



# ELIMINATING TOXIC HUNGER

## WITH A HIGH-NUTRIENT DIET

By Dr Joel Fuhrman, M.D

### WHAT IS TOXIC HUNGER?

For most people, hunger means a grumbling stomach, headaches, light-headedness, irritability, fatigue, and inability to focus. And for many people, these uncomfortable symptoms are the undoing of all of their attempts to lose weight by eating less food. Conventional wisdom, and even medical textbooks, would suggest that these are normal symptoms of hunger. Since eating removes the symptoms, they are mistakenly believed to be hunger, but they are not. The typical Western diet is loaded with calorie-dense processed foods, oils, sweeteners, and animal products; regular consumption of these foods results in inflammation, oxidative stress, and accumulation of toxic metabolites.<sup>1-3</sup> I call the headaches, light-headedness and other symptoms “toxic hunger” because they are actually symptoms of withdrawal produced by the body’s attempts to detoxify the wastes produced by harmful, low-nutrient foods. People are consistently driven by these symptoms to consume more calories than they require. In addition, scientists now know that unhealthy food has effects on the brain similar to those of addictive drugs, producing a constant drive to eat more. These combined effects drive widespread overeating behavior, which has led to an epidemic of obesity and preventable chronic diseases.

In my experience guiding thousands of patients as they transition to a high-nutrient diet, I have observed that my patients’ perceptions of hunger change as their diet improves. Uncomfortable toxic hunger symptoms become less frequent, and hunger symptoms shift – mainly felt in the mouth and throat (“true hunger”) and upper chest area, rather than the head and stomach. I have now documented and published these results (titled “Changing perceptions of hunger on a high nutrient density diet”) in *Nutrition Journal*.

From the data we collected, we substantiated my findings over the last 20 years, and used a cohort of over 760 participants to conclude that enhancing the micronutrient quality of the diet leads to changes in the experience of hunger and a reduction in the uncomfortable toxic hunger symptoms, despite a lower caloric intake.<sup>4</sup> Healthful foods do not produce withdrawal symptoms; when the body is given vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts and seeds, addictive drives are not activated, and there is nothing to detoxify. One is then led by true hunger, a signal that directs the body to the precise amount of calories needed to maintain a healthy weight.



## A HIGH-NUTRIENT DIET

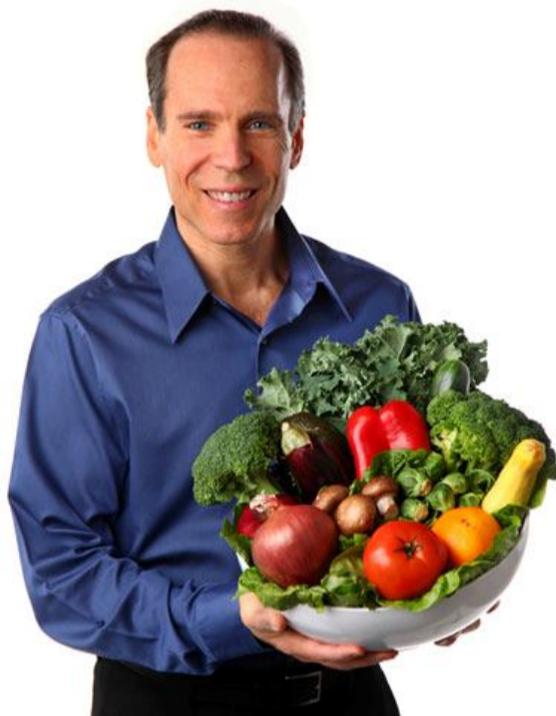
In addition to mitigating toxic hunger symptoms, following a high-nutrient diet provides disease protection by supplying your body with valuable micronutrients – vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are only found in plant foods. When we consume sufficient amounts of vegetables, fruits, beans, and raw nuts and seeds, we fuel the body's natural healing abilities.

Macronutrients are the nutrients that contain calories, thereby supplying us with energy. Protein, fat and carbohydrate are macronutrients. Micronutrients are those nutrients that don't contain calories, but have other essential roles. Micronutrients are vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. There are thousands of them. The key to both longevity and maintaining a healthy weight is to eat a high-nutrient diet. This means eating predominantly nutrient-dense foods – those that have a high proportion of nutrients (micronutrients) compared to calories (macronutrients):

$$\text{Health} = \text{Nutrients} / \text{Calories} \quad (\text{H} = \text{N} / \text{C})$$

This equation means your future health can be predicted by the micronutrient per calorie density of your diet. I recommend eating a variety of the most health-promoting, nutrient-dense foods every day or **G-BOMBS**: **G**reens, **B**eans, **O**nions (and garlic), **M**ushrooms, **B**erries (and pomegranate), **S**eeds (and nuts). In addition to nutrient density, these foods support the immune system and have powerful protective effects against cancer, heart disease, dementia, and other chronic diseases. Each of these groups of plant foods has its own unique phytochemicals and disease-fighting effects (I discuss the benefits of these foods in detail in my book *Super Immunity*). A diet rich in G-BOMBS will have a high micronutrient to calorie ratio and sufficient micronutrient variety, putting people back in touch with the amount of calories they actually need – true hunger.





**Joel Fuhrman, M.D.** Dr. Fuhrman is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (1988), and has received the St. Joseph's Family Practice Resident's Teaching Award for his contribution to the education of residents. He is a board-certified family physician, and nutritional researcher, who specializes in preventing and reversing disease through nutritional and natural methods.

Dr Fuhrman is the author of seven books including the New York Times bestseller *Eat to Live: The Amazing Nutrient-Rich Program for Fast and Sustained Weight Loss* and his newest release *Super Immunity: The Essential Nutrition Guide for Boosting your Body's Defenses to Live Longer, Stronger and Disease Free*. In it he discusses how to naturally strengthen the immune system against everything from the common cold to cancer.

As one of the country's leading experts in nutritional and natural healing, Dr. Fuhrman's articles, case studies, and advice are widely published, from medical journals such as the University of Pennsylvania Journal of Orthopedics and Nutrition Journal, to consumer publications such as Mothering Magazine and Health Science. He has appeared on hundreds of radio and television shows including: ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, CNN, Today, Good Morning America, the Discovery Channel, TV Food Network, and the Dr. Oz Show. His own television program, *3 Steps to Incredible Health!* directly addresses the crisis of obesity and chronic disease plaguing America and helps support PBS stations nationwide.

Dr. Fuhrman is actively involved in scientific research on human nutrition, and has published in several peer-reviewed scientific journals. His discoveries regarding food addiction and human hunger were published in Nutrition Journal in November 2010, in a paper entitled '*Changing perceptions of hunger on a high nutrient density diet.*' Currently his research activities include working with researchers on the National Institutes of Health on nutritional interventions for specific autoimmune diseases. Dr. Fuhrman is the Research Director of the Nutritional Research Foundation and a founding member and on the board of directors of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine.

Along with his nutritional expertise, Dr. Fuhrman has been involved professionally with sports medical committees, advised professional and Olympic athletes, and has lectured to athletic trainers and world-class athletes for maximizing performance and preventing injury. In an invited review in Current Sports Medicine Reports in July 2010 entitled '*Fueling the Vegetarian (Vegan) Athlete,*' Dr. Fuhrman discussed strategies for reaching caloric needs and performance benefits of a high-nutrient, plant-based diet for athletes.

Learn more by visiting [DrFuhrman.com](http://DrFuhrman.com), his blog at [Diseaseproof.com](http://Diseaseproof.com), and [Facebook.com/drfuhrman](https://www.facebook.com/drfuhrman)

You can visit his website by tapping **HERE**

## References

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**VIDEO  
PLACEHOLDER**

Green vegetables are the most critical missing elements in modern diets. Learning to prepare and enjoy greens is essential to creating health and a body you love. And when you nourish yourself with greens, you will naturally and effortlessly eat less foods that make you sick and overweight. Eating both raw greens and cooked greens are powerfully protective against cancer and extend your lifespan as they encourage your ideal weight.

Nutritionally, greens are very high in vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals but they are also high in protein and fiber. When you taste some of my favorite recipes for greens you might find that superfoods, such as kale, collard greens, bok choy, spinach and broccoli raab (rob) can actually be prepared to be a real treat. Remember, once you start to eat for health your food preferences and tastes will change and healthy foods will gain a new and delicious flavor.

Besides salads and the green vegetable recipes, greens are also great in soups. When you steam or boil vegetables, some of the nutrients get lost in the water. When we simmer vegetables in soup, all the nutrients are retained in the liquid. Making one big pot of soup can be used for a great lunch or dinner for the whole week.

So a cornerstone of my lifespan-enhancing advice is to have at least one large salad as a main dish for lunch or dinner and chew it thoroughly to get as much nutrition as possible. Put a sign on your refrigerator that says that the salad is the main dish.

You can get hundreds of great recipes for salads, greens and great soups in my books or on my website [www.drFuhrman.com](http://www.drFuhrman.com).