

How's Your BLOOD SUGAR?

Managing Blood Sugar is a Key to Boosting Energy Levels and Healthy Living

By Lisa K. Harris

We are what we eat. Or more to the point, we are what we don't eat.

"Managing blood sugar is the key to healthy living," asserted Dr. Catherine Wilbert. "What we put into or don't put into our body affects our overall health."

A doctor of naturopathic medicine, nutrition consultant and certified physical trainer, Wilbert was a guest speaker at a health seminar at Sunflower Farmers Market in January.

Boosting energy levels and improving health starts with small changes in lifestyle, Wilbert noted. "The tiniest change can have the broadest implications."

Many of her patients ask for guidance on diet and exercise after breaking their New Year's resolutions, she said. "So often people set themselves up for failure by trying to accomplish too much in too short of time. This is unrealistic."

Wilbert has found that her patients can be successful by stabilizing their blood sugar.

"Once they've managed one little change, like blood sugar management, my patients feel better and become healthier."

Stabilizing blood sugar in the morning and after workouts is crucial, said Wilbert.

"These are the two most important times to manage blood sugar and they are the ones most often missed."

According to Wilbert, people skip breakfast and after-workout snacks in order to lose weight. "This is a misconception," she said. "People who do this are burning muscle, not fat."

The result is shifting ones body composition.

"People get fatter instead of thinner if they behave this way," she said.

Muscle determines metabolism. "The more you have the more calories you burn," she said. "The only way to lose fat is to build muscles," which is accomplished by strength training and a proper diet. Wilbert recommends eating adequate protein spread out over three small daily meals and two snacks in between. "A healthy amount of protein is six ounces per meal."

The most important meal is breakfast, according to Wilbert, because "it sets you up for the day." It's also the most challenging meal because people don't want to invest a lot of time in making breakfast, and thus make poor choices.

"A lot of people only drink a cup of coffee and eat a bagel," she said. "A bagel contains 70 grams of carbs, or two-thirds of your daily requirement. You'll feel great for two hours while your blood sugar spikes, and then you crash and fall asleep at your desk."

"Blood sugar determines energy levels, cardiovascular health and weight management," she continued. "It determines everything."

If the body can't use the sugar immediately, as in the case of the coffee and bagel breakfast, the body will convert sugar to fatty acid and store it either as fat or send it to the liver to produce cholesterol. "Either way you lose," Wilbert said.

She recommends starting the day right with a low-fat source of protein. Easy sources are soy cheese, turkey sausage, scrambled eggs (use four eggs whites and one whole egg). "You can wrap it up in a burrito and eat it on the way to work."

She also recommends a protein shake if making the burrito is too time-consuming.

For lunch and dinner, Wilbert suggests a balanced meal. Her favorite choice is grilled chicken breast or wild salmon; whole grain bread or a baked sweet potato; and steamed cruciferous vegetables.

As a three-time champion body builder, cyclist, and triathlete, Wilbert recommends eating protein one hour after working out.

"In order to build muscle, you have to eat protein," she said. "What you put into your mouth to support your training matters."

Proper diet and sugar balance is crucial to successful training, according to Wilbert. "I've seen athletes outperform others by eating right. Success isn't all exercise; it's what you eat as well."

"Always read food packaging labels before you buy anything," Wilbert suggested. Manufacturers

make health claims on packages, but not all of these are accurate.

"Think of the front of the package as the marketing gimmick," she said. "There are a lot of claims and room for gray areas about health (within the US Food and Drug Administration rules for package claims). The back is the truth about the ingredients."

"Take protein bars," Wilbert said. The front of the package may state there are twenty grams of protein. "But you need to look at the source." If the list of ingredients mentions hydrolyzed, collagen, or gelatin protein sources, "your body can't use any of it. It's what we call bio-unavailable."

These sources of protein are indigestible because they are made from "bones, beaks, and hooves," she said. "The parts of the animals left over after the meat is removed. Besides being disgusting, your body just passes it through its digestive system."

Instead, look for soy and whey as protein sources, Wilbert said. "These two sources your body can use. One is from a plant and the other from milk."

Diet is key to the body's health, especially for athletes. "I think of the body as a race car. It's not going far on water, but give it some high performance fuel, like a balanced wholesome diet, and it's off and running," Wilbert said. A proper diet will take athletes to a place they never thought they could obtain."

Dr. Wilbert, who is based out of New Orleans, is the author of "Set on Success: Body and Life Transformations." She is the founder of PhytoCeutical Formulations, which produces nutritional supplements and shakes, and the owner of Vitality Juice, Java and Smoothie Bar, a retail nutritional supplement store located in Louisiana and New Mexico. Her Web address is pcflabs.com.

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Catherine Wilbert, wellness expert and doctor of naturopathic medicine. Photo courtesy Catherine Wilbert

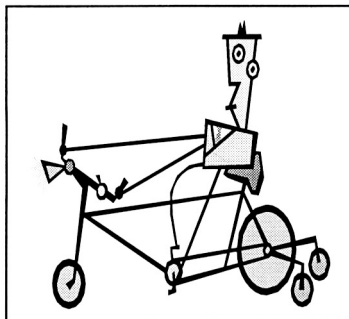


Catherine Wilbert, bodybuilder. Photo courtesy Catherine Wilbert

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