

How many times have you heard the saying, “You are what you eat” and, on hearing it, asked yourself this simple question, “What exactly does that mean”? In our world of information overload, maybe even info glut, we receive so much dietary advice it’s easy to become confused.

Increasingly, nutrition is being viewed as a science and in many ways it is a science. But we don’t need to be rocket scientists to get it right and it can be simplified if we stick to some basic fundamental principles of biochemistry. That is, we are all unique, we are all biochemically and metabolically unique, so there could never be a unified dietary approach that would agree with all of us for the long term.

It’s very simple really – no two people, not even identical twins, are the same in height, weight, appearance, hair or fingerprints. Like the rest of the world’s population, identical twins don’t have the same fingerprints and they often have different metabolisms.

And just because something is working for you now it doesn’t mean it will work for years to come, or should be followed for ever without some sort of modification.

This is important to realise because there are three basic levels to nutrition and we may find ourselves at any one of them at any point in our life.

1. Therapeutic Level

This could be a short-term detox, or elimination diet. It’s when you cut back on some food choices (coffee/dairy for instance) to unload some toxins and help ease the burden on your organs. Common eliminations are alcohol to assist liver function or dairy foods for asthma sufferers.

If an individual has a severe condition/biochemical imbalance then this is the phase they would adhere to for a period until recovery.

2. Maintenance Level

This means maintaining a daily balance and enjoying social eating in such a way that it doesn’t lead to severe imbalances. Maintain a nutritional balance in order to maintain balanced blood sugar levels. This is most important as your blood sugar level influences how you think and perform and reflects your productivity at work. This is often a fine line and requires a third approach known as the experimental.



Upgrade Your Fuel Mix

We’re all individuals and that even extends to our food needs, says Health Watch’s Teya Skae.

A balanced approach always works best in the long term. Particularly when we socialise or eat out on a regular basis, the balanced approach doesn’t mean we can go completely astray and abandon our fundamental dietary needs – we just incorporate new experiences and learn how to get back on track and balance if we have lapsed from our usual standard.

This approach also prevents psychological repercussions of guilt or remorse about food. Let’s remember what we focus on is what we attract. So it pays to be quite neutral with food really. Some people see chocolate as an evil, while for others that might be a piece of steak or a pasta dish with creamy sauce. This doesn’t help at all and getting neutral with all concepts raises your metabolic rate and your consciousness in relation to your basic life need, which is nutrition.

3. Experimental Level

This isn’t to be confused with extremes or obsessively rigid approaches. Instead, be open to experimenting with different foods/combinations and see how you feel 1-2 hours after having that meal. For those people who require a little bit of structure, the experimental phase is best done in conjunction with awareness, as well as an open minded nutritionist or naturopath.

We all see food and nutrition differently and many people experience a lot of stress in this area, even to the point of obsessive worry. As every human being is in a committed long-term relationship with food (unless of course you’re a breatharian and there are a few of them on the planet now), food will be a place of challenge at some point.

So most of us will consume food every day, even three times a day. Hence, adopting an experimental approach is practical

as it helps us detach and practise being more open minded for the sake of sanity, as well as liberating strong “unhealthy” attachments to so called “right” nutrition.

So what constitutes the right nutrition for you? It is your Nutritional Fuel Mix – your ideal ratio of proteins to carbohydrates and to fats eaten at main meals on a daily and seasonal basis.

For many people, experimenting with your right Fuel Mix may be like playing roulette, as this is the part that needs to be finetuned over time and with open minded awareness, maybe even with your nutritionist.

Rather than following any one of the strictly regimented popular diets like Atkins (high protein and fat), Palaeolithic (everything in its natural form), Macrobiotics (60 per cent grain based), Vegan (no animal products whatsoever) or perhaps even Blood Types, make up your own, by starting out with some basic principles. In the end, it’s all about the right Fuel Mix for your unique biochemistry that makes the difference and not the diet itself. What will work for one person might not work for another and may even be harmful to someone else in the long term.

As a nutrition advisor this explains why I so often hear people say, “I was doing really well on this plan and then, after a while, I started getting cravings for these foods and feeling tired”. That usually happens because the diet no longer serves that individual’s current biochemical state. It’s time for an upgrade. It’s very simple – modify the ratios and foods and combinations and ask what does my Fuel Mix look like now?

What is your ideal Fuel Mix?

Your Fuel Mix is your ideal combination of proteins, fats and carbs eaten together as part of your daily breakfast/lunch/dinner. To use a simple analogy, it’s like putting the right form of petrol in your engine. When you get your personal Fuel Mix right, you are, in fact, eating in the best possible way because it allows you to gain and use maximum energy from everything you eat. This takes into account digestion and assimilation for your unique biochemistry. So it involves using energy well with less biochemical toxic waste that leads to many conditions such as muscle soreness, headaches, cravings, even fatigue.

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Upgrade Your Fuel Mix

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Getting the mix right

Four major factors are involved here:

1. Biochemical Uniqueness
2. Your current activity level
– sedentary or busy/active and athletic
3. Season of the year – winter requires a bit more fat and protein to stay warm while summer calls for more raw, fresh fruits and vegetables.
4. Your current phase of life. Is your goal to build lean muscle tissue or to detoxify the organs and create a healing outcome?

Please note, it is not about avoiding carbs or following a high protein diet. Instead, it's how you put your nutrients together at every meal that makes a world of difference.

Generally speaking, if you eat like a pyramid you will look like one in a matter of time, unless you're a marathon runner or Olympic gymnast. Even though some long distance runners can do well on a high carb diet, say 60-70 per cent, in the long run, this diet yields the potential problem of accumulating a much higher body fat ratio than sprinters or non runners.

Let's face it, in the United States and Australia obesity is an epidemic. So the average fuel mix ratio of protein: carbohydrates: fats should be 40: 40: 20 for energy and to maintain leanness. While this ratio would be ideal for one person, someone else would need 25: 60: 15, that is 25 per cent protein, 60 per cent carbs and 15 per cent fat. This would suit a male runner, but if a female followed this regime the chances are she would have high body fat composition.

Losing weight is about increasing your metabolic rate so your body burns more fuel efficiently. The old idea of cutting back on calories is not the ideal way to lose weight as it slows down your thyroid gland and your metabolic rate. Guess what? The incorrect fuel mix for your biochemistry will do the same – it will slow you down and pile on the weight along with other symptoms.

In summary, we are all unique on many levels. Externally, we differ in height, weight and build. The internal differences also affect our ideal fuel mix. Although our psychological and external physical differences are readily apparent, not many people realise the extent to which we differ from each other internally, as well.

We all have different strengths and weaknesses in the various bodily systems, such as our cardiovascular, digestive and immune systems. This is commonly understood. Some people have a strong digestion, while others have to take more care with what they eat. Some of us have strong immune systems and are rarely ill,

while others seem to catch everything that comes along. The variations are endless. All these variations define our metabolic individuality.

Differences are also known to exist in other bodily tissues. The blood, for example, is recognised to exist in different types, like Type A, B, AB and, the commonest group, O. What's interesting is that in tests done on "normal, healthy" samples of blood, even of the same blood type, no two "normal" blood samples were found to be the same.

When it comes to our so called "right nutrition", it pays to be open minded and learn as much as we can about our biochemical uniqueness. Then finetuning our personal Fuel Mix over time and experience is the next phase. You might be surprised to learn what really works well for you and the great thing is that your body knows what it needs, while your mind may not.

Your body will tell you over and over again – when you get it right, you feel satisfied for hours with no cravings and stable energy levels. You might even feel emotionally uplifted. But when you feel tired and craving certain foods, this is a sign your current fuel mix isn't working for you. Nutrition today has become such a cerebral science, yet really it is up to us to monitor our own moods, energy swings and symptoms in relation to our nutrition.

Obviously, it's helpful to become more open minded so that we can let go of preconditioned, outdated concepts. A classic example is eggs. For so long we were told to avoid eggs because they contain cholesterol, yet now they are promoted as healthy because the cholesterol is the "good" type. We're being told we can even eat three eggs a day! Another classic myth is coconut – "Isn't that too much fat?" Well, it's the sort of fat that helps you burn fat! And so the list goes on.

In the end, it all depends on how you put it all together to create your ideal Nutritional Fuel Mix to provide you with maximum energy and wellbeing.



In Wellness!
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References:

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