



# BLOOD TIES



*Following the right diet for your blood type could be the answer to losing stubborn weight and curing your most persistent ailments. By Nicky Carter*

**I**f you constantly feel bloated and tired, struggle to shed the excess kilos or suffer from recurring illnesses, the answer to your problems could be encoded in your blood. There is a small group of modern-day clinicians who theorise that we inherited the traits of our blood types from our hunter-gatherer, agrarian ancestors.

#### Breaking it down

Dr D'Adamo, author of *The New York Times* best-seller *Eat Right For Your Type*, says each blood type formed specific antibodies against certain foods and is an elemental part of our genetic inheritance.

'There had to be a reason why there were so many paradoxes in diet studies and disease survival,' he says. 'Why certain people lose weight and others do not on the same diet, or why certain people keep their vitality as they age.'

#### Unlocking the benefits

The key to the blood-type diet or eating plan resides in individual biological profiling, which, once identified (through blood tests), dictates the foods we should eat for our blood types. The benefits of this include a smoother running digestive system, weight loss and more energy. Fans of Dr D'Adamo and the blood-type diet include Jennifer Lopez, Gwyneth Paltrow, Hugh Grant and cardiothoracic surgeon and TV personality Dr Oz,

American naturopath Dr Peter D'Adamo, a pioneer in this field, believes that the evolution of blood types enabled our ancestors to outwit the shifting environmental conditions and that blood type, diet and health are inextricably linked, transcending ethnicity, race, gender, age or lifestyle. Here we take a closer look at his theory.

who credits the system for giving him 'more vital energy'.

Complementary and alternative medicine healthcare practitioner James Liddell, from the Lifestyle Clinic in Tokai, Cape Town, is also a convert. 'As a scientist, I initially thought that it was a diet fad, but having suffered IBS (irritable bowel syndrome), I was prepared to try anything. Within days of following my correct blood type diet, my IBS was gone,' he said. 'From my own experience, I have come to the

conclusion that the blood type diet prescribed by Dr D'Adamo works for 80% of people.'

#### A different view

Dr D'Adamo's diet is not without its critics, of course. One of those critics is principal dietitian at the Nutrition Information Centre at Stellenbosch University and spokesperson for the Association of Dietetics in SA, Irene Labuschagne. 'There is absolutely no scientific link between our blood group and the diet we eat. This diet plan is full of pseudo-science and it has the potential to scare people into avoiding a great many healthy, nutritious foods in an effort to take a short cut to losing weight.'

This opinion is loudly echoed by the majority of the global medical community, whose main argument is that Dr D'Adamo's study not only contains no references and seems to be built mainly around anecdotal evidence, but also that no clinical trials he claims to have run have been published, and a significant number of the claims made in his books are unsubstantiated. Also, a 2004 study concluded that the ABO-group evolutionary timeline he suggests (see 'Type set', right) is extremely inaccurate. These blood groups evolved around five million years ago in a common ancestor of humans and other primates, not 50 000 years ago in modern humans, or indeed even in the order Dr D'Adamo suggests.

#### Way of thinking

Dr D'Adamo doesn't believe that the lack of clinical proof cited by his detractors is truly relevant. 'The delightful fantasy that everything in modern medicine has a strong evidence basis is exactly that - a delightful fantasy. The majority of

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herbal medicines, many of them used successfully since antiquity and the basis for many modern drugs, also have weak evidential basis in modern science,' he says.

'We've done some very simple polling that shows that in a rather large number of online responders, the level of satisfaction following one of the four blood-type-specific diets sits consistently at about 85% across all four blood types.' ■

**MEDICAL**

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#### Type set

- **O, for 'oldest' or 'original' - the hunter.** It was the first blood type to evolve (according to Dr D'Adamo) and is specific to the hunter-gatherers who wandered the Earth around 50 000 BCE. Type Os should opt for a high protein, meat-based diet, avoiding wheat, grains and dairy products. Aerobics, martial arts, contact sports and running are best suited for this group.
- **A, for 'about-turn' - the agrarian or cultivator.** Evident around 15 000 BCE, when our ancestors abandoned their hunter-gathering ways and adopted a more vegetarian-based diet. This group should follow a predominantly veggie diet filled with nuts, beans, rice, pasta and fruit, and do calming exercises such as yoga and t'ai chi.
- **B, for 'balance' - the nomad.** It entered the stream at around 10 000 BCE. Thanks to these nomadic ancestors always being on the move and therefore having to become more varied in their choice of foods, modern-day type Bs can enjoy a more varied diet, including meat, dairy, grains and vegetables. These types do best with moderate physical exercise requiring mental balance, such as hiking, cycling, tennis and swimming.
- **AB, for 'amazing benefits' - the enigma.** Considered to be the most modern blood type, having evolved a 'mere' 1 000 years ago, they have the pick of the crop, being able to choose from a wide variety of the foods suitable for both blood group A and B. Similarly, a combination of the exercises for types A and B will suit them best.