



GET YOUR BODY BUZZING

Julie Meeks

Think your body's not performing to its potential? It might be time to change the petrol you are using.

Have you ever tried eating 20-30 different foods every day? It is not an easy job but the food we eat gives your body fuel to function. When we don't give our bodies the right type and amount of foods, it's like trying to run our car on unleaded petrol when we should have used leaded petrol. We should be consuming between 20-30 foods every day to ensure an adequate amount and variety of essential nutrients. Most of us perform the bulk of our work, recreation and family obligations between 7am and 6pm, yet many people insist on eating the majority of their food after 6pm. Our muscles and brain cells thrive on having a steady, constant supply of fuel available and this means it's really important to eat regularly and not skip meals.

Many people try and take a short cut and get their energy from elsewhere. 'Energy drinks' such as Red Bull, V, Lift Plus and Black Stallion have flooded the market with a vengeance. These products have been promoted to various groups but primarily appeal to athletes, children and teenagers.

However, a newspaper recently reported on an incident that indicates they might be attracting an entirely new target group. Armed robbers.

"A youth's heavy consumption of the energy drink Red Bull could explain (but not excuse) in part why he robbed a supermarket at knifepoint, a judge said yesterday. The court was told that before the robbery the youth was drinking up to 11 cans of Red Bull per day which would put him in a state of caffeine intoxication leading to impaired judgement and delirium".

Most authorities agree that the safe daily upper limit for caffeine is 300mg for the average person. Eleven cans of Red Bull contain 880 mg.

There is no doubt that caffeine is a stimulant and can give us some energy but it cannot be sustained and it is obviously not advisable to head down the track of the armed robber.

The human body uses several types of fuel - protein (from our muscles), fat (stored as fatty tissue) and carbohydrate (stored as glycogen in the muscles and liver). The main fuel for our brain is carbohydrate, stored as glycogen in the liver and muscles. When stores are low, blood sugar levels are also low. This is when we feel tired and lacking in energy, making daily living, especially exercise - very difficult.

Foods rich in carbohydrate include bread, pasta, rice, potato, fruit, cereals, milk and yoghurt. Some of these foods need to be eaten at each meal to give our brain and muscles a continuous supply of fuel.

Despite popular belief and current diet trends, there is no merit in having a diet with no or little carbohydrate as this will result in fatigue and does not promote fat loss in the long term.

The F Word

You can afford to eat a much larger volume of food if your fat intake is reduced

Bowl of pasta with tomato based sauce	3g of fat
Big Mac with regular fries	52.5g of fat
Chicken and Salad Roll	4.5 g of fat

The importance of eating can often take a backseat when times are tough but this is when a good diet will benefit us most - to give us the endurance we need to get through it all.

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