



MEET THE EXPERT

Yvonne Wake is a public health nutritionist, fitness expert and life coach.

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10 signs you need to clean up your diet

Your body is constantly communicating its needs, giving outward signs when things need fixing from within. So listen to what it's saying, give it the right nourishment and it will soon be running like a well oiled machine

1 You're doing too much tooting

A musical behind is a sure-fire sign your digestion needs a helping hand. 'Flatulence is caused by a build-up of intestinal gas produced by bacteria in the digestive tract,' explains registered public health nutritionist Yvonne Wake. 'Sometimes foods such as beans, lentils and barley can contribute to this condition, as they contain carbohydrates that can't always be digested and absorbed by the intestines.' Researchers from the University of Michigan Integrative Medicine suggest gradually increasing the amount of beans and other legumes you eat over several weeks to help overcome this problem. 'Make sure you chew your food properly, too,' says Yvonne.

2 You're riding an emotional roller-coaster

In a study from the British Journal Of Nutrition, researchers found that when participants reduced their dietary fat intake from 41 per cent of total energy to 25 per cent, it had an adverse effect on their mood, with significant increases in anger, hostility, tension and anxiety. 'Eating a whole food diet, high in fruit, vegetables and good fats, will help keep a person calm and relaxed,' says Yvonne. 'Eating regularly throughout the day can also help by keeping your blood sugar levels steady to prevent any "hangry" episodes.' For a quick mood boost, Yvonne suggests tryptophan-rich foods, such as fish, turkey, dairy products, eggs, nuts and seeds. 'Tryptophan is used by our bodies to make the happy hormone serotonin,' she says.

3 Your breath smells

While good dental hygiene goes a long way to preventing bad breath, your diet is key, too. 'Low calorie and low carb diets can be a key cause,' says Yvonne. 'High protein eating plans, such as the Atkins diet, have also been known to give you bad breath. When there are not enough carbohydrates for the body to use, the body burns fat, and as a result produces chemicals called ketones that are released in the breath. A balanced diet will help remedy this problem.' It is also worth addressing your bowel movements, if you are not regular, too. 'Constipation can eventually lead to bad breath,' says Yvonne. 'As the waste matter backs up inside your colon, the body reabsorbs the toxins and these then get breathed out.'

4 You keep forgetting things

In order for your brain to keep concentration and memory at their peak, it needs fuelling with the right nutrients. A diet that is high in artery-clogging foods can prevent

sufficient fresh blood from reaching the brain, depriving it of oxygen and nutrients. 'Studies have shown that poor memory and a risk of dementia are linked to low levels of high-density lipoproteins in the blood – what we know as good cholesterol,' says Yvonne. 'Foods such as omega-3-rich salmon, tuna and linseeds can help protect your brain cells and increase memory, as can antioxidant-packed foods, such as blackberries and blueberries. But the most important vitamins for memory are B12 and B6. These are found in eggs, meat and other animal products, and are also added to foods like cereal.'

5 You're eating 'diet food' but not losing weight

Check your food labels for added or hidden sugars, which are now considered to be more damaging than dietary fat to your weight and overall health. A review published in the British Medical Journal found that people who reduced their sugar consumption lost an average of 1.8lb over a period of 10 weeks to eight months. Those who had increased their sugar intake, knowingly or unknowingly, gained 1.7lb. Recent studies have also suggested that raising the levels of good bacteria in your gut with probiotics could help with weight loss. A 2016 review published in the journal Nutrition & Metabolism found that, in particular, the *Lactobacillus* and/or *Bifidobacterium* strains have been shown to reduce abdominal fat and overall body weight.

6 You're always cold

Chilly all the time? It's highly likely your diet is to blame. 'Nutritional deficiencies are often the underlying cause of feeling overly cold when everyone else is warm,' says Yvonne. 'If you skip meals or are on a low calorie diet, your body won't have the energy to keep you warm, as priorities shift to brain and organ function.' By giving your body the correct type and amount of fuel regularly you can help regulate your body temperature. In particular, getting enough good fats is key. 'Low fat diets are a common culprit for feeling cold,' says Yvonne. 'We need body fat to insulate us and when there is none it's difficult to stay warm.'

7 You have constant food cravings

These can be a side effect of restricted diets, according to a study from the University of Toronto. Researchers found that when deprived of foods like chocolate, restrained eaters experienced more food cravings and were more likely to eat the craved food,

indicating that moderation, as opposed to deprivation, is key. It's also worth checking your hydration status. 'We sometimes mistake hunger for thirst, so if you feel a craving coming on try drinking water instead,' says Yvonne.

8 Your last three meals came out of a packet

Those time-saving, pre-packaged meals and snacks can make calorie-counting and portion control a whole lot easier, but there could be a hidden cost to the convenience. In a study published in the journal Health Economics, consumption of processed food positively correlated with an increase in weight, with more weight being gained as people ate more processed food. Another study also found that when fed whole foods rather than processed, the body burns nearly 50 per cent more calories. The bottom line? Making meals from scratch is key to maintaining your weight, health and happiness.

9 You're too burnt out to workout

Our bodies run on three primary fuel sources: protein, carbohydrates and fats, and striking the right balance between them is key to optimal performance. 'As exercise intensity increases, our bodies predominantly use carbohydrates to fuel exercise,' says Yvonne. 'Carbohydrates create glucose in the body, glucose creates glycogen, and glycogen is our energy source.' If you are planning on going hard, make sure you fuel your engine with some healthy carbohydrates. 'On a low carb diet your body may struggle to perform or go at intensities that require a quick breakdown of energy,' says Yvonne. 'Fruit, vegetables and whole grains are good carbohydrate sources.'

10 You've lost your libido

If you are struggling to get fired up in the bedroom, your diet could be a factor. According to a study from the International Journal Of Eating Disorders, malnutrition can lead to a loss of libido, as well as causing sexual anxiety. 'A nutrient-rich, real-food diet is the best way to provide your body with everything it needs for hormone production and all the other physiological functions needed for a healthy sex life,' says Yvonne. 'Eating a healthy diet with at least 10 portions of fruit and vegetables a day and getting regular exercise will put you in peak performance.'



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