**Why the blood type diet works**

Despite the seeming logic of the argument, one key aspect has remained largely unexplained: What is the link between the blood running through our veins and the type of “engine” we have? Compelling new evidence sheds light on that connection: Finnish researchers have proven that blood group antigens (molecules on the surface of blood cells that determine blood type) serve as an energy source for microorganisms in the gut.

These findings underscore what D’Adamo has been saying for years: “Many of the bacteria in your digestive tract eat the amino sugars and basic sugars that comprise blood type antigens as a way of nourishing themselves—they ‘eat right for their type.’ Now that we’re starting to understand that people prone to excess weight often have different bacteria in their gut than people who are not, we have evidence of blood type as a way to select your diet to optimize beneficial bacteria and lower your weight.”

**How blood type determines microflora**

“Different blood types have different populations of bacteria in their bodies; in fact, certain bacteria are 50,000 times more likely to be found in people with one blood type or another,” notes D’Adamo, who says these differing microorganisms persist from ancient adaptations to food supplies as humans migrated to new geographic regions. “For instance, the microbiome of certain people has developed to take carbohydrate metabolism two to three steps further, so they break down carbs more efficiently,” says D’Adamo, describing blood types that descend from early agricultural societies whose diets were heavy in plant-form carbs. But in women who don’t have this blood type—specific efficiency (such as hunter-gatherer descendants whose microbiomes are designed to digest animal protein), carb-based diets can backfire. Incomplete digestion fuels the growth of unfriendly flora, which produces toxins that researchers have implicated as an underlying cause of weight gain. “It makes sense that if you want to get rid of problem bacteria, you’ve got to stop eating foods you can’t digest, because they’ll serve to feed the bad bacteria,” notes D’Adamo.

Using blood type as a guide to eliminating foods that fuel “bad” flora, and selecting fare that supports “good” growth is a strategy that has already had success: “We have clear-cut observations that when we put people with SIBO [an overgrowth of harmful bacteria in the small intestine] on the blood type diet, the condition rectifies itself, usually within six weeks,” D’Adamo says. And when it comes to weight loss, success is just as fast, if not faster—women report losing up to 12 pounds in the first week!

**Weight loss is just the beginning**

Optimizing digestive function impacts a wide range of body systems, which is why blood type diets help resolve problems like internal inflammation, nutrient malabsorption, immune system dysfunction and hormonal imbalance. D’Adamo notes, “The biggest improvements we see involve autoimmune thyroiditis, psoriasis and other skin problems and fatigue. These conditions normally result from having had a compromised eliminative process, so it makes sense that they improve with the switch to optimal foods.”

Those health perks are particularly beneficial for women born before 1971. “When I was in my 40s, I started to fall apart,” recalls Wendy Minotti, 52. (See her story on page 36.) “But as soon as I started eating for my blood type, my hormones seemed more balanced. I lost weight. My chin no longer breaks out and my skin is firmer.”

**BLOOD TYPES AT A GLANCE**

**TYPE O**

High levels of stomach acid help this blood type, which descended from hunter-gatherers, easily process all kinds of meat.

**TYPE A**

As people began cultivating crops, their microorganisms adapted to allow for the optimal digestion of all kinds of plant foods.

**TYPE B**

Type Bs, descendants of nomadic tribes that raised herds to survive, are efficient digesters of plant foods and red meat.

**TYPE AB**

Type ABs arose from the comingling of A and B populations, and as a result, harbor digestive advantages of both types.
Danielle Dungen, 39, a military wife and mom who felt driven to drop pounds after glancing at her medical chart during a routine exam and seeing what the doctor had written: obese. Suddenly she was filled with fear that she wouldn’t live to see her two children grow up.

Danielle began to investigate healthy lifestyle options, which led her to Eat Right 4 Your Type by Peter J. D’Adamo, N.D. She decided to test the book’s theory that each blood type thrives on a specific diet, and got started by giving up wheat, gluten and corn.

Danielle felt encouraged after the first day when she noticed she had more energy than usual. Even her belly bloat and stomach pains subsided. And she really became a believer after the first month when she discovered that eating lean meat and produce had helped her lose 20 pounds.

Today, 13 years after losing a total of 88 pounds, Danielle is still following that recipe for success, and has gone on to become a personal trainer. Best of all, she says, “I not only saw my children graduate but I now have energy to play with my granddaughter!”

Considered the original blood type, Type Os are descended from hunter-gatherers who faced great physical demands and relied on animal protein to meet them. D’Adamo explains that Type O microorganisms are designed to process meat very efficiently, so metabolites left over when they stick to a high-protein/low-carb diet.

1. Eat lean beef, lamb, turkey, chicken or fish (especially bass, cod, halibut, sole and rainbow trout) as often as you wish. For best results, when choosing beef, D’Adamo advises seeking out grass-fed animals, which are leaner than their grain-fed counterparts and higher in conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a fatty acid that assists the body in burning its own fat stores.

2. Avoid wheat germ and wheat products (including breads). D’Adamo explains that the digestive tracts of Type O individuals can’t tolerate the gluten they contain, so metabolic rate slows in response. “I have seen overweight Type Os, who had been unsuccessful with other diets, quickly lose weight solely by eliminating wheat from their diets,” he says. Also smart: Steer clear of legumes and beans, which can impair Type O digestion and produce nagging symptoms such as fluid retention and tiredness.

3. Favor foods that support the thyroid. Type O’s tend to have low levels of iodine, D’Adamo points out—and because the mineral regulates thyroid function, shortfalls can result in a slower thyroid. To increase iodine intake, he advises consuming kelp, seaweed, dairy, lentils and soy-based foods, and reducing salt. And avoid cruciferous veggies such as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and mustard greens since they harbor goitrogen compounds that can inhibit thyroid function.

4. Round out your diet with fruit and veggies. D’Adamo recommends leafy greens, bananas, cherries, blueberries, figs, mangoes and plums. Their alkaline pH won’t tip Type O tissues (which are naturally on the acidic side) into an unhealthy state of over-acidity.

Then follow the lead of Shelley Brennan, who overcame stubborn pounds and a laundry list of health complaints, thanks to D’Adamo’s Eat Right 4 Your Type. “Before I started the diet, I was sick all the time,” shares Shelley, who was troubled by severe allergies, recurrent bronchitis, sinus infections and yeast infections, plus seemed to catch every cold and flu virus that made the rounds. She tried upping the intensity of her exercise routine and cutting back on carbs to get her weight and health under control, but despite her efforts, she wasn’t seeing results.

Once Shelley began eating for her blood type, though, everything changed. “Little by little my illnesses started disappearing,” she shares. “And I discovered one reason why I had been feeling so lousy despite constantly working out—it’s because Type As aren’t supposed to exercise as intensely as I was doing.”

Today Shelley is 40 pounds trimmer, with a laundry list of health complaints (under the supervision of her doctor) and feeling more vibrant than she ever thought possible. She raves, “The blood type diet has truly changed my life!”

Ideal Type A Dinner

Mustard tea-marinated salmon with sautéed veggie-quinoa pasta medley.

D’Adamo explains that the digestive tracts of Type As have an abundance of digestive enzymes in the upper gut, as well as bacteria in the lower gastrointestinal tract, that help them digest grains and plants that can be difficult to break down.

1. Fill up on fruit (like berries, figs, plums, apples, avocados, pears, and peaches) and veggies (like broccoli, carrots, collard greens, kale, spinach and garlic). These plant-form complex carbohydrates constitute prime Type A fuel.

2. Favor fish and poultry, but limit intake to four servings of fish (such as salmon, trout and red snapper) and three servings of poultry per week. According to D’Adamo, Type As can tolerate moderate amounts of these foods, but since they produce fewer meat-digesting enzymes, they need to be careful not to overdo it. And red meat is best avoided when possible: D’Adamo cautions that Type As process it so poorly, it puts them at heightened risk of intestinal bacterial overgrowth and increased fat storage.

3. Snack on nuts and seeds. Type As flourish on plant-form protein, so peanuts, pumpkin seeds, walnuts and nut butters are top snack picks. Other protein sources D’Adamo recommends: beans and legumes (like black beans, black-eyed peas, green beans, lentils and soybeans) and other soy products (like milk, miso and tofu).

4. Enjoy up to three servings of cereals (like cornmeal, buckwheat, oatmeal and oat bran); grains and pastas (like oat, rye, barley, rice and quinoa); and breads and muffins (favoring soy flour bread, rice cakes, cornbread or muffins) per day. Type A microorganisms are ideally suited to breaking down these grains, so the body gets optimal nutrition from the carbohydrates and protein they supply.
Then follow the lead of Wendy Minotti, who remembers how her figure and confidence were shot after having five children. “I stretched my body out so many times, it wasn’t even funny,” shares Wendy, who tried to get back in shape by living on salads. The approach backfired, though—she was never satisfied and would sometimes resort to eating a book of cheese sandwiches just to curb her midday hunger.

Wendy’s realization that weight loss didn’t have to involve deprivation came after watching a friend unravel Blood Types, Body Types and You at a birthday party. The premise of book, which is part of a series by Joseph Christiano, N.D. (go to BodyRedesigning.com for details) intrigued Wendy. She adopted the way of eating and was stunned when just one sandwich on oatmeal bread left her feeling full.

Soon Wendy’s checkbones emerged, and her joint aches, facial rashes, allergies, depression and hot flashes disappeared. Even her formerly saggy skin looked tighter. “It’s not just a losing weight thing,” Wendy raves. “It’s a looking younger thing. It’s the best antiaging method I’ve ever found!”

**Your slimming strategies**

Type B probably came into being as a mutation that occurred when Type Os moved into harsher climates like the Himalayas, Peter D’Adamo, N.D., says. These nomads herded and domesticated animals, so they lived on meat and dairy, as well as produce. Type Bs do well on animal and vegetable foods, D’Adamo explains, but have problems with some foods that can be resolved with smart choices.

1. **Favor lean red meat (like lamb, venison and beef) and fish (like salmon, cod, flounder and halibut). And choose turkey over chicken since the latter contains a protein that can interfere with metabolism in Type Bs.** Says D’Adamo, “Ask a B about the biggest thing they get out of this diet, and they’ll say, ‘It taught me not to eat chicken, and I’m never going to go back.’”

2. **Enjoy dairy. “The basic sugar in the Type B molecule is D-galactosamine, the same sugar present in milk,” says D’Adamo. This compatibility lets Bs do well on animal and vegetable foods, D’Adamo explains, but have problems with some foods that can be resolved with smart choices.**

3. **Eat your fill of veggies (like leafy greens, beets, carrots, eggplant, peppers and sweet potatoes) and fruit (like kiwi, cherries, cranberries, grapes, plums, watermelon, papaya and pineapple).**

4. **Have carbohydrates in moderation.** D’Adamo advises eating two to four servings of millet, oat bran, oatmeal, rice, rice bran or spell weekly, and aiming for up to two servings daily of cereals, pastas or breads made with these grains. But since corn, buckwheat, rye and wheat can lower Type B’s metabolic efficiency and trigger blood sugar imbalances, products that contain these grains should be avoided. Nuts and seeds can pose similar problems, so it’s best to avoid peanuts, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds.

**Ideal Type B Dinner**

- Curry lamb–sweet potato kebabs
- Mahimahi with yam puree and braised kale.

Then follow the lead of Sharon Lewinter, who had struggled with countless diets before her mom clued her in to the blood-type approach. “I constantly felt bad about myself,” admits Sharon, who struggled with tiredness, bad skin, depression and varicose veins. “One day I was talking about my frustrations with my mom, and she mentioned a book that had been collecting dust in her attic—Eat Right 4 Your Type. I read it that night and got started the next day.”

As an AB blood type, the first few days on the plan were challenging for Sharon because she could no longer indulge in favorites like pasta, french fries and chicken. But the immediate results she saw after eliminating these foods helped her power through. “I dropped 15 pounds in two weeks,” she says. “I’ve never seen results like that with any diet!”

**Your slimming strategies**

Type AB is the newest blood type—it emerged as populations bearing both A and B blood types began to intermarry. And while Type ABs are prone to some of the same digestive traps that impact Types A and B, they share some of the benefits, as well: As D’Adamo points out, ABs’ “combined” type allows them to tolerate and digest a wide variety of foods that suit both Type As and Type Bs.

1. **Fill your plate with veggies (aiming for three to five servings per day), seafood (such as salmon and tuna) and turkey. When eating red meat, make it more of a side dish.** D’Adamo explains that the intestinal makeup of Type ABs doesn’t digest red meat efficiently, and as a result, meat is stored as fat. That’s why he advises limiting beef to no more than three 5 oz. servings of lean cuts per week. Also avoid chicken since the same protein that makes it a problem for Type Bs can slow metabolism in Type ABs.

2. **Enjoy dairy. Type ABs share the Type B tendency to thrive on milk, but in moderation.**

3. **Have carbohydrates in moderation. Type ABs do well on grains in general, and can tolerate occasional servings of wheat germ and wheat, as well as four servings of millet, oat bran, oatmeal, rice, rice bran or spell, and seven servings of bread, crackers and pasta per week. But since corn and buckwheat can disrupt AB digestion and lower metabolism, D’Adamo advises avoiding these grains and foods that contain them.**

4. **Snack on fresh fruit.** According to D’Adamo, the best choices for Type AB individuals include cherries, grapes, plums, watermelon, figs and kiwifruit, which can be enjoyed up to three to four times per day. One to avoid: oranges. Type ABs have alkaline stomachs that are sensitive to the acids in this citrus fruit.

**Ideal Type AB Dinner**

- Turkey over chicken since the latter contains the same protein that makes it a problem for Type Bs.
- Curried beets and goat cheese.
- Sauteed garlic kale and collard greens.