

Why the blood

For decades women have been losing weight—and keeping it off—by eating right for their type. Meanwhile, scientists have been bickering over its credibility. But a new finding could change all that.

Dr. Oz is
Type O!

Tapped-in as he is to women's weight concerns, it's not surprising that Mehmet C. Oz, M.D., is familiar with blood type diets. But the usually unflappable physician is surprised at how often he's asked about the popular approach: "It is remarkable how infrequently I can get out of any kind of audience's presence without someone asking me a question on this topic," he's told radio listeners. And as a Type O descended from hunter-gatherers, Dr. Oz admits to feeling more "vital energy" when he eats right for his type. "I know when I eat these types of meals [proteins, vegetables] and I don't eat too many of the carbs, it's better," he said on a recent episode of the *The Dr. Oz Show*. "Other folks can get away with the carbs—they do not have much of a problem with it."

For more than a decade, a group of nutrition experts and dieters alike have made the same observation: Tailoring diet to blood type leads to lasting weight loss, plus health benefits including increased energy and relief from GI problems. The researcher widely recognized as the authority on blood type diets, Peter D'Adamo, N.D., author of *Eat Right 4 Your Type*, explains the observation like this, "If you put the right kind of gas in the right kind of car, it runs very well—probably runs a lot longer. But if you put in the wrong gas, it'll run for a while, and you probably won't notice the difference until something goes wrong." Two things we're sure to notice? Belly fat that won't budge and tiredness that won't lift.

PHOTO: D. DIPASUPIL/FILMMAGIC. GRAPHICS: J. SON. MAIN TEXT: MELISSA GOTTHARDT. REAL-LIFE TEXT: LISA MAXBAUER AND D. SOULLA

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 *microbiomes* 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 descended 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 indications that when we put people with SIBO [an overgrowth of harmful

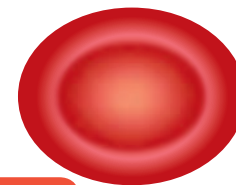
bacteria in the small intestine] on the blood type diet, the condition rectifies itself, usually within six weeks," D'Adamo says. And when it comes to weight loss, success is just as fast, if not faster—women report losing up to 12 pounds in the first week!

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."

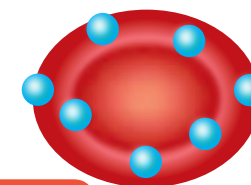
Those health perks are particularly beneficial for women born before 1971. "When I was in my 40s, I started to fall apart," recalls Wendy Minotti, 52. (See her story on page 36.) "But as soon as I started eating for my blood type, my hormones seemed more balanced. I lost weight. My chin no longer breaks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

BLOOD TYPES AT A GLANCE



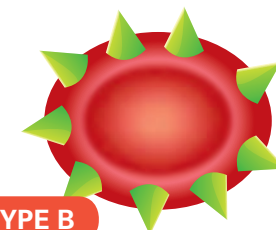
TYPE O

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



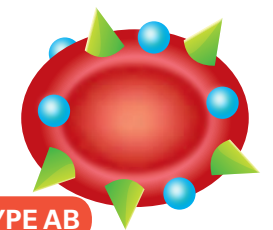
TYPE A

As people began cultivating crops, their microbiomes 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.

IF YOU ARE TYPE O

Then follow the lead of 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!"

Your slimming strategies

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 microbiomes are designed to process meat very efficiently, so metabolic rate is highest 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 Os 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, seafood and—in moderation—iodized 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.

Ideal Type O Dinner



Pomegranate steak served with sautéed horseradish, spinach and carrot salad.

IF YOU ARE TYPE A

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 plagued 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, off all medications (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!"

Your slimming strategies

Early Type As emerged when hunter-gatherer game sources started to become scarce, and humans turned to agriculture to expand their food supply. As their diets changed to more of a semi-vegetarian approach, their microbiomes adapted to the crops they cultivated. The result: 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.

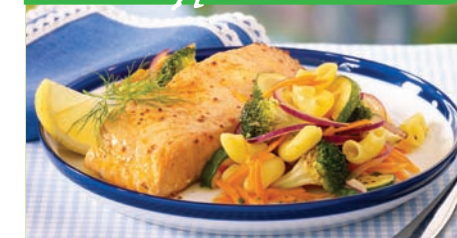
1 Fill up on fruit (like berries, figs, plums, apples, avocados, pears and peaches) and veggies (like broccoli, carrots, collard greens, kale, spinach and garlic). These plant-form complex carbs constitute prime Type A fuel.

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 cereal (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 microbiomes are ideally suited to breaking down these grains, so the body gets optimal nutrition from the carbohydrates and protein they supply.

Ideal Type A Dinner



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

Danielle Dungen, 39, San Antonio
Height: 4'11"

NOW:
109 lbs

Danielle lost
88 lbs!



THEN: 197 lbs



Shelley Brennan, 48, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC, Canada
Height: 5'4"

NOW:
Size 6

Shelley dropped
5 pants sizes



THEN: Size 11



**Wendy lost
22 lbs!**



Wendy
Minotti, 52,
DeLand, FL,
Height: 5'8"

**NOW:
148 LBS**

THEN: 170 lbs

IF YOU ARE TYPE B

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 three grilled-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 unwrap *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 cheekbones 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 thrive on three to four servings of yogurt and cheese and up to five servings of milk each week. (If you're lactose intolerant, incorporate cultured fare like yogurt and kefir into your diet for two weeks—their probiotics enhance the gut's ability to break down lactose so you can gradually introduce other dairy.)

3 Eat your fill of veggies (like leafy greens, beets, carrots, eggplant, peppers and sweet potatoes) and fruit (like bananas, 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 spelt 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 Bs' 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 served with wild and basmati rice pilaf, and sautéed garlic kale and collard greens.

PHOTO: WENDY: MARC VAUGHN, H & M; BROOKE SANE, STYLIST; ROBBIN K. JOHNSON, INSET; COURTESY OF W. MINOTTI.

IF YOU ARE TYPE AB

Then follow the lead of Sharon Lewinter, who had struck out 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!"

Flash forward three years: Sharon is 72 pounds trimmer, still shedding inches and all the health issues that used to plague her have disappeared. Says Sharon, "It's a miracle that I no longer struggle with any of the problems I used to—including my weight!"

Your slimming strategies

Type AB is the newest blood type—it emerged as populations bearing both A and B blood types began to intermingle. 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 cod, red snapper, 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 dairy food, especially options rich in digestion-enhancing probiotics like yogurt and kefir. This blood type also processes egg-form protein efficiently, so enjoy up to five eggs a week.

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 spelt, and seven servings of bread, crackers or muffins each 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



Mahimahi with yam puree and braised kale.



**Sharon lost
72 lbs!**



Sharon
Lewinter, 32,
New York City
Height: 5'6"

**NOW:
118 LBS**

THEN: 190 lbs

PHOTO: SHARON: MATTHEW DUTILE, H & M; VALERIE WEISS, STYLIST; ELODIE OZANNE, INSET; COURTESY OF S. LEWINTER, STILL: FOOD & PHOTO