

Angry fat: the new lifestyle hazard to watch

By Sarah Berry

It is estimated that as much as 70 per cent of cancer is [lifestyle-related](#).

There are also [established links](#) between being overweight and the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases.

But, it is not just fat that [is the problem](#). Rather, what Dr Lise Alschuler refers to as "angry fat" may be to blame.

"The data shows pretty clearly that obesity in the US is responsible for one in every six deaths and one in every five diagnoses," says Alschuler, founding board member of the Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians and co-author of *The Definitive Guide to Cancer: An Integrative Approach to Prevention, Treatment and Healing*.

"What we're now learning is the mechanism between extra weight and cancer. I phrase it as 'angry fat'."

When there is excess glucose circulating in the blood, triglycerides, which are a type of fat, store in the fat cells, she explains.

When this happens the fat cells start to swell and send "distress" signals.

This 'distress' or inflammation, "triggers the production of a range of chemicals and hormones that can turn on inflammation and damage cells directly and stimulate uncontrolled cell growth systemically," Alschuler, herself a breast cancer survivor, says.

This means that health is not just about losing fat but looking to make fat less "angry".

"There are overweight people who aren't insulin-resistant or have angry fat," explains Alschuler.

She notes that insulin resistance and being overweight are not always the result of diet and "it's not just about sugar".

That said, [addressing diet and other lifestyle factors](#) can certainly help to calm cranky cells.

To turn down the internal heat and minimise our risk of inflammation and insulin-resistance, Alschuler, who was recently in Sydney to speak at the BioCeuticals Symposium, suggests:

1. Calorific restriction. "Most of us consume too much."

2. Manage glycaemic load. "Foods that reduce the glucose load in the body include cinnamon, blueberries and spices," she says.

"Low GI is also consistent with Mediterranean and Paleo diets which advocate minimal consumption of refined, processed carbohydrates. They are also anti-inflammatory." Although the Paleo diet tends to be heavy in animal protein, which has been linked to cancer, Alschuler points out that the type of meat consumed makes a difference. The Paleo diet [advocates eating pasture-fed meat](#), which [has been found](#) to have less fat as well as more omega-3 fatty acids.

Still, when it comes to meat, considering quantity is as important as quality. "One of the triggers is excessive saturated fat - particularly animal fat," says Alschuler. "It's worth considering."

3. Eat a rainbow on a plate (made up of natural, not synthetic colours). Polyphenols are a type of antioxidant which have very potent anti-inflammatory effects. There are more than 4000 types of polyphenols found in different fruits and veggies, so variety is key. "They are also anti-insulin resistant and directly anti-cancer," [Alschuler says](#).

4. Support the body with good fats, like omega-3s and other health-supporting nutrients.

"Co-q 10, which is found in food and supplements and supports the pancreas, liver and kidneys," Alschuler says.

5. Make a good night's sleep a priority. "One night of sleep-deprivation will cause someone to be insulin-resistant [the next day](#)."

6. It's not about juice-fasts or quick fixes. "Persistent organic pollutants are irritating to fat cells, but the answer would be less 'detoxify' on a three-day juice fast," she says.

"For this purpose, it's really a long-term commitment to how we support our natural detoxification process ...

"It's typically a gentle daily process - optimising intestinal function and adding a lot of antioxidants to the diet."

7. We don't have to ditch our favourite foods or drinks. "I'm a big fan of organically grown coffee. It's a rich source of polyphenolic compounds and green tea," Alschuler says. "[Similarly] I'm not averse to grains if they're whole and organic. But the more **processed they are, the more likely they are to be converted to glucose.**"

8. Sometimes it's nothing to do with food and everything to do with attitude. "It's not about reproachfulness - that will only aggravate the whole thing," she says. "Any health improvement has to be couched in self-love and respect. Not only to make it sustainable but to make it successful.

"Chronic stress feeds the cycle of chronic inflammation and elevates blood sugars."

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