

Does Eating Right Require a Biology Degree?



The evolution of the Internet is perhaps one of the greatest achievements during the past twenty years. Finding information on even the most basic topics once required a trip to the public library and possibly an hour or more to flip through a card catalog followed by wandering down

endless shelves of books to find what you were looking for. It might also have involved a trip to the inner sanctum of the library known as “The Reference Room” for an even deeper search of the information kept locked away behind its glass window. I still don’t know how to use the reference room at my local library, in fact, it’s been years since I’ve set foot inside a library. Not to denigrate libraries—they still are a great source of information—but so much can be found in mere seconds right on your computer or even your smart phone. The net result is we’re all becoming better informed, and in a lot of ways, just plain smarter because of this ready access to information. But as in most things—especially ones possessed of so much power—caution is advised.

The World Wide Web (WWW) can be both a blessing and a curse when it comes to retrieving information and pitfalls abound. Searching out information online and then determining its value is an acquired skill. A lot of time can be wasted in the pursuit, and even worse, you can easily be misled or misinformed by a lot of the information that you consume online. How to be a good consumer of online information is beyond the scope of this post, but Rob includes some basic pointers in this post for [spotting low-quality scientific](#)

[studies](#). To paraphrase Sy Simms, “An educated information consumer, is less dangerous to himself and others.”

Proliferation of Dietary Cults

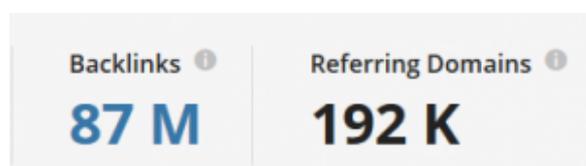


This double-edged sword is probably no more evident than when it comes to seeking out diet and nutritional information online. It also doesn't help matters that the various dietary factions have formed around de facto leaders who are rather aggressive in defining the principles of their dietary beliefs to the point of becoming dogmatic. To make matters worse, there is even in-fighting among groups, which in turn begets splinter groups with modified views on the original principles. If it reminds you of something, it's because these belief systems have a lot in common with religious feuds—both past and present day.

There's a Research Study for That



A tactic that has become the hallmark of these spats is to cite research studies and letting that stand as the final say on the matter at hand. If you have a point to make, then there's most likely a study to support your position. PubMed – a research report repository from NIH – is probably one of the most heavily-linked Web properties at the moment. There is no shortage of nutritional and medical studies and keeping up with all of them is a daunting task.



Backlinks to PubMed

I respect the folks with degrees as well as those that completed medical school. It's not an easy thing to accomplish. On the other hand, I don't take everything they proclaim when it comes to health and nutrition as gospel. Case in point: my brother, Rob, who holds a PhD in biology, has proclaimed to me that what's required to lose weight and stay healthy is actually quite simple: stay away from processed foods and eat as many whole foods as you can. Great advice and I concur wholeheartedly. And I think it should form the core of anyone's approach to diet and nutrition, however, I think it doesn't tell the whole story.

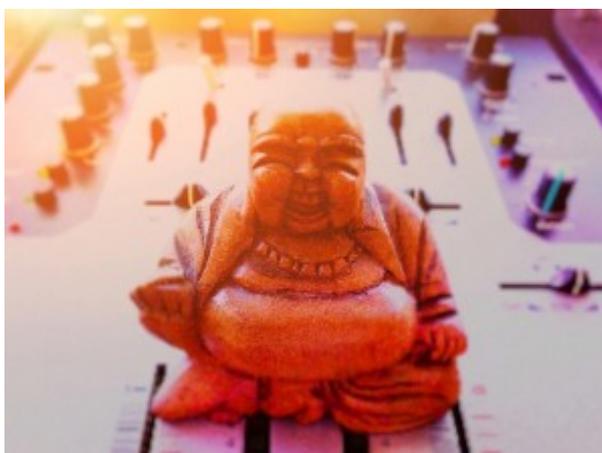
Though Rob has managed to maintain exceptional health and body

composition following that directive, I on the other hand, have had to tweak it by adding in a few caveats specific to my own metabolic situation. This is where the low-carb business comes in and remains an on-going investigation on my part. My degree is in computer science, and what I know and understand about biology and human metabolism is what I learned back in high school biology class and what I've learned from my online reading. It's a fascinating subject and I'm eager to continue my informal education in this area.

Do I feel that I need a biology or medical degree to direct my eating and lifestyle?

No, certainly not when there are so many research studies to pick and choose from to lead me down the nutritional rabbit hole. My preference is to let my experience, the experience of others, known facts (as few as there may be), and common sense to be my guide.

Moderation, Stupid!



The age old admonition to do all things in moderation continues to be my guiding principle, especially when it comes to eating. Yes, I eat a low carb diet, but I no longer keep my carbs low enough to enter into ketosis, in fact, I'm gradually upping them in the hope of crossing over into what would be considered a "balanced" diet. How many carbs that turns out to be in my case remains to be seen.

Moderation works in both directions: don't overdo things by consuming too much of something, i.e. dietary fat, sugar, rib eye steaks, etc. Conversely, don't overdo things by restricting or cutting out completely such as carbohydrates or saturated fat. Moderation's buddy is balance. It's not worth risking your long term health for whatever results you're seeking such as weight loss in the near term in exchange for nagging health issues down the road. Slow and steady and moderate certainly aren't very sexy, but crossing the finish line with your health intact is a pretty big achievement.



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