



## Patrick Holford

says the food we eat can dramatically affect our wellbeing

# You are what you eat

Nutrition expert Patrick Holford tells Dawn Mellowship the secrets of how to achieve your full health potential.

**O**ptimum nutrition is essential for maintaining a healthy, happy body, mind and soul. Sounds simple enough, yet many people are easily bewildered when it comes to understanding nutrition. Help is at hand with the renowned nutritional therapist Patrick Holford, who has spent 25 years researching and providing guidance on the role of nutrition.

### Food can change your life

'Back in 1976, I met a nutritionist who told me you are what you eat and if you change what you eat it will change how you feel and think,' says Patrick. 'I decided to put it to the test and for one month I stopped eating meat and drinking coffee, started eating lots of fruit and veg, took loads of supplements and reduced my intake of wheat. Within ten days I was waking up alert, I found my concentration had improved, I lost a stone in weight in the first week, and my skin, which had looked like a lunar landscape, cleared up completely. On top of that my migraines vanished! That's what made me realise that the power of nutrition can transform your health.'

If anecdotal evidence isn't enough, Patrick has been involved with

numerous scientific studies. Having a background in psychology, he had a keen interest in the effects of nutrition on mental health.

'I started to study nutrition in relation to intelligence and schizophrenia. One of the first studies we did gave school kids an optimal supplement of the vitamins and minerals that we had worked out were important for brain function, versus a dummy pill. We got a staggering nine-point increase in IQ score, only in the children taking vitamins. Then I started to study schizophrenia and found very convincing evidence that large amounts of certain nutrients could dramatically help people with mental illnesses.'

Patrick's research and discoveries led him to found the Institute of Optimum Nutrition (ION) in 1984. This is an educational charity, offering advice and assistance through nutritional therapy and educating the public and health professionals about nutrition.

### Optimum nutrition

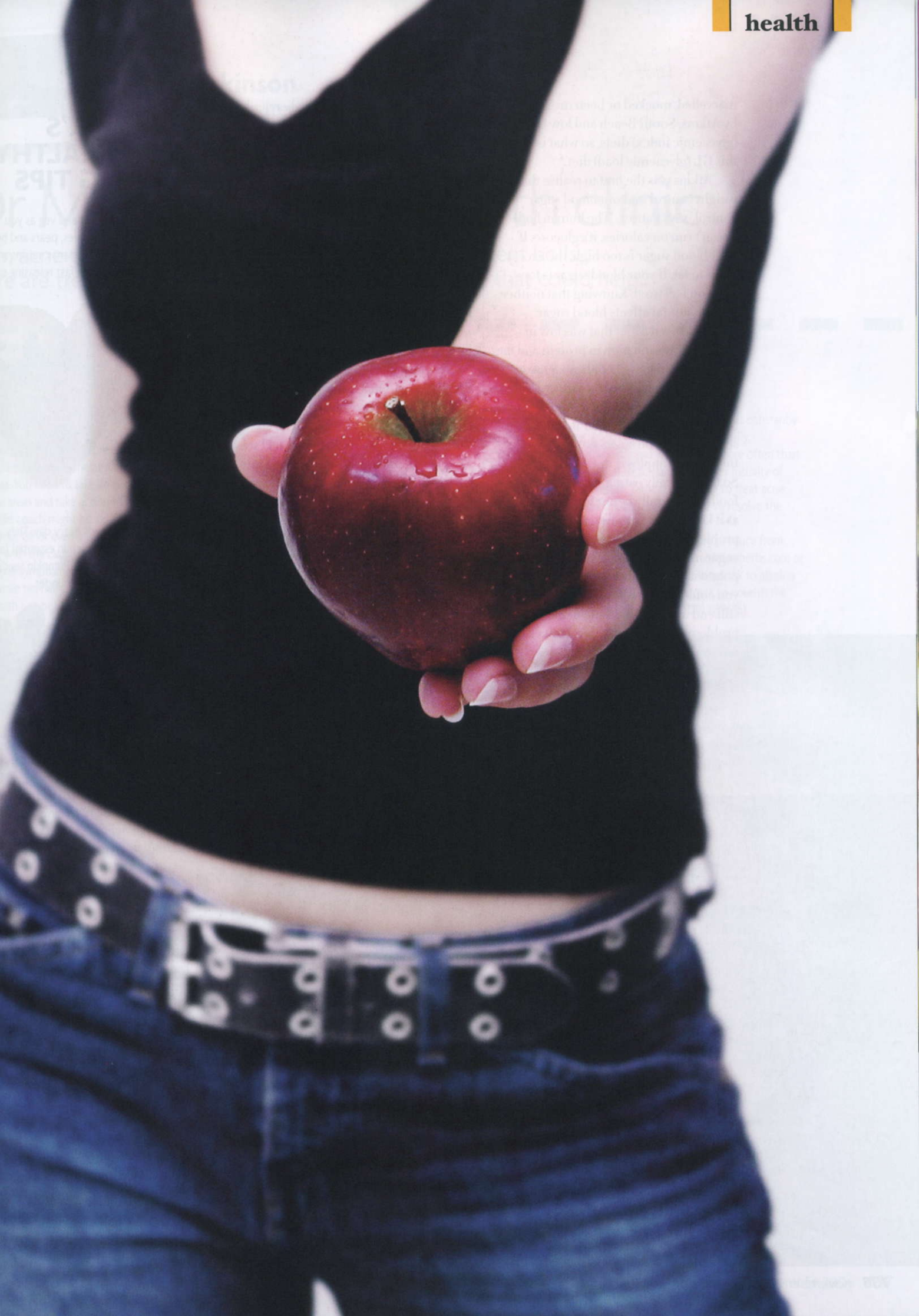
So what is the key to achieving your full health potential? According to Patrick, the secret lies in finding out your individual optimum nutrition.

'If you ask the question: "If you woke up 100% healthy, how would you know?", most people will say, "I would have more energy, my mood would be better, I would have more mental clarity, my skin would look good, and my cholesterol would be ideal." The question is: what is your personal optimum nutrition for achieving 100% health? That is really what we have focused on, not just what prevents major deficiencies but what maintains peak health. We are all genetically different and unique.'

One little gem you can find on Patrick's website is a 100% online health profile. Fill it in honestly (no cheating!) and like magic it will work out your optimum nutrition. The results suggest positive changes you can make to your diet, and supplements and exercise routines to dramatically improve your health. If you want to take it a step further, Patrick offers weekend workshops to transform your health, or if you are suffering from a chronic illness, he has trained nutritional health therapists to help you.

### Lose weight the GL way

One of Patrick's many books is *The Holford Low-GL Diet*. We've all



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marvelled, mocked or been mystified by Atkins, South Beach and low GI (glycaemic index) diets, so what is this GL (glycaemic load) diet?

'Atkins was the first to realise that weight control is about blood sugar control,' says Patrick. 'The human body doesn't run on calories, it's glucose. If your blood sugar is too high, the excess turns to fat. If your blood sugar is too low, you feel tired. Knowing that neither protein nor fat affects blood sugar, Atkins devised a diet that was low in carbohydrate and high in protein and fat.'

'Meanwhile, we had the extension of the GI diet. This is a measure of how fast the sugar in food releases into your bloodstream, eg, the sugar in dates sends your blood sugar sky-high, while the sugar in apples is not nearly so bad. So theoretically eating more low GI foods is generally better for your health as it keeps your blood sugar even. The problem is it is not very precise. The sugar in sweet potato is low GI, but sweet potato is almost all carbs, so mistakenly you could eat a lot of low GI foods and still end up with blood sugar and weight problems. GL solves all this. It takes into account the quantity and quality of carbohydrate and the GI score.'

'So, watermelon has 5g carbohydrate whilst the GI score is 72. We call it 72 x 5, which gives you 3,6 or 4 GL. If you eat no more than 40 GLs in a day, you will lose weight. Then you can say very precisely

that one large punnet of strawberries has the same effect on your blood sugar as one single date, as they are both 10 GL.'

If you don't believe the hype, there are some very convincing studies showcasing the benefits of a low GL diet. One study demonstrated that in a trial of 20 people who followed the diet for eight weeks, the average weight loss was 10.25lbs, and 94% of the participants felt much healthier afterwards. So, you can forget low calorie diets, says Patrick.

'We have all been told that weight is determined only by the calories you eat, less the calories you burn off, and that isn't true. On a low calorie diet you are trying to lose fat but your body thinks you're being starved so it tries to conserve it, which is why you feel so sluggish. Studies have shown that a low calorie diet reduces your metabolic rate.'

### Brain food

Patrick's latest project is the Food For The Brain Programme. 'We set up a charity called Food For The Brain and our first project is to transform children's health through nutrition. At the moment we are working with two schools, radically changing the schools' diets, involving the parents in workshops, and giving the kids a multivitamin and essential fat supplement every day and 15 minutes of structured exercise. It's a case of watch this space.'

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## PATRICK'S TOP HEALTHY EATING TIPS

**1** Eat as much fruit and veg as you possibly can. Apples, pears and berries are the best. Omit bananas, raisins and dates because of the fast releasing sugar.



**2** Snack on seeds every day. They are incredibly rich in essential fats, minerals and proteins. Pumpkin seeds are probably the best all-rounder.



**3** Eat more oily fish and less meat.



**4** Become a master of your blood sugar by learning about GL because that is the key to more energy, better concentration, a stable mood and weight.

**5** Take a high-strength multivitamin every day.

For more information about Patrick Holford, supplements, research and more, go to [www.patrickholford.com](http://www.patrickholford.com).

For more info about the Food For The Brain Programme, see [www.foodforthebrain.org](http://www.foodforthebrain.org).

