



**Improve Your Health
by Eating the Right Foods**

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How Your Body Works

There's been a tendency ever since the world discovered "dieting" to mystify food, and make the whole subject seem as complicated and unattainable as the Holy Grail.

The truth is, what your body needs to ingest is incredibly simple:

- **Carbohydrates**
- **Protein**
- **Fats**

I don't want to turn this into a science lesson, but I do think it's worth hitting the high points in a quick overview of what food is composed of, and how it works. (Knowing exactly *how* something works is the quickest way to demystify it!)

Carbohydrates

You get a big clue from the name – "carbon" + "hydrate".

Carbohydrates provides the fuel that powers your rocket ship. Simple carbohydrates would be sugars such as glucose and fructose. Complex carbohydrates come in the form of starches. The body digests sugars much more easily and quickly than starches – and the downfall with this is that large amounts of insulin are released to compensate for the "surge". You can instantly see from this why large doses of simple sugars are bad for the body and stress it.

Complex carbohydrates are digested more slowly, allowing your body adequate time to absorb and process them. You won't suffer the energy "crash" that simple sugars in refined carbohydrates create.

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White bread and many store-bought cakes are examples of “refined” carbohydrates. These are absorbed almost as easily as pure sugar, and are therefore not as good for you as complex carbs.)

Example of foods that provide healthy complex carbohydrates:

- Whole grain cereals
- yams
- corn

Proteins

Proteins help build muscle mass, breaking down into **essential** or **non-essential** amino acids for energy. If carbs provide the fuel, then proteins provide the engine components.

“Essential” and “non-essential” refer to the way these particular amino acids are created, not to their importance. “Non-essential” ones are particularly vital, because unlike essential amino acids, they cannot be created from the body, they can only be ingested in food.

Small amounts of proteins are found in many vegetables and grains, but we are used to thinking of foods such as meat and fish as “proteins”, because of the high balance of protein (and little to zero carbohydrates) found in these particular foods.

Another reason for think of animal proteins as “complete”? They provide all the necessary amino acids, where as plant sources don't.

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How can you tell how much protein you need? Simple! Assuming you are satisfied with your weight, **add 0.36 grams of protein per pound of your total body weight**. (For example, if you are 120 lbs., you need 43 g. protein per day to healthily maintain it.)

TIP: If you combine legumes such as lentils, peas or beans with rice, you can inexpensively create a complete protein.

Fats

The easy way to tell the difference between saturated and unsaturated fat? Saturated fats are solid, and unsaturated are liquid.

You need fats to transport vitamins throughout the body, and to create essential fatty acids, which (like protein) contribute to building healthy cells. (Fat can also be converted to "fuel", like carbohydrates, and are broken down by enzymes.)

So just from having learned this simple bit of biology, you can see instantly why an all-protein, no carbohydrate diet (or vice versa) would create a severe imbalance and interruption of fuel and building material delivery to the body (no matter how many Hollywood celebrities or diet gurus say otherwise.)

Your Basic Food Needs

Food itself is rather simple. The complex part of the equation is us. Our varying individual needs. These can be affected by:

- heredity and genetics
- health conditions, defects and illnesses
- metabolism
- level of activity
- environment
- mobility (or lack of)

It's true you need proteins (meat, fish, dairy products), carbohydrates (grains, starchy vegetables and fruits) and fats (butter, animal fats, vegetable oils and fats), which in turn provide you with glucose for fuel, amino acids, enzymes, fatty acids and cell-building material.

But there is one single most important ingredient you always have to add. And that is common-sense.

For example, migraines can often be aggravated by:

- Chocolate
- Red wine
- Cheese
- Peanuts
- Bananas

If you're coming down with a migraine, the worst thing you could do – and you've probably learned not to do this the hard way – is drink a

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glass of red wine with cheese, and snack afterwards on peanuts and chocolate.

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Likewise, if you suffer from any type of irritable bowel syndrome, it doesn't matter how often the books tell you to munch fresh strawberries – you will have learned from bitter experience that just won't work for you. Ditto if you're sensitive to vitamin C, and your face breaks out in a rash, every time you eat an orange.

But what about the foods whose effects are lesser known? What about foods that mysteriously create adverse effects on some occasions, but not others?

Very often, this can be caused not by the food themselves, but by additives. (Example: if you have high blood pressure and drink green tea which has ginseng added, you may find yourself suffering both an uncomfortable and alarming rise in blood pressure and a splitting headache.)

It would be easy to say "read the labels, every time" – and you should – but there's a simpler solution you may already have realized is staring you in the face.

Eat Simple Foods

By "simple", I mean, instead of buying a box of cake mix (which might contain over a dozen artificial chemicals, refined carbs and additives), bake those muffins from "scratch", using plain ingredients. Instead of opening an expensive pouch of crockpot stew, make it yourself from simple potatoes, carrots, green beans, bouillon cubes, flour and seasonings such as pepper, marjoram and thyme.

It's true that humans are omnivores – meaning we can eat both plant material and animal proteins. But that doesn't include dioxins, sulphites, and other man-made chemicals!

Are All Additives Bad?

It's also important not to swing too far to the other end of the spectrum, roundly condemning all additives and "chemicals" as "evil". The truth is, many of our "natural" foods naturally contain these chemicals in the first place: they just don't need to be added.

Why do food companies need to add nutrients and chemicals? Seeing a whole host of added ingredients is usually a big clue that the product itself has been refined to the 'nth degree, which often destroys the natural nutrients (or creates "refined" carbohydrates).

Bottom line? You don't need to inject a carrot with a dozen nutrients and chemicals.

That being said, there are situations where foods containing additives are better than other processed foods. A case in point? My friend Gwen's son refused flat-out to eat any breakfast, when he hit his teenage years. Gwen remained adamant that he eat something nutritious, and after a battle of wills, he offered to drink Carnation Instant Breakfast every morning, if she would buy chocolate flavor for him.

Gwen retorted that if it truly contained adequate protein, vitamins and nutrients, she would allow him this compromise. Being a very thorough person, she immediately had a nutritionist check out the ingredients – and (coming from an old-school “simple foods” background) was slightly shocked to find out that it indeed checked out as nutritionally balanced.

Don got his chocolate breakfast shakes, and Gwen was relieved he was going off to school with adequate morning nourishment. Yes, it would have been better if he had eaten half an organic grapefruit, a slice of whole grain toast with organic almond butter and drunk a glass of goat milk – but in spite of the refined sugar portion, Carnation Instant Breakfast was a satisfactory alternative to the reality that would have occurred, had she held her ground – *no* breakfast for Don!

Are Organic Foods Really Better?

In a word – yes.

The sad part? Organic foods are nothing more than food produced naturally, without pesticides, often using principles of proper crop rotation that our great-great-grandfathers took for granted. Fruits, grains, vegetables, fish and meat used to be pure and healthy.

Nowadays, whether or not these items are still beneficial is often questionable, to say the least.

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There is another factor to consider besides additives or pesticides, when considering going organic: Genetic engineering. Again, genetic engineering has become a dirty word, with some justification, when it comes to foodstuffs. But sometimes it really is an innocent way of improving a strain of vegetable, for example.

But no, you can't tell what sort of genetic engineering that fat peach has undergone. Or what pesticides have absorbed into its skin.

So do consider investing in certified organic foods – or at the very least, peel all fruit, even after it's been thoroughly washed.

The Best Foods For You

The best foods you can choose all boil down (if you'll pardon the pun – and please don't boil them, you'll lose all the nutrients) to:

- Foods that don't cause adverse effects (like migraines or stomach ache)
- Natural, "simple" foods – preferably organic
- Raw foods – yes, there's a good deal of truth to the claim that heating (particularly at high heats) destroys nutrients. (And if you can't tolerate raw vegetables and fruits, try pure vegetable and fruit juices instead – but watch out for added sugar)
- A balanced diet.

What is a balanced diet? Sensible **proportions**, and a good combination of **fats**, **complex carbohydrates** and **protein**.

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Healthy sources of fats (don't exceed – or drop too far below - **40g.** per day, average):

Olive oil

Canola oil

Flax seed oil

Raw nuts

Small amount of butter (if your family doesn't have cholesterol problems)

Healthy sources of carbohydrates: (average mom needs about **150g.** per day)

Starchy vegetables and fruits such as yams, pumpkin and bananas

Cereals such as oatmeal, oat bran, red river cereal, muesli, granola, whole grain cereals

Whole grain breads

Whole grain muffins

Healthy sources of protein: (**0.36g.** per pound of body weight)

Lean meat

Fish

Eggs

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Soy products

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Healthy sources of fiber and vitamins:

Fresh fruit

Leafy green vegetables

And of course, many foods contain various degrees of protein, fats and/or carbohydrates. (Case in point being milk, which contains fats, but is considered a protein.)

And speaking of vitamins, many foods – particularly leafy vegetables and fruits – are loaded with vital vitamins, as well as powerful anti-oxidants, which clean your bloodstream of heavy metal deposits.

Good sources of antioxidants?

- Citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes)
- Green leaf vegetables (spinach, Broccoli, Swiss chard, Romaine lettuce, Brussels sprouts)
- Blueberries
- Cranberries
- Raspberries

And let's not forget anti-oxidants such as Green Tea.

The Last But Most Important Nutritional Need

This last ingredient doesn't contribute anything in the way of protein, carbohydrates, fats or anti-oxidants (though occasionally it might add some minerals) – yet without it, we'd die.

I'm talking, of course, about water.

Yes, it's true that one should drink 6-10 glasses a day (depending on body weight). Your body runs on electricity, just the same as a car battery. What happens when your car battery runs out of water?

It goes flat. It loses energy completely.

A surprising amount of health problems have been "cured" when the sufferer was persuaded to start drinking adequate amounts of water.

So that's your basic overview of how we work and what we need to ingest. Rather than tell you long lists of what you "should" eat, I've recapped the basic principles, so you can adapt your food to your own unique physiology, heredity and health challenges (if you have any).

After all, the one who ultimately will decide what's best for you to eat is you!

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