



Beat the

BLOAT

Eat the way your digestive system wants you to and you'll feel better than ever, says holistic nutritionist **Elizabeth Montgomery**

Have you ever felt tired and sluggish after eating? Or wondered why your stomach makes strange sounds? The answer could be that your meal contained too many complex food combinations for adequate digestion. Unfortunately, most westerners have been raised to eat in a way that creates a myriad of digestive issues: bloating, acid indigestion, wind, constipation... the list goes on. Does it sound familiar? In my experience, the most frequent health complaints are linked to poor digestion. Many people rely on antacids to curb digestive discomfort, while others simply resign themselves to living with these (often embarrassing) symptoms. Understanding how to optimise digestive function is essential for greater health. And the good news is, it's easy when you know how!

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There are four main digestive processes: digestion, absorption, assimilation and elimination. Has your mouth ever watered before eating something delicious? That's because when we first see, or smell, and begin to chew food, our mouths secrete digestive enzymes to break it down. Once the food goes into the stomach, depending on the type of food, the digestive organs release appropriate enzymes. Problems begin when we eat foods that are incompatible.

So how does this affect you? The body uses tremendous amounts of energy when it attempts to break down foods that are not compatible in the stomach. This can create large energy dips after eating. Furthermore, it leads to the incomplete breakdown of what you've eaten. The end result is fermentation

and even putrefaction in the digestive tract. This situation then feeds undesirable bacterium, yeasts, moulds and fungus, which thrive in these conditions. Candida overgrowth is a common health issue. It can easily spiral out of control when there is fermentation present, leading to a range of uncomfortable symptoms: bloating, depression, nail fungal overgrowth, headaches, PMS and skin rashes, among other things. Some research suggests unhealthy gut bacteria is linked to autoimmune and autism spectrum disorders.

COMBINING CORRECTLY

The solution to many health issues may be found in understanding that different foods digest in different ways; good digestion is possible when we learn how to eat healthful combinations. This awareness has been around for several decades. The science behind it lies in the fact that different enzymes are required to break down different foods. For example, the enzymes to break down protein are produced in the stomach, and the ones for starches in the mouth. If too many foods that require differing enzymes are eaten together, it leads to indigestion, rancidity and fermentation all along the digestive tract. Much greater digestive health is within reach when we learn to get back to the basics with simple food combining.

THE 3 GOLDEN RULES

1 Never eat protein together with carbs

This is because different enzymes are required to break down these very different foods. Proteins require acidic enzyme secretions and take up to four hours to digest. Carbs require alkaline enzymes and only take up to two and a half hours to digest. When eaten together, the foods do not get properly digested which leads to indigestion. Always combine protein with plenty of low glycemic (low sugar) vegetables only. Carbs also go well with vegetables, but remember never to mix the two.

Good examples of how to eat protein foods are: lentil soup (protein) with salad and steamed green beans, celery and carrot sticks with humous (protein), salad with goats cheese (protein), quinoa (complete protein) served with salad and vegetable soup. Good examples of how to eat carbs are:



vegetable risotto served with side salad, millet porridge with cinnamon, pasta with tomato sauce and a side salad, baked sweet potato with cinnamon and steamed asparagus.

2 Never eat fruit with any other food

Fruit digests very quickly and is 'pre-digested'. On average it takes one piece no more than 30 minutes to exit the stomach. When eaten with other foods it can't be digested, and the result will be fermentation in the digestive tract. One fruit to be careful with is melon, which must be eaten alone. It digests rapidly and can cause fermentation if it is forced to spend too much time in the stomach. Always eat fruit on an empty stomach and ideally early in the morning.

This is also a great way to gently 'wake up' your digestive system.

Lemons, limes, tomatoes and avocados are all technically fruits. However, they combine well with either vegetables or fruits.

3 Avoid drinking with meals

It's best to avoid drinking large amounts of any fluid with meals, otherwise the digestive enzymes will become diluted. You should try to stop drinking 30 minutes before meals and wait at least two hours to drink again after eating. A small amount of liquid with meals is OK. In fact, a small cup of warm water with ginger and lemon before meals can actually aid digestion.

These food combining rules may seem difficult to follow at first, they are in fact very easy when adopted into a healthy eating programme. The results will lead to enhanced digestion, improved energy levels, weight loss and a greater sense of wellbeing.

Find out more

Elizabeth Montgomery is a London-based Holistic Nutritional Therapist who has been studying and exploring; nutrition, eastern medicine, astrology and medicine way healing practices for many years. To arrange a private consultation visit holisticnutrition.co.uk

