A well known nutritionist and trainer from the USA named Mike Geary, has often suggested that nutrition is the single most important subject we should be teaching our kids in schools. While poverty and a lack of food are increasing concerns in many parts of South Africa, one must consider that obesity is also a very serious problem we need to be addressing! In May this year, The Star news claimed that over 60% of adults in South Africa are obese. That's more than half the adult population! You know, I can't agree more with Mike's assertion. While kids are learning basic Science, Maths and Geography in schools, we are completely neglecting a possibly far more important matter in healthy and correct nutrition habits! Don't get me wrong, basic education is essential for all our young people in this lovely country, and I'm sure we all know how far *that's* lagging behind in some areas. I'm just saying that I think we need to pay more attention as children **and** adults to what kind of foods we're consuming.

Allow me to school you then in a bit of nutrition 101 shall I? I figured you have read this far, may as well bore you with some more info! Okay, so what are macronutrients hmmm? Well, *when it comes to nutrition, food is broken into three basic parts known as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. These are called macronutrients, and they are in the food you're eating which is broken down into energy known as calories. I'll briefly address each of the macronutrients in order to help us understand what they're all about.*

Carbohydrates

Let's start here as this is usually the central aspect of a fat-loss diet. And if it's okay with you I'm going to focus more towards weight loss than weight gain as that is where everyone else's focus is too (if your goal is to gain weight, simply eat **a lot**. If you wish to gain mostly **muscle** and not fat then eat **a lot** but still **healthily**. But that's a topic for another day. End of story.)

So the reason I say carbohydrates (carbs) are the main focus is, simply, because chances are close to 100% that if you're a little overweight or out of shape, it's thanks to our high-carb foods (not to worry, the better we understand what we're dealing with, the more well-equipped we are to fuel our weight loss efforts!)

You see, carbs can be broken down into two basic parts: Simple carbs, and complex carbs. The third type of carbs which I'll omit from this discussion is fibrous carbs, which are things like green veggies, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers and so on. They are healthy and do not pack on the calories. So you can generally eat as much veggies and salads as you like. Anyway, so simple carbs are the things that most of us enjoy most, like all the fun things in life. Examples of simple carbs are any sugars, soda, syrup, sweets, cookies, chocolates What someone like me would usually refer to as "bad carbs".

Then we have complex carbs. These take a bit longer for your body to turn into energy. Examples of complex carbs are oats, bread, apple and pasta.

The type of carbs do not matter so much as the rate at which your body can turn them into fuel or energy. When you're exercising hard, you require carbs in order to get the job done. In this case simple carbs are a good option shortly before exercise. You are likely to use these carbs for fuel instead of storing them in the fat cells. Ever heard of the GI content of food? Well this stands for Glycemic Index, and it is a basic measurement indication for *how fast* the particular carbs will spike your blood sugar. e.g. a red bull would have a very high GI which will make you feel all happy and silly and energetic very quickly, followed by a crashing sleepy and lazy feeling.

Professor Tim Noakes claims that carbs are the main culprit involved in obesity and overweight people, and therefore has been following a close-to no-carb diet plan ever since. While I agree 90%, much of my own research has suggested that *some* carbs are still necessary in your diet, in order to give your body enough fuel to function sufficiently (look at me, lowly PE trainer disagreeing 10% with *grootkop* Prof. Noakes!) The thing is, our bodies are inherently lazy, meaning we naturally look for ways of storing and preserving energy as much as possible. So in this case, depleting your body of its preferred fuel source - carbohydrates, you generally create a need to look for energy elsewhere thereby forcing your body to dip into fat stores (ta-daa!). The reason I say you still need carbs, is because a low-carb diet is not effective for a long period of time. Your inherently-lazy body quickly figures out what you're doing, and immediately starts to sloooooow your metabolism down to a crawl, in order to preserve energy and

survive! So now what, Einstein? Well according to Nick Nilsson, famous fitness pro aka "the mad scientist" of muscle, strength and fat loss, we need a strategic overfeed day in order to put our bodies back into fat burning mode - also known as a 'cheat day'. This involves eating just one high-carb, high fat meal, such as Pizza, for example! Which effectively resets your metabolism and sets you up for another 1-2 weeks healthy eating!

But I'm getting ahead of myself, that was just some fun info. Let's move onto the next macronutrient.

Protein

In many ways this is most important for your body. Protein is used for repairing muscle, bone, skin, teeth and hair amongst others. Famous fitness guy John Romaniello says "Think of protein as the mortar between the bricks. Without it, the entire structure of your body begins to break down."

Proteins also help your body to create hormones which function to regulate blood pressure and blood sugar levels, which are in direct correlation with your metabolic rate and growth of muscle. This would explain how Noakes' blood pressure and cholesterol levels regulated themselves - because of his high protein diet. Oh by the way, I'm sure you have all heard the word **metabolism** before. Well if you're not completely sure what it means, here you go (I'm glad you asked); metabolism is the rate at which your body turns food into energy to be used in daily activity and exercise. So obviously a high metabolism is very favourable! You can increase your metabolism by doing moderate to intense exercise for just 30 minutes per day!

And as you can see, protein is also very important in order to make your body function properly and healthily. Some of the best sources of protein include...

Eggs - Just one large egg packs in a good 6 grams of complete protein. Also note for most of you farmers out there, that the *most* nutrition comes from the yolk (yellow part). Contrary to some beliefs, the egg yolk is not an unhealthy fat - the more yellow it is, the more nutrients and vitamins it contains! The most healthy, nutritious eggs you can get are from free-range chickens on your farms. Meaning don't keep your poor chickens locked up and grain-fed all day, let them roam freely in a large pen or veld and graze off seeds and things they'll find naturally in the environment!



Eggs

Fish - An excellent source of complete protein. Any type of fish contains protein and healthy fat, but once again wild fish is far better than farmed fish kept in pens. The healthy omega 3 to omega 6 fat ratio is just a lot higher. So when I say the farmers can benefit the most from healthy eating, I really mean it! You guys have access to all the best food in its healthiest form (if you choose to do so).

Poultry - Chicken, turkey etc. Good for you.

Red Meat - My personal favourite! *Red meat really gets a bad rap and is said to have bad effects on cholesterol etc. But this could not be further from the truth.* Animals need to be in their most natural easy-going environment like Karoo veld, in order to produce the best quality meat. In other words, cows, sheep, springbuck etc. on natural grazing, will give you your best quality proteins (and fats). So be sure to keep your livestock in a stress-free, harmonious living environment to feed off veld bushes and grass, **not** grains and compressed unnatural foods.



Lamb shank - delicious and excellent source of complete protein.

Dairy - Fresh milk from natural grazing fed cows is **the** healthiest (and most yummy) milk that you can get anywhere! Just one glass of full cream milk contains about 8 grams of protein. Here's something else you probably didn't know about milk: Fresh farm milk straight from your naturally fed cows, is **far** healthier than low-fat or pasteurised milk you get off the shelves! In the well known nutrition book "Fat Burning Kitchen" by Mike Geary and Catherine Ebeling, they say "When milk is pasteurised, the



Dairy and red meat are healthy proteins

protein molecules are heated and they actually change shape, making them much harder for our bodies to break down and digest. This then puts unnecessary strain on our digestive system to break down these molecules. Because milk is heated during pasteurisation, the heat destroys the active and healthy enzymes in the milk." Pasteurised milk has also been linked to diabetes, cancer and arthritis. They go on to say that, in contrast, raw healthy milk was actually used as medicine during the early part of the last century. Clean raw milk, cheese and butter from naturally grazed cows are a complete and properly balanced food, and one could live on it exclusively if you had to!

Fats

The general population seems to be afraid of fats. All the food and drinks labels saying "low fat" and "diet" or whatever, are simply a marketing gimmick and these foods end up being filled with other preservatives and sweeteners even worse for your health. Here's the thing, fats are a very *necessary* part of your diet. Without some essential healthy fats in our bodies, we would not survive. The trick is to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy fats, and this is quite simple.

Monounsaturated Fats - Are found mostly in nuts, such as avocados, pistachios, almonds, walnuts, and cashews. This type of fat can also be found in olive oil. Monounsaturated fats help lower bad cholesterol and raise good cholesterol, which is a very good thing. It's also been proven to help fight weight gain, and may even help reduce body fat levels.



Nuts

Polyunsaturated Fats - Like monounsaturated fat, this good fat helps to fight bad cholesterol. You can find polyunsaturated fats in foods like salmon, fish oil, sunflower oil, and seeds. Polyunsaturated fats contain Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids, which have largely been processed out of our food. There are studies that have shown we don't consume nearly enough Omega-3 in our diets, and since it's part of the complete protein family, our bodies can't produce it on their own. Therefore, it is very important to incorporate a good Polyunsaturated Fat source in your diet.

Saturated Fat - This is an interesting one, which is also known as something of a 'middle ground' when it comes to fat. Saturated fat is found in things we have talked about - red meat, dairy, eggs and seafood. Now many people believe that too much of these types of food are bad for their health, as they have been shown to elicit an increase in cholesterol. But as we have also in fact discussed, cholesterol is not always a bad thing. John Romaniello states in his "Final Phase Fat Loss" programme that cholesterol functions as an antioxidant against dangerous free radicals in the blood which cause inflammation, and is also necessary for the production of certain hormones to fight against heart disease!

So if you enjoy your Merino mutton, lamb and other great tasting red meats, then eat up! They contain some essential fatty acids - which the body cannot produce on its own and therefore must be obtained from food. *Also, if you happen to exercise regularly, red meat can help you build muscle, burn fat, and fight against cholesterol related heart disease.*

Trans Fat - The black sheep of the fat family (boo trans fat)! This is not only the worst fat you can get, but also the worst type of food in general that you can ever put into your system. Trans fats are found in foods like potato chips and fried chips, cookies, cakes, donuts, margarine, and basically any deep fried food. Trans fats cause increased inflammation in the body, as well as diabetes and heart disease and the inability to fight infections or illnesses. When we speak of high cholesterol - your cholesterol levels are trying to save your sorry ass by building up and fighting all the poisonous trans fats you are feeding into your body. So if you happen to be on cholesterol medication, you're not addressing the problem! What needs to be resolved is the bad food in your diet!

So anyway, trans fats are made by a chemical process called *partial hydrogenation*. When vegetable oil (monounsaturated fat) is heated to high temperatures, it gets packed with hydrogen and converted into a solid fat. This makes it ideal for food industries to work with because of its high melting point, and reusability in deep frying. Essentially, a trans fat comes about when over processing foods in order to offer consumers a longer shelf life. If you purchase any pre-packaged foods, chances are it is loaded with trans fats. *You should try to avoid trans fats at all costs if you are serious about your health or want to live longer!*

Conclusion

I sincerely hope you found this article informative, and perhaps even interesting and fun! *The message is really quite simple - eat good quality, organic fresh food in its most natural possible form, and your body will be healthier for it.* Farmers, you guys have it good. You have access to most if not all of this great healthy food like mutton, venison, fresh veggies and dairy! So please make sure you spread the word to all friends and family on how to follow a healthy eating plan. We will see a reduction in many chronic illnesses and diseases all over South Africa if we simply start at the root of the problem and fix our diets!

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