

Can a simple blood test help determine the ideal diet, or is metabolic typing just another fad? Suzanne Harrison checks it out

# Body of evidence

**HAVE YOU TRIED** every diet, but nothing seems to work? Do you spend hundreds of dollars on supplements, but don't feel any different? There's always some new research or book that touts a quick fix – but some nutritionists say the answer has more to do with your metabolism, and that a simple test may be all it takes to get you on the right track.

Allan Chan Wai-kin is a chiropractor, but during the past couple of years he has discovered metabolic typing – a simple test that Chan says can make all the difference to your health.

Based on the results of a questionnaire (which asks about such things as diet, emotional state and habits) and a blood

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Allan Chan Metabolic tester

test, Chan says he can determine what a person should eat and what supplements they should take. The idea of metabolic typing is to match people's eating habits to what suits their physiology.

“It's to find out how people are assimilating nutrients and how that's affecting their general health,” says Chan. “Using that data, we categorise them into three main groups.”

These three are: para-sympathetic, sympathetic and balanced. The system is more comprehensive than just examining blood type, says Chan, who trained in metabolic typing in Canada.

According to Australia-based Metabolic Typing Gold Coast, the system can im-

prove digestive and bowel problems, help with weight control, fatigue, high blood fat (including high cholesterol), difficulties with carbohydrate metabolism, balancing carbohydrate-to-protein ratios and allergies and help boost immunity.

“We look at how they're digesting such things as carbohydrates and proteins,” says Chan. “Then we can see what metabolic type they have, how well they're eating and what they should be eating. Everyone has a different biochemical makeup. This helps balance the body and helps people live at their optimum health.”

Metabolic typing isn't traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), but Chan says it's closely related. TCM also typically classifies people before administering remedies or suggesting special foods. Chan says metabolic typing can also be preventative, because it can uncover hidden propensities for the likes of heart disease or diabetes.

He says it's a systematic way for people to find out what they need, rather than what health trends dictate. “Should I take an antioxidant, or calcium? This gives a more systematic way of knowing that.”

Chan says he typically tests three to five people a week, and that interest is growing. It's more widely used overseas. “In Canada and the US, there are also doctors and nutritionists who do this too.”

As an example of different dietary requirements, Metabolic Typing UK notes that the traditional diet of an Eskimo is 80-90 per cent animal protein and fat, “yet they don't suffer from heart disease or cancer”. This is because they need these slow-burning foods to survive in their harsh climate, the group's website says. Over time, their metabolism has adapted to their diet.

“Compare this diet to that of the Hunzuckuts in Asia who are renowned for their good health and longevity. Many generations ago, they adopted a diet that was high in complex carbohydrates and vegetables and relatively low in protein and

fats,” the website says. “In other words, a diet that is healthy in one part of the world can be very unhealthy in another.”

But is metabolic typing simply another health fad? Naturopath Jennifer Walker, from Zama International, says it appears to have a lot to recommend it. “It can add value,” Walker says. “However, if you do try it, think of it as a long-term project and stick with the programme.”

Dietitian Gabrielle Tuscher is less con-

