

Why Am I So Hungry?

You've heard it a million times - you are what you eat. I see this statement in a very literal way, you are what you eat, what you think, and what you do. Literally. This letter is about eating.

The human body is an extraordinary thing, its processes are still being studied and our understanding of it is being expanded every day. In order to maintain homeostasis – our body's overall internal balance – our major organs have the daunting task of extracting microscopic elements from the food we eat. The complexities of these needs are just beginning to become evident. These elements in turn start to make up our bodies on a cellular level, so if the food you eat is full of processed chemicals as opposed to healthy nutrients... you are what you eat.

Phytonutrients, are the nutrients found in plants. More than 8,000 have been identified to date with more being discovered constantly. It will be a challenging, and nearly impossible, job to find them all and then apply how the combination of them are responsible for optimal health.

When we eat, the sensation of being full, or satisfied, is not so much a matter of quantity (how much we eat) but rather quality (what we eat). When the food we eat is devoid of phytonutrients, our stomachs do not feel satisfied and you may keep eating because your body is craving these building blocks. Your hunger will not subside until the brain registers that the demand for these nutrients have been met. This is the reason why following a diet of plant-based foods and healthy animal proteins (meat and eggs), while altogether avoiding processed foods, is so important in not becoming overweight and creating ill health. By eating nutritionally dense whole foods, the body feels satisfied at the right time.

Fruits and vegetables today, have been hybridized over the last couple of thousand years. The purpose of this was to create fruits and vegetables that are larger, sweeter, faster growing, easier to harvest. Unfortunately, altering nature came at a price; it has very much changed the balance between phytonutrients and sugars. So after consuming a small amount of fruit, our need for sugar is met but our phytonutrient dependence is not satisfied.

The same scenario is true for meats, eggs and dairy. Almost all "conventionally-raised" cows and chicken are fed entirely corn based diets laced with growth hormones, antibiotics and other medications. Many of these animals never get any natural sunlight, breathe fresh air, or exercise – which, in turn, increases their stress levels. You are what you eat.

Grass fed meats and free-range eggs from small local farms are healthier due to the greater amounts of minerals and nutrients in them, which is due to the diversity of the animals' diets. These animals grow at a natural rate, build better immune systems, don't need antibiotics or hormones, and their bodies are built of healthy vitamins and minerals.

Back to fruits and vegetables. Did you know carrots have only been orange for the past 400 years even though humans have been eating them for nearly 10,000 years? Just like all produce, the carrot has been bred for size and sugar content while drastically reducing its nutrient levels. Purple and yellow carrots have 20 times more phytonutrients than the orange carrots. This scenario has occurred in many of our favorite fruits and vegetables.

The most nutrient-dense part of any fruit or vegetable is in the skin. Plants have evolved to defend themselves from insects and diseases by concentrating certain phytonutrients in their outer skin. Just like these phytonutrients protect the plant from disease, when we consume them they also help protect our bodies from disease.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away! Take responsibility for your own health, no one else can. The father of medicine, Hippocrates, once said, "Let medicine be thy food and let food be thy medicine." And the great Thomas Edison is quoted, "The doctor of the future will give no medicine but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease." I think they would be a little upset with our present healthcare system!

From all of us at Hardscrabble, Zino, Shagbark and Harvest Moon, thank you for your continued support and we wish you a year of health and happiness.

Rob Covino



Recommended Reading
Eating On the Wild Side by Jo Robinson
Primal Blueprint by Mark Sisson