



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Are You a Health Food Junkie?

Are you obsessed with eating all the “right” things? Take this quiz to find out:

Give yourself a point for each “yes” answer.

1. Do you spend more than three hours a day thinking about healthy food? (For 4 hours, give yourself 2 points).
  2. Do you plan tomorrow’s food today?
  3. Do you care more about the virtue of what you eat than the pleasure you receive from eating it?
  4. Have you found that as the quality of your diet has increased, the quality of your life has correspondingly diminished?
  5. Do you keep getting stricter with yourself?
  6. Do you sacrifice experiences you once enjoyed to eat the food you believe is right?
  7. Do you feel an increased sense of self-esteem when you are eating healthy food? Do you look down on others who don’t?
  8. Do you feel guilt or self-loathing when you stray from your diet?
  9. Does your diet socially isolate you?
  10. When you are eating the way you are supposed to, do you feel a peaceful sense of total control?
- Scoring:

**2-3 points:** You have at least a touch of orthorexia.

**4 or more points:** You are in trouble...

**10 points:** You don’t have a life—you have a menu!

*(Quiz taken directly from Health Food Junkies by Steven Bratman, MD, with David Knight © 2000, pp. 47-52.)*

Steven Bratman, MD, coined the term *orthorexia nervosa*, or the unhealthy obsession with eating healthy food, after years of struggling with his own healthy eating obsession and treating patients who suffered from the same thing. Can a person really suffer from eating too healthfully? They can! Too much of a good thing can be...too much. When thoughts of food combinations, avoiding certain “bad” ingredients, and fussiness over food preparation consume most of one’s daily waking thoughts, he or she has crossed the threshold into “obsessive.” It’s this obsession that takes a mental and potentially, physical toll on the body. At its worst, it can even lead to death.

Why does someone start down this path? There is usually at least one strong, hidden cause for orthorexia. Bratman identifies 7 main reasons

### College Corner: Resolution Re-Do, Part 1

You don’t need a special day to “start over” and improve your life. You just need a smart approach! New Year’s resolutions imply a short-term fix to a long-term problem. In reality, we should *all* work on improving our lifestyle. Lifestyle solutions take time to become habit but the pay off is long-term strategies to that long-time problem. Use Part 1 of this special New Year’s Guide to rethink and re-do your resolutions.

Do any of these common resolutions sound familiar?

- Eat less-
- Move more-
- Stress less--
- Stay healthy-
- Drink less-
- Lose weight-

**Prioritize:** Of all the different things you would like to accomplish in the New Year, which goal is most important to you? Make this your first priority. Tackle this task head-on and table your other goals until you have your first concern under control. Trying to change too many things at once is a sure-fire way to stamp out long-term success.

**Personalize:** Ask yourself why you want to change. Are you doing this for yourself or to please someone

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## Health Food Junkie continued...

someone experiences orthorexia:

- The illusion of total safety or the idea that we can keep from getting sick if we just eat healthfully
- The desire for complete control or using healthy food to deal with the unpredictability of life
- Covert conformity or the indirect way to conform to society's thinness ideal without admitting it publicly. (People on strict dietary regimens often enjoy the side effect of weight loss without being on a "weight loss diet.")
- Searching for spirituality in the kitchen—using food and an elaborate dietary regimen to make peace with their soul or find God
- Food Puritanism or the desire for self-deprivation through denying oneself certain foods
- Creating an identity through dietary restrictions
- The fear of other people or using dietary restrictions as an excuse to keep to one's self

How does someone recover from this disorder? Often, it's not as easy as just willing oneself to stop concerning himself with the

nutritional content of his diet. In fact, it took Bratman over ten years to feel "cured" from his orthorexia. The first step on the road to recovery is admitting there is a problem and feeling the need to solve it or unload the burden of obsession. Secondly, time is important. Often the mental fixation eases slowly over time. Next, a person benefits from uncovering his reasons for falling into orthorexia in the first place. Was she searching for a way to control her life? Was he trying to ward off all illness? Lastly, a person needs to relearn how to eat with balance and moderation, or what dietitians and nutrition experts refer to as a "healthy diet" where all foods can truly fit. How do you know if you are cured from orthorexia? Bratman states if you can eat the foods you grew up on at your mother's house (think boxed macaroni and cheese, canned soup or an iceberg lettuce salad) and eat them without making a fuss, you're definitely on the road to recovery.

For more information, read Steven Bratman's book *Health Food Junkies—Overcoming the Obsession with Healthful Eating* by Steven Bratman, MD, with David Knight, © 2000, available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

## College Corner continued...

else (or get them off your back?) If your goal is not personally important, chances are you will not stick with it long enough to create a new lifestyle habit.

**Pros vs. Cons:** Now contemplate the benefits (or pros) of changing this behavior. How will you feel? How will you look? Will it improve your health or self-esteem? Of the pros, identify which one is most significant to you. Is this particular pro strong enough to drive your change? Next, consider the challenges, obstacles, or cons to change. Think of anything and everything that you might encounter that would keep you from succeeding. Ask yourself: "Are these obstacles real or just excuses?" Do you think the cons are strong enough to prevent you from acting? If the pros do not outweigh the cons, sticking to that new behavior may be a little tough.

**Confidence:** On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), rate how confident you feel regarding being able to follow-through with your goals or behavior changes. The more confident you feel, the more likely you will succeed. *We'll revisit your resolutions next month in Part 2.*

## Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are "off-duty." I've said it before and now I'll say it again. Nothing beats a cara cara orange! Cara caras are back in season. Look for these delicious, rosy red-fleshed navel oranges at your local grocery

store. Nicknamed the "power orange" because they are bursting with vitamin A, C, fiber, folate, potassium, and lycopene, cara caras are less acidic than a typical orange and gentler on the stomach. Try them plain as a snack or sliced in a salad. Enjoy!