



## Extreme Natural Diets

“Diet” can refer to someone’s natural eating pattern (without regimen), or to a specific regimen, such as for weight loss. These concepts get mixed when someone uses a particular type of natural eating pattern because they decide it is likely to be healthiest, and then systematically implement it. This raises the question as to which “natural” dietary pattern is best. All seem to lead to healthy populations: high-vegetable low-fat Okinawan versus low-vegetable high-protein with Arctic tribes, versus high-fat moderate-everything-else traditional Mediterranean. The low disease risk in these populations may stem from their over-all lifestyle, including unprocessed foods. The contrast in their eating patterns provide direct scientific evidence for there being no best way to eat. The human body can adapt to almost anything so long as those nutrients are processed slowly, meaning natural unprocessed foods, providing the equivalent of a continuous conveyor belt of nutrients to the body’s cells. Processed foods surge nutrients into the blood faster than lean tissue can absorb and use them, forcing nutrients to be cleared as waste or as body fat, neither of which contribute to health. Unfortunately, processed foods are most prevalent in processed modern lifestyles, which add to the strains on the body, increasing nutrient needs just when they are either surging or absent, like a pendulum swing between a flood and drought. These unnatural strains are hard exercise, low sleep, chronic stress, and dietary patterns that flood then disappear. The healthiest people in the world do not spend time exercising or dieting; they just live a natural life. For the rest of us, we need interventions to compensate for the strains, including the one of not having time to really fix our situation. If we are going to make time, it has to be effective, because we don’t really the time to fix it. Without an effect, it was lost time we didn’t have. If the diet works, then we get extra years of life as well as greater mental and physical energy every day. That is worth making time we don’t have. So what is the program? Moderation, starting from what you believe in.

**Extreme diets:** If the body needs to recover from illness, surgery, or exercise, the protein available in random foods might not be enough, even though there are natural societies that do not eat much “protein” food. If the body needs to recover from caloric excesses through life, vegetables will likely be the only viable solution even though there are natural societies that are perfectly healthy not eating vegetables. If you exercise you need immediate glucose recovery to maintain health, even though people who do not exercise do not need to eat carbohydrate. The body can make fats (except the “essential” ones, omega-3 and omega-6). Fats can be relatively low in the diet, but most long-lived societies eat 1/3-1/2 of their calories as fats, showing how variable this can be in healthy people.

- **High protein:** Studies from the early 1900s showed that diets based entirely on meats during the Winter months in the Arctic were roughly 50% fats, 15-25% carbohydrate (glycogen in the muscle of the animals being eaten), and the rest protein. It is fascinating to realize that what we might have thought was almost all protein, is really just a high-quality protein source much more balanced like the traditional Mediterranean diet. Protein sources in the grocery store are nothing like wild animals in these natural higher-protein diets in terms of the type of fats within them and how they are processed before and after slaughter. The link to high protein intake and most major modern diseases is real and the necessary consequence of not being able to feed the general public with wild animals. Optimizing the health of every person on the planet would deplete the planet in short order.
- **High carbohydrate:** Carbs are high in things that don’t move, meaning plants. Most of the carbs in plants are locked up as fiber and therefore never enter our bloodstream. The usable fuel calories in plants are sucrose, which is equal parts fructose and glucose. Fructose mainly goes to the liver for conversion to glucose and is released into the bloodstream to maintain blood sugar. Glucose is used as fuel directly by all of our tissues, particularly the brain and muscle during contraction. The most concentrated sucrose in the plant is fruit. Tubers (yam, potato) and cereals (rice, corn and other grains e.g. oats, wheat, quinoa) are mainly glucose. A high-carb diet could not be healthy because of conversion to fats, unless exercising at athletic levels. The main problem with carbohydrate is their processing, which make them unhealthy in even small amounts.
- **High vegetables:** If you take “carbs” to mean non-fiber carbohydrate, or carbohydrate that actually goes into the bloodstream, vegetables would not qualify. Technically vegetables are carbs, but functionally they are not. A high vegetable diet provides a large amount of phytonutrient, vitamins and minerals, but not calories. Many animals and human societies subsist mainly on vegetables and are likely the healthiest of all. But the amount of fat, protein, and carbohydrate calories fall short of what is needed for high-intensity exercise, surgery recovery, or other forms of intensive stress on the body, such as illness. Vegetables are the single healthiest thing you can eat, but that does not mean they are the only thing you need when under challenges that increase your needs.
- **High fat:** The traditional Mediterranean diet is roughly half dietary fats in terms of calories, but these fats are of much higher quality than what are consumed in modern societies. High fat appears to increase lifespan only