"Foods That Activate Your Gut, Brain, and Metabolism"
Webinar Questions Answered by William Li, MD

Please note that these are brief answers to complex questions and are not meant as medical advice. Please seek medical advice from your personal healthcare professional for more complete information.

What about the role of hormones in weight gain? especially with menopause?

Hormones have a critical effect on weight control. Some, like thyroid hormone, help the body burn stored fuel, while others like estrogen, affect the growth of adipose cells. Leptin is one of the hormones made by fat cells that influence the brain to sense fullness and lower appetite, while adiponectin, also made by fat, improves the body's storage of fuel in partnership with insulin. Hormones are part of your body's complex orchestra of signals that control fat growth and weight regulation.

Is fetal fat development influenced by maternal dietary intake? Genetics?

Fetal fat development is part of a genetic program during development, and fat lobules begin to be formed in the developing fetus' body between 3-4 months of pregnancy. Maternal diet has been suggested as one cause of early obesity, especially if there is excessive intake of high fat foods. More research, however, is needed in this area to fully understand the impact of maternal diet on fat development after birth.

Can't you push your fat cell size from overeating any type of food, not just "junk' food?

That is correct. Overconsumption of calories from any source can expand fat cell size and number. Hence, the importance of moderation when it comes to eating — even healthy foods!

Lots of people (some here and more so in Europe) eat unhealthy foods, such as French Fries and soda, and stay thin. Why do you think that is?

Body composition is the result of many factors such as overall diet, physical activity, sleep, medications, hormones, stress levels, underlying disease, environmental exposures, and behavior, to name just a few. So, diet is only one factor. I have lived in Europe and while it is true that many people there do eat fries and drink sodas, on the whole their overall diet is much healthier than what is eaten by Americans AND their levels of daily exercise, such as walking, is much, much higher.

What is considered is a "healthy" amount of body fat. Is there a percentage?

This is a simple question that does not have a simple answer, because every individual is different, and people come in different sizes, shapes, ages, lifestyles, and behaviors. That said, the general range of 'healthy' percentage of body fat is:

- Men: 10-20%
- Women: 20-30%

How does this fit in with the research on time-restricted feeding (long fasts, not always eating when hungry)?

There is a lot of fascinating and important research on time-restricted feeding, which is an active and still swiftly moving area of research. As it relates to managing body fat, the best practical advice is to: 1) wait a bit before eating after you get up; and 2) don't eat after dinner. This increases the natural period of time-restricted feeding that you do every single night when you sleep. The longer you are not eating, the longer the period where your insulin levels decrease and your metabolism can switch to and stay in fat burning mode, which helps to manage body fat.

Fat decreases metabolism. Is it true muscle increase metabolism? And does our metabolism go down due to lifestyle changes leading to muscle loss (such as desk jobs) and therefore an increase in fat mass leading to an unhealthy cycle?

Muscle does increase metabolism because the greater the muscle mass, the more energy it takes to maintain it. Of course, being inactive reduces muscle mass because your body does not want to expend unnecessary energy, so you want to both build muscle and use it.

Do low levels of C-reactive protein indicate lower levels of visceral fat?

C-reactive protein (CRP) is a very useful blood marker for inflammation on a general level. High levels of CRP indicate that inflammation is happening somewhere, but it doesn't pinpoint the location, or the type of tissue involved. However, people with higher amounts of excess visceral fat will tend to have elevated CRP because excess fat is pro-inflammatory.

If you have a normal BMI, how do you find out if you have abnormal amount of visceral fat?

BMI does not tell you how or where your 'body mass' is located or distributed. This is one of the pitfalls of using BMI as a health indicator. For example, a normal BMI could have the mass distributed in muscle, bone, or fat — and the number does not distinguish between any of these tissues, including visceral fat. The best way to look at visceral fat is to use a tool called a dual x-ray absorptiometry, or DEXA scan.

Could I get a list of these 150 foods that increase thermogenesis?

I have lists of all these foods broken down by where you would find them in the grocery store in my book Eat to Beat Your Diet, which is available on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/Eat-Beat-Your-Diet-Activate/dp/1538753901/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2CUM9GPHROR16&keywords=eat+to+beat+your+diet&qid=1693675471&sprefix=eat+to+beat+your+diet%2Caps%2C108&sr=8-1