

No One Diet Works for Everyone

By Laura Brown, Certified Health Counselor

Diet and Nutrition expert Laura Brown discusses why no one diet works for everyone, and discusses how to create sustainable, lasting weight loss without dwelling on calories, carbs, fats, proteins, restrictions and lists of good and bad foods, in a way that is flexible, fun and free of denial and discipline.

There are many differing dietary theories on the market today. It doesn't require a very close inspection to notice the many contradictions between these theories and to wonder how it could be that the field of experts is so far apart on what works and what's healthy.

The simple answer to that question is that no one diet works for everyone. Some people swear by Barry Sears' Zone Diet and some couldn't follow it if their life depended on it. If D'Adamo's Blood Type diet worked for me, why was I hearing that some people couldn't stand it? Some people looked and felt great on Atkins; others said it almost put them in the hospital.

It turns out that we are looking at the results of something called "Bio-individuality". It's a new understanding that goes beyond the flavor-of-the-month approach to weight loss. Bio-individuality, a theory put forth by Roger Williams in 1956 in a book called *Biochemical Individuality*, says that every person is unique, and the diet that will work best for them is also very unique and individualized. Just as we all have different personalities, finger prints, DNA and other characteristics, we all have different dietary needs. And they change over time as we change and grow, and as we move through the seasons, and through the years. We have different dietary needs at twenty than we do at forty and sixty. And they're all determined by the stamp of our bio-individuality.

Ancestry - One of the factors determining our dietary needs is our ancestry. If your ancestors come from Italy and southern Europe, the Mediterranean type diet rich in olive oil and nuts, abundant in fruits & vegetables, whole grains, fish, poultry, dairy and red wine, is likely to work for you. Ancestry also plays a part in determining the foods that are not good for you. If you're of African descent, where green vegetables, grains, beans and sweet potatoes were consumed daily, but milk was usually not available, it makes sense that you would be lactose intolerant, as

many people of African descent are. If you are having issues with a particular food or class of foods, it may help to look to your ancestry for clues.

Blood Type - Another major factor in bio-individuality is our Blood Type. Popularized by D'Adamo in his Blood Type Diet, the theory is that each of the blood types (A, B, AB and O) developed at a certain time period in human evolution, each with unique ways of eating and living. For example, type A developed during a period of agrarian communities, and type As do well with lots of vegetables, fruits and grains. Type O, on the other hand, occurred in the midst of a hunter-gatherer culture, when people ate more meat. Type Os often find that more protein is essential in their diets. The differences in diet between blood types are related to chemical differences in the body, resulting in varying interactions between substances in food, and your blood. So if you're a type AB, and you eat foods that are chemically similar to type A, they can actually irritate your system, just as getting a transfusion of the wrong blood type would. This is why it's sometimes said that one man's food is another man's poison.

Metabolism – Metabolism, or the rate at which you convert food into energy, is a third important factor in bio-individuality. Metabolic types can be divided into three major categories. Slow burners don't require a lot of food to feel full, and often can't handle large amounts of meat, fat and salt or spice in their foods. They tend to crave sweets, and often do well on vegetarian and high carbohydrate diets. Fast burners tend to crave salty, fatty foods, are frequently hungry and don't do well on high-carb and vegetarian diets, requiring more protein in their diets. Mixed types have variable or average appetites, and can eat a balance of both carbs and proteins. There are questionnaires available online to determine your metabolic type, or you can just observe how your body reacts to food.

So what can a person do to lose weight and stay healthy, given that no one diet size fits all? Fortunately, there are common principles that lead to sustainable, lasting weight loss, whatever your bio-individual "diet-print". Some of the things you can do include the following:

Learn to listen to your body – your body knows what it needs to eat and it will tell you if it doesn't like something. If we just learn to listen to our bodies, we can begin to identify what makes us feel good (light, happy, satisfied, at ease), and what makes us feel bad (too full, sick, groggy, irritated).

Find real food to eat – Michael Pollan writes in his new book *In Defense of Food*, "eat food, mostly vegetables, not too much". We have to eat food. It's not an option. So the trick is in

finding real food – food that nourishes, food that is nutrient dense, without additions we don't need (like chemicals, sugars and salts). When we begin to add real vegetables, fruits and whole grains to our diets, we begin to crowd out less healthy choices.

Drink more water – try replacing sodas, caffeinated beverages and alcohol with plain, pure water, if you want to effortlessly drop 10 pounds. Most Americans don't get enough water, and many are chronically dehydrated. Water will make you feel full sooner, and if you drink a glass of water about 30 minutes before a meal, it will also help your body break down the food you eat.

Cook at home – America has truly lost the sense of reasonable portion sizes. Add to that the fact that restaurants make foods tastier by adding salt, sugar and fats, and you'll see the reason that cooking your own foods makes sense. It doesn't have to be a big production – simple fresh vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins are easy to cook. Add in fresh herbs for flavor and you'll never miss the extra additives.

Reduce your stress – Many people eat too much food too fast when they are feeling stressed, in hopes it will help them relax. Finding other ways to relax, whether learning to meditate, taking a hot bath when you get home from work, or going for a walk, can help you separate the need for nutrition from the need for comfort and relaxation. Both are real human needs, but one can't truly replace the other.

Get enough sleep – it's not uncommon to try to substitute food, caffeine and sugar for adequate sleep. Most people need about 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night, and will find their appetite more manageable if they get enough rest.

Always eat breakfast – breakfast truly is the most important meal of the day. When you skip breakfast you set yourself up for uncontrollable hunger later in the day. Your body needs both food and water first thing in the morning, after fasting through the night. A sound breakfast sets your balance for less food cravings and more healthy choices.

Get regular exercise – adequate exercise suppresses appetite, while at the same time improving digestion. Exercise and movement are essential to physical and emotional health. They help reduce stress levels, and help your body burn fat through using muscles. Small changes can lead to better levels of movement. Park your car further away and walk the distance. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, or find a buddy to walk with at lunch time.

About Laura Brown

Laura Brown is a Certified Health Counselor (CHC) and the founder of Intuitive Wellness. A Certified Health Counselor is a nutrition expert, wellness authority and a supportive coach.

Laura is passionate about helping people achieve their highest level of wellness. For over thirty years, Laura has pursued an interest in personal growth and alternative healing and in exploring the mind/body connection.

In 2007, Laura took that passion a step further when she earned her (CHC) designation at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition (IIN), studying an approach that enabled her to integrate the many paths to wellness she has traveled in her life into a powerful program for helping others.

Laura speaks regularly at health-oriented events, conferences, educational and other organizations, on topics such as Eating for Energy, Brain Health, Longevity and Preventing Illness through diet and lifestyle.

To schedule a free one-hour health consultation with Laura, go to www.intuitive-wellness.com, email Laura at laura@intuitive-wellness.com, or call 770-953-0534.