

FOOD AND MOOD

As I've said previously, it's really important to become in tune with your body and understand the messages it sends you. Before I see a patient for a consultation, I ask them to fill out a food diary of everything they've consumed for three to four days and to record how they felt after each sitting. Certain foods can make us feel bloated or tired or energised. Let me give you an example. When I first saw Sara for a consultation, she was suffering from bloating, constipation and feeling really lethargic. We went through her food diary and it became obvious that when she ate dairy, yeast and wheat products her bloating was worse and it made her feel tired. We devised a new eating plan and after four weeks her bloating had gone, her bowel habit was regular, she had lost nine pounds in weight, felt energised and looked full of vitality. We were able to improve her condition in a short space of time and Sara didn't have to spend money on expensive food allergy tests. When you become the expert on you, you too will be able to see the clear link between what you eat and how you feel.

ARE SOME FOODS LESS HEALTHY THAN WE THINK?

Most of us realise that eating large amounts of chocolate, chips and burgers is not healthy. But there are certain foods that people believe are healthy which may cause them more harm than good. If you suffer from tiredness or digestive problems it is important to look at which food groups you are consuming and how often, as this can impact on your health.

MILK

If you suffer with digestive issues, such as bloating, or get run down and tired easily, it could be due to how your body processes the proteins in dairy or how much dairy you are consuming.

To find out for sure, it might be worth doing a trial without dairy products – such as milk, cheese and yoghurt – for two weeks to see if it helps. If you feel better afterwards then that is great, and in these circumstances I would suggest you limit your dairy intake to two or three days a week. I don't feel it is necessary to completely cut out any food group unless you have a proven serious reaction or lactose intolerance (in the case of milk), so limiting your intake will allow you to still enjoy the foods you like.

In the UK and Europe there are strict regulations for milk production so hormones are not injected unnecessarily and antibiotics are not overused, but it is important to know what can go on in other parts of the world. In some countries the cows are sometimes injected with hormones to keep them producing milk. When cows are milked constantly, this can lead to them getting mastitis, an infection in their udders, and they're subsequently injected with antibiotics. The cows can also be kept in cramped factory-like conditions.^{4,5} It is important to know this does happen in parts of the world if you travel a lot or care about animal welfare.

The decision to consume organic milk is a personal one, and factors such as cost and animal welfare can play an important role in helping you to decide. Organic cows are fed more grass or hay, as opposed to a processed feed, and few artificial fertilisers or herbicides are used so there are healthier fats in the milk. The cows also live longer and are less stressed as they can roam free and aren't kept in pens.⁶ At present, a pint of organic milk is nine pence more expensive than ordinary milk. If you are concerned about your energy level, then you could see if organic milk makes a difference. Other dairy alternatives would be goat's milk, filtered milk or there are types of milk widely available at supermarkets with less of the protein casein that can affect digestion. There are lots of options to try that allow you to avoid completely cutting out milk and other dairy products.

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I personally try to have as much non-dairy milk as possible and limit my intake of dairy products as they can cause me to bloat and feel tired if I have too much. I have found the same in many of my patients. Another option is to find a local farm shop from which to buy your dairy products. You'll also be supporting your local farming community.

There is currently some controversy around whether soya milk is good for you or not. Soy is quite processed nowadays and can also convert to phytoestrogens, which are thought by some to interfere with our own natural hormones. However, the evidence is inconclusive at the moment. I would advise women of childbearing age to limit their soya intake, for example I only have soya milk if I am out in a coffee shop or a couple of times a week at home.

FISH

Fish is full of omega-3 fatty acids that protect the heart and is also a good source of protein, with less fat than meat and poultry. However, some fish, such as tuna, can contain mercury and other environmental pollutants. The body can deal with small amounts of these pollutants, but children, pregnant women or those who are unwell should limit their intake. Farmed fish should also be limited as their nutritional value is lower than wild or organic fish, their feeds can be contaminated with chemicals, or they are fed other fish. It's also estimated that in North America, farmed fish have more antibiotics per pound in weight than any other livestock.⁷ Farmed fish are also higher in unhealthy fats than their wild counterparts. Farmed salmon is high in Poly Chlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxins, which are chemicals that drain our energy and affect our hormones.⁸

Wild or organic fish, on the other hand, have a diet rich in algae and other phytonutrients, so try and choose wild or organic over farmed, and buy your fish from a reputable fishmonger.

WHEAT AND GLUTEN

People who have coeliac disease have an adverse reaction to gluten and need to avoid it entirely. If they don't, there will be ongoing gut problems, tiredness, and the condition could lead to osteoporosis (weak bones) and anaemia. However, I see lots of patients who don't have coeliac disease but still suffer from tiredness and gut problems and who feel much better when they stop, or reduce, wheat-based products. Wheat germ agglutinin (WGA) is a chemical in wheat responsible for many of the symptoms and ill effects caused by wheat.⁹

If you frequently experience abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, diarrhoea or excessive wind, you may have a condition known as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which is often caused by an inability to break down a group of sugars that naturally occur in food called Fermetable Oligo-, Di-, Monosaccharides and Polyols (FODMAPS).

If these sugars are not broken down in the small intestine, they travel on to the large intestine where they provide a free meal for your gut bacteria. These repay the favour by producing gas, which leads to the bloating, pains, wind and bowel changes often seen in IBS.

Studies, including the original study by Shepherd et al, have shown that avoiding FODMAPS – including fructan, the FODMAP found in wheat – can improve the symptoms of IBS.¹⁰ People with IBS often find an improvement when they avoid high-FODMAP foods, including fruits such as avocados, cherries, apricots, nectarines, peaches and plums as well as honey, dairy, wheat, onions, garlic, lentils, beans and sweeteners.

Unlike those with wheat intolerance and allergies, people who may benefit from a low-FODMAP diet do not have to completely avoid wheat (and other foods containing FODMAPs). They just have to acknowledge their symptoms will worsen with high-FODMAP foods.

The simplest way to discover whether you're experiencing an intolerance to wheat is to simply cut it out of your life for two weeks. If you feel better, there's your answer. It's easy, quick and you don't need any expensive laboratory tests. After an initial period of cutting out wheat, I normally advise my clients to restrict consumption to one or two times a week, and just a small amount at a time. I tell my patients to do the same with dairy if I think they're reacting to it, but not at the same time or we won't know which eliminated food product is making the difference.

MEAT

If you are going to eat meat, try to eat meat from a reliable source, for example a local farmer or butcher. This is because, in parts of the world, non-organic meat can contain antibiotics and hormones. Non-organic meat can be exposed to more chemical additives approved for use in food. In some countries meat producers inject their meat with additives to tenderise the meat, extend shelf life and add flavour, however this is not the case in the UK.

I'm not saying to cut these foods out of your diet, just make sure that they do in fact suit you and that you are eating good-quality, local produce as far as possible. Making long-lasting dietary changes is a process and it can take years to be in the right place physically, mentally and spiritually to make and sustain these changes. I became a vegetarian in my mid-twenties for three years (mainly because Russell Brand is a vegetarian and I'm a huge fan!). However, my decision wasn't based on my *own* values and mentally I just wasn't ready. Subsequently, I mainly ate chips, baked beans and cheese. I eat meat and fish again now, and overall my diet is more balanced.

A good start is to try the Energy Cleanse in chapter 9 and see how it makes you feel. When you see and feel the difference in your body from making changes for just three weeks, you will feel more motivated to make long-lasting lifestyle changes.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Someone once told me to avoid avoidance of foods. This means as soon as you make a food ‘contraband’ it suddenly becomes way more appealing! If you eat well and healthily the majority of the time, and every now and again want a fizzy drink or a burger, it isn’t going to do you much harm. Remember the 70/30 rule, it is just all about balance.

‘EATING CLEAN’

One of the key ways to increase energy and beat tiredness is to cut out chemicals. This means avoiding processed foods as much as possible. An easy rule is to think about how much human interference a food has had. For example, an apple is a wholefood, but an apple pie is flour, sugar, butter, etc., fashioned into food. Another example is that if a food has a long list of ingredients, a lot of which you don’t recognise because they’re additives, preservatives and other chemicals, it’s best to avoid it. Whenever presented with a choice, try to pick the food that has been interfered with the least. This is what I try and apply to myself when I’m out and have to grab food on the go. If you do this you’re on to a winner. I also try and keep snacks on me like dried fruit, seeds, nuts or healthy snack bars in my handbag so I don’t feel starving and reach for a muffin. I call this *eating clean*.

ORGANIC FOOD

People always ask me if organic foods are really worth the extra money. Most people think that organic food means that no chemicals or pesticides are used. I did too for a while. Organic actually means ‘fewer chemicals and a minimal amount of pesticides’. Because organic food is more expensive, the Environmental Working Group published guidelines on which fruit and vegetables should be eaten organic, and which ones are grown with fewer pesticides and can be eaten without being organic.¹² A study in 2012 stated that there was no benefit in

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eating organic food over non-organic food. The study stated that the nutritional difference between the two was not much, however, organic foods had 30 per cent less pesticides.¹³ We know from chapter 7 that the less chemicals the better for our overall health, and this is reason enough for me to buy organic food wherever possible.

Foods that should be eaten organic:

- apples
- celery
- cherry tomatoes
- nectarines
- chilli peppers
- grapes
- cucumbers
- peaches
- potatoes
- spinach
- strawberries
- peppers
- kale
- courgettes