Eat Well and Feel Great

The Teenager's Guide to Nutrition and Health

Tina Lond-Caulk

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Foreword

As a nutritionist myself for over 20 years, I have witnessed first-hand the problems parents experienced raising their children, because their GPs had no nutritional information and 'domestic science' was abolished in many schools in the early 1960s. Even after I wrote *The Food Doctor for Babies and Children* in 2003, clients would call me in despair at the lack of readily available information to deal with weaning, teething, food intolerances and allergies, and my clinic was frequented by a plethora of young teens who simply wanted reliable information on everything from digestive disorders, skin problems and raging hormones to eating disorders.

Then along came the marvellous Tina Lond-Caulk (aka the Nutrition Guru), whose training and knowledge, determination and personal experience of motherhood have secured her place in the world of nutrition. She specialises in visiting schools up and down the country to deliver research-backed, informative lectures to students, teachers and parents alike, all in a digestible and simple-to-assimilate format. Alongside her presentations, she engages the students with practical work – the first hands-on approach for over half a century.

She has now collated the best of these teachings into the glorious book you hold in your hands and she has written it in a language that teenagers can understand, but which parents and teachers can be reassured has all been carefully researched and is backed up by published medical information.

At a time when the world is looking at significant issues such as sustainability, avoiding food waste, lowering fast food consumption and encouraging us all to cook real food for proper nourishment, this book could not provide better all-round support for the health and well-being of our next generation.

Tina, I salute you on such an engaging and expertly written book!

Vicki Edgson
Retired nutritional therapist

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Introduction

This easy-to-use handbook is a guide on how to optimise your well-being so that you can achieve boundless energy and vitality, look and feel fantastic every day, and strive for all the things you want to do with your life.

Each year, I work with over 20,000 school students in my Food for Life education programme and over the last 20 years I've met hundreds of people in my busy clinical practice as an evidence-based nutritionist. Drawing on the combined power of these unique experiences, in this book I want to share my knowledge with you so that you too can realise the power that food and your daily habits have over your health and well-being.

I am hugely passionate about how nutrition and lifestyle habits affect every one of us, and have a first-class honours degree in nutrition and post-graduate training in eating disorders and behavioural psychology, as well as a special interest in nutrigenomics, which is the study of how nutrients affect your body's expression of your genes.

Through my work I meet many teenagers and young people who are struggling with health issues that are related to their understanding of nutrition, but also to their relationships with their bodies. So many people don't feel great when they first come to see me, but in a short time I get to see the rapid transformation in their energy levels, sleep quality, weight, mental well-being, skin health and confidence once they start taking better care of their incredible bodies.

Your body is like a car. If you don't look after it and give it what it needs – fuel, oil, water and so on – it just can't perform how you want it to. It simply won't work properly. Your body is a complex, incredible machine that needs proper care and attention. Without the right support you can start to feel sluggish, perhaps have low mood, develop skin issues, find it difficult to concentrate – the list goes on.

In this book you will learn how to develop a healthy and joyful relationship with your body and with food. You will learn how to spot

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the signs that your body needs specific nutritional support, as well as how to create harmony in your body and mind through healthy lifestyle habits and a balanced approach to your food choices. Most importantly, you can learn all about self-care. I look at all the topics that may be of interest to you as a teenager, from plant-based diets, skin health, muscle gains and improving your sleep, to the whys and wherefores of eating disorders, and how to change some of your behaviours should you wish to. You can also learn how to maintain a healthy weight or indeed gain weight if that's what you need.

I hope this book inspires you to develop an understanding of how amazing your body is and what it needs to thrive. Create healthy habits and your body will reward you!

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Chapter 1

Set yourself up for success

Do you want to enjoy...

- waking up feeling alert?
- loads of energy?
- a sharp mind?
- a balanced mood?
- good motivation?
- skin that glows?
- an effortless healthy weight?

You deserve to spring out of bed in the morning feeling totally recharged from a great night's sleep, full of energy, vitality and motivation to face each day. With this sense of wellness comes a great improvement in self-confidence too, and when we feel well, fit and strong we can achieve an enhanced sense of well-being.

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I've worked with thousands of young people to help them feel fantastic, boost their confidence, increase their concentration and focus for their academic studies, improve their skin, hair and nails, and ensure they maintain a healthy weight and create a healthy, sustainable relationship with food. Every one of us deserves to feel well every day, both inside and out, and I'm going to show you how that's possible.

THE THREE STRANDS OF OVERALL GOOD HEALTH

Psychological health:	sharp mind, good mood and motivation
Physical health:	energy and ability to enjoy physical challenges, good sleep quality
Biochemical health:	optimal levels of blood sugar balance, cholesterol, stress hormones etc.

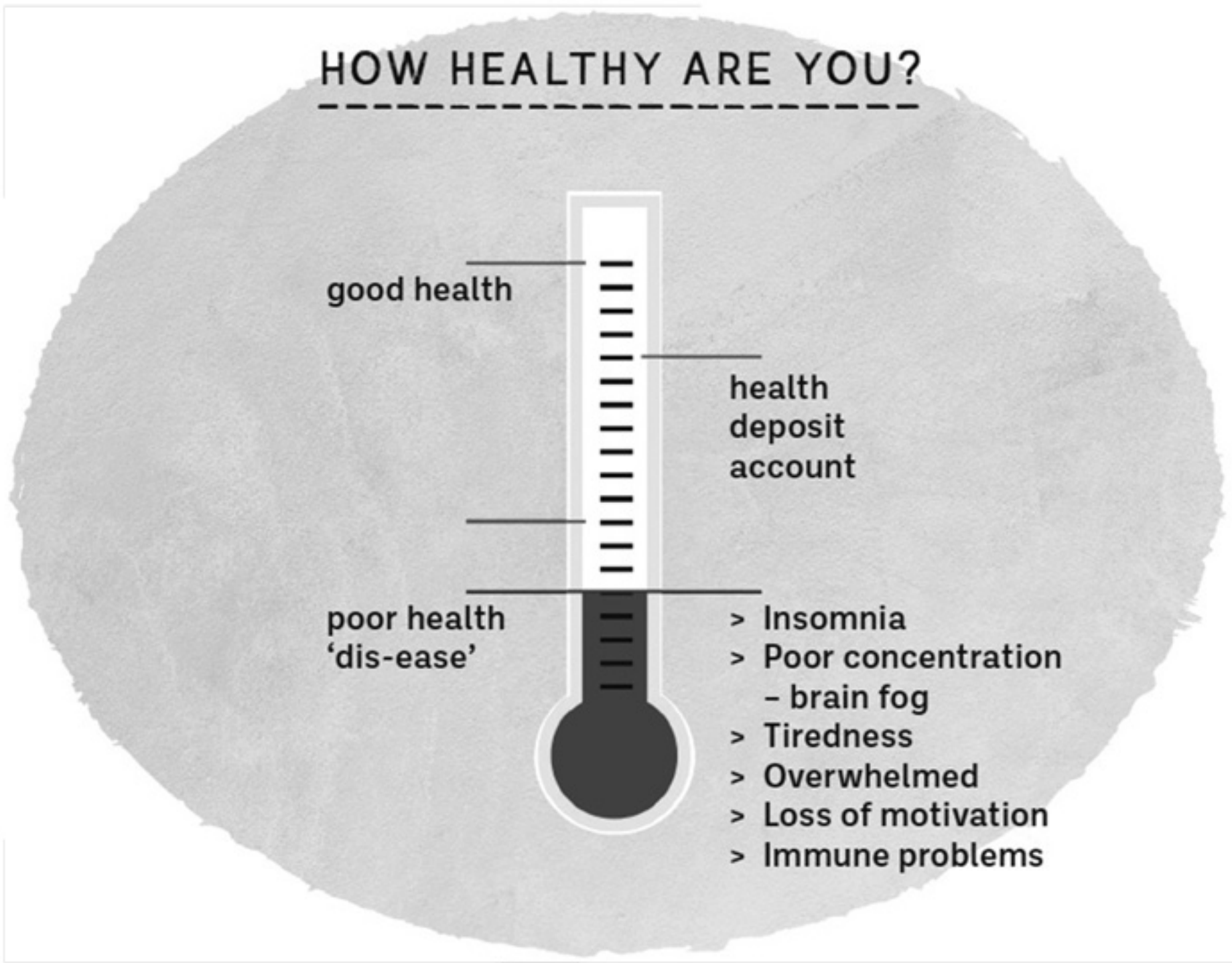
The impact of what you eat

Food is information for our bodies. The chemical constituents in our foods literally tell our body how to behave, so what we eat can impact our moods, energy levels, motivation, ability to concentrate, to sleep and even whether we feel happy or sad.

Hopefully, we are all born in good health, but your lifestyle choices – your food intake, water consumption, how much you sleep, whether or not you exercise regularly, and get proper relaxation and fresh air –will all affect whether or not you maintain that level of good health.

This diagram shows how those choices will impact your health. The first signs of someone being unhealthy are tiredness, sleep problems, low mood, low motivation, maybe getting coughs or colds, skin reactions or tummy problems. But you can reverse that, because our body loves to repair itself. Your bones can rebuild themselves in six weeks and, believe it or not, your skin is only 21 days old, but that's ancient compared to your inner skin and gastrointestinal tract, which

are just four days old, so if you burn the inside of your mouth, you will have new skin there in a mere four days.



Your body is constantly recreating itself, so you can improve every aspect of your health and well-being. Don't worry about what habits you have had in the past – each day you can improve, starting today, so even if you're right down there in the red zone, in no time at all we can get you back to good health.

The 80:20 rule

The 80:20 is an approach to healthy eating, teaching you balance, moderation and allowing for treats, without ever feeling guilty or worrying you are overindulging. There will be times when you need to be more flexible, like when you go on holiday or are having a celebration. This is absolutely fine and you can just get back to your balanced lifestyle afterwards.

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The basic idea of the 80:20 rule is very simple. In order to be healthy and balanced, you don't always have to make 100% healthy food choices.

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The rule says that making healthy choices 80% of the time is enough. For the remaining 20%, you can choose less healthy food and enjoy treat foods. Sometimes you will find that it will be 70:30 and that's just fine – being flexible and not rigid around food is vital for our overall relationship with food.

This will also help you stick to a healthier diet, because it's widely known that depriving yourself of all treats and sweets simply isn't sustainable, and can in itself create or make an unhealthy relationship with food even worse.

Let's talk about food

Before we look at what a healthier diet is, let's look at what you eat now. Do you eat a lot of junk food or ready meals, or do you order a lot of takeaways, without necessarily thinking about whether they're good for you or not, or what the alternatives are? I'm not judging, because I know it's easy to fall into a lifestyle where that's what you eat, but let's take a moment to consider some of the pros and cons.

PROCESSED FOODS – FOR OR AGAINST?

For	Against
Tasty	Lack the nutrients your body needs to function and thrive
Quick	Packed with unhealthy preservatives and additives
Convenient	Affect your concentration and academic performance
Cheap	Contribute to weight gain, obesity and disease

In nature, we would never find foods that contain the combinations of high sugar, salt and fat found in processed and fast foods. These three compounds activate the pleasure and reward centre of our brain, leading us to want more and more, as our brain finds this mix truly addictive. This equation sums it up:

> **Sugar + salt + fat = the bliss point**

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The bliss point is where a particular food has just the right amount of saltiness, sweetness and richness to trigger a reward in your brain, in the form of a quick release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Of course, this makes you feel good, so you subconsciously want to recreate that feeling by eating that particular food again. The combination of tastes is more rewarding than one of the substances acting on its own and it's the combination that produces the bliss point. This explains why processed and fast foods are so addictive.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT!



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I regularly see young people in my clinic who are addicted to junk food, with the result that they feel sluggish, fatigued and carry extra pounds that make them feel bad about themselves. They may also have difficulty concentrating and have poor performance in school. In 2018, researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University looked at 11 existing studies, involving 100,000 participants aged 16 to 72, from Europe, the Middle East, the USA, and Australia, and they found that, 'A diet of fast food, cakes and processed meat increases your risk of depression.'

Certainly, if your diet is lacking in key nutrients or you are eating a diet that may cause inflammation, you are more likely to suffer low moods. In nutritional terms, inflammation is when the bacteria in our gut is altered and then interacts with our immune system, triggering it in a way that stimulates a response from the body. The swelling when you twist your ankle is a type of inflammation, but chronic inflammation can cause damage to cells, tissue and organs that may ultimately lead to health issues like diabetes or heart disease.

Junk food and ultra-processed foods have the ability to cause inflammation, but fortunately a healthy diet based on whole foods – natural foods with no added sugar, salt or fat – can also provide the building blocks for us to produce 'feel good' neurotransmitters (the body's chemical messengers).

If you're someone who is always drawn to crisps, cookies, burgers and fizzy drinks, I'm going to show you how some simple changes will make you feel great about yourself and get rid of all those symptoms that may be niggling you. We know that extra weight gained in your teenage years will most likely stay with you as an adult, unless you learn about healthy eating, the role of exercise and managing your stress levels.

But before you embark on your road to optimising your health and well-being, it's important to know why you're doing it. Do you want to feel amazing, improve your mood, feel more energised or feel more confident in yourself? Once you find your why, it helps you keep on working towards that goal.

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