

FOOD COMBINING

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O. K., now we're eating good quality food, free of as much chemicals as possible, hopefully grown in nutrient-rich soils. We eat relaxed, chew thoroughly, trying not to drink with our meal, and know to stop eating when our appetite decreases instead of our stomach groaning. But what about the combination of food in our meal? Will all the items digest well together?

Food combining techniques are based on common sense and digestive physiology. Let's go through one example of a poor food combination: the hamburger! The bun, a complex starch, gets a little digestion in the mouth, only minutes are spent in the stomach, but most digestion occurs after it leaves the stomach. The meat, a high protein, gets no digestion in the mouth, but when it reaches the stomach, it goes no further for hours, for here hydrochloric acid and other enzymes do their thing on protein. Now put the two together and you can see a problem develop in the stomach. The bun needs to get out quick, but the meat wants to stay for awhile. So your body ends up compromising, and lets them both out in, say, one hour. The result? Incomplete digestion of the meat and severe damage to all the nutrients in the bun. Therefore, poor food combinations rob your body of potential nutrients and leave behind undigested food debris that may ultimately rot in your lower bowel.

There are other examples of poor food combinations, based on a little more complex understanding of digestion. It would take pages to explain all of them. There are charts out there, but I developed my own since I found most of them too confusing. You can probably cover 90% of food combining principles by simply not mixing high starch and high protein food at the same meal, and try to always eat high protein foods last on your plate. It's time America broke away from "meat and potatoes"!

It has become apparent that just selecting good quality food is not enough to ensure the complete digestion and assimilation of nutrients. Points to consider about improving digestion are emotions, drinking with meals, length of chewing, time of day food is consumed, quality and proper combinations. Lets address each of these factors with our main emphasis on food combining principles and techniques.

Most of us are aware that eating under stress, such as after an argument or on the run, lends to forms of indigestions. This is due to the sensitivity of the digestive tract to shut down under stress, as the body prepares for "flight or fight". Eat when you're relaxed, make time!

All beverages consumed during meals may dilute digestive juices. The body generally compensates by simply manufacturing more; however, this uses up tremendous extra energy that could be used elsewhere in the body. At the very least, the habit tends to minimize the amount of time a person spends chewing their food. This is contrary to what Nature intended. If you must drink with meals, limit it to around 4-5 ounces of room temperature water. Otherwise, drinking up to 15 minutes prior to eating, and 1-2 hours after is generally acceptable.

As I just mentioned, adequate chewing time is very important. Some authorities say one chew for every tooth in your mouth (based on them all being there). Just be sure the food is of a consistency that goes down well without beverage chaser.

Different schools of thought promote varying times of day as to when to eat, especially what to eat at those times. My clinical experiences tend to agree with the "Fit for Life" authors. That is, most people are not hungry in the morning, the appetite not really kicking in till around noon. I also agree to avoid eating much after sunset, especially within one hour prior to bed. Not only does the time of day affect your digestion, but most certainly the quantity does. Simply put, **DON'T OVEREAT!** You'll never digest everything if you let your stomach dictate when to stop eating.