



Overcoming Four Greatest Obstacles to Following the McDougall Diet

Last week we returned from our biannual adventure trip to Costa Rica. I spent 7 relaxing days with 100 people from various part of the United States and Canada. This afforded me many hours for casual conversations with travelers who were at various stages of dietary change. I heard about medical miracles, such as weight losses of 60 pounds and more, relief of crippling arthritis, chest pains, and diarrhea, and stopping bagful of expensive medications. Mixed up in these chats about healing were pleas for even greater success and more help. People told me of facing difficulties like:

"I'm incurably ill, but I can't change my diet, so that is why your program won't work for me."

"For a whole bunch of reasons I like the fact that I am a vegan, but I never seem to be satisfied."

"I have lost 70 pounds, but I have 60 more to lose. I've been at this plateau for 6 months."

"I did well the first 6 months after leaving your 10-day program; however over the last year I have lost all the health I had gained, and gained all the weight I had lost."

Let me offer some painless and simple solutions for these common obstacles.

Obstacle #1: Change Is Difficult

Cindy is a 48-year-old woman from Oklahoma. She was diagnosed with colon cancer 10 years ago; follow-up treatments included surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. Since then she has suffered from debilitating, daylong diarrhea. She and her husband were invited by a friend to attend the McDougall Costa Rica Adventure. After hearing about the exclusively vegetarian diet served on this trip, she protested, saying all those high-fiber vegetables would aggravate her bowels and cause her to spend the entire trip in the bathroom. She soon discovered the opposite.



After the first day her watery diarrhea had stopped and by day three she was having two formed stools a day. This rapid improvement was no surprise to me. In 1974 Dr. Andersson (*Nutr Me-tab.17:102*) published research showing these benefits—people with damaged small intestines (called an ileopathy) went from 20 watery stools a day to two or three formed movements within 72 hours of changing to a low-fat diet.

Fats and oils cause the liver to produce large amounts of bile acids. Unfortunately, Cindy's small bowel, damaged by radiation treatments given 10 years ago, could not reabsorb these bile acids, so they passed freely into her large intestine where they caused severe irritation and diarrhea. Not by Cindy's own choosing, the low-fat, plant-foods served in our Costa Rican resort's restaurant ended 10 years of needless suffering.

Change is difficult. The purpose of our residential programs (at home and abroad) is to create environments that facilitate change. But you can create a similar situation at home for free. A detailed description of my 10-day [program](#) is provided at no cost on my web site. People are always amazed by how many of their incurable ills are fixed after only a few days of eating right. They

are equally surprised by how forcefully their problems return when they slide back into their old ways. My guess is Cindy will only have to experience McDougall's revenge a very few times before she becomes permanently committed to eating perfectly.



Obstacle #2: McDougall Is Not about Vegetables

Betty is a trim, physically active, 40-year-old woman from California who has been trying to follow the McDougall Diet for more than a year. She has found our plan impossible to stick with; feeling hungry, fatigued, and frustrated. That changed for her after my orientation lecture, "The McDougall Program for Maximum Weight loss" just a few days ago in Costa Rica. (This lecture has just been released on [DVD](#)).

I explained to the audience that people often believe that the McDougall Diet is a "vegetable-based diet," and as a result, they are left wanting. Green and yellow vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, peapods, green peppers, and lettuce, are too low in calories to provide satisfaction. The primary purpose of eating is to obtain life-giving energy. This is accomplished safely only by whole plant foods plentiful in carbohydrates. These special plant foods are known as starches. Because of their natural satisfying properties people refer to potatoes, rice, pasta, beans, and corn as "comfort foods." In addition to "clean and efficient energy," starches provide an abundance of other nutrients, such as proteins, essential fats, vitamins, and minerals. Single starches, such as potatoes and sweet potatoes, are "complete foods" and can easily meet all of our nutritional needs.

People get a glazed look over their faces, and some dismiss me as crazy, when I tell them I recommend a starch-based diet. They think of starch as something used in the laundry to stiffen shirts. Starch brings back memories of pasty bland-tasting goop, and white, airy Wonder Bread. Most disturbing is that nearly everyone believes starches are fattening. Fortunately, common knowledge is completely wrong and the proof is before your own eyes.

Ancient pictures and writings show us that all major populations of people have lived on diets based on starches: potatoes in the Andes of South America, corn in Central America, wheat in Central Europe, and rice in Asia. Even today 60% of people worldwide follow a starch-based meal plan—and by no coincidence these same people are trim, healthy, active, and youthful. When they abandon starch for meat and dairy they develop obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. *It's the starch folks!* And with this realization you will be set free to better enjoy life.

The proper scientific term for foods containing an abundance of complex carbohydrates is starch. During the growing season, green leaves collect energy from the sun and synthesize sugars that are converted into tiny starch granules, which are eventually stored in the plant parts for their own use later in the year. These same stored-carbohydrates also provide us with ideal sources of food for all year long. People are "starch-eaters." (Like cats are "meat-eaters" and giant anteaters are "ant-eaters.") Violate your nature and the price of poor health will be paid.



Betty ran every day in Costa Rica with the energy of an Olympic athlete. She left her meals comfortably full and did not experience hunger for several hours after eating. She even told me of a new sense of calm that had settled over her. By the simple mind change of putting starch at the center of her diet she has gained control of her life. The last thought she shared with me was, "It all makes sense now."

Obstacle #3: Failure to Appreciate the Body's Efficiency

Robert, a 50-year-old doctor from California, lost 70 pounds on the McDougall diet during the first year with the program. His debilitating back pains almost disappeared, as did his generalized arthritis. However, over the last 6 months he has lost nothing more, with 60 more pounds still to shed. "It is not fair," he said, "I eat better than ever before, and I am stuck at this plateau."

For the past 3 decades his body had adapted nicely to carrying around an extra 130 pounds with surprising little complaint. Compared to before, his highly efficient body is now very pleased to be just carrying around an extra 60 pounds. But that is still only possible because his current eating and exercise habits are able to support this extra body fat. So what is this man to do?

Robert, and others stuck at similar roadblocks, must make even more changes in order to set a new body weight and higher level of health. And that means a stricter diet and exercise program—because obviously the one that he is currently following has allowed him to remain at an undesired plateau. Paying closer attention to the details of the McDougall program will start people back on the losing track.

Give up the nuts, seeds, cold-pressed olive oil, dried fruits, refined flours, and all the other rich treats you have been pampering yourself with since you gave up meat and dairy. Right, they are all vegan (not from an animal), and even more holy, they are mostly "raw." But they are still "calorie bombs," which are guaranteed to stop weight loss and cause fat gain.

Eating out in restaurants is the second most common way people consume too many calories, even when they make efforts to eat vegan. Plan on it—these commercial food outlets are going to try to please you at every meal by enhancing the flavor of your dishes with added sugars, refined flours, and vegetable fats. The best solution is to fix all your own meals at home and pack your lunches for when you are away. Carry a cooler of food when you travel long distances. Short of following this serious recommendation, find restaurants that will serve you basic foodstuffs, like whole beans, steamed rice, baked potatoes, green salads, and plain fruits.



Eat simpler for better health and easier weight loss. At home, plan meals of cooked whole grains or oil-free hash browns for breakfast and pack your lunch with leftovers. For dinner, think "two choice combinations," like sweet potatoes and broccoli; rice and green beans; or beans with a few plain condiments. Simple, monotonous meal plans facilitate success.

Finally, move your "stuck body" off of its present comfort setting by exercising more. Exercise burns calories, occupies time you might spend eating, relieves anxiety and depression, and makes the appetite more appropriate for your caloric needs. Robert is more than half way to his weight goal, and he will succeed. After all, his record of success shows he is capable of change and the rewards he has found so far make him greedy for even more improvements.

Obstacle #4: No One Responsible Is Fixing Your Food

Mark is 61-year-old successful businessman from Arizona. My guess is his wealth amounts to tens of millions of dollars. His wife is a busy businesswoman. These two people seem to control everything in their lives, except for their food. But, everyone must eat, and satisfying meals do not magically appear at the doorstep. Drive-through windows at McDonald's and Taco Bell are as close as you can come to this fantasy. Unfortunately, these fast foods are health-destroyers. So how do busy people—and those

who hate to cook—get fed safely?

I asked Mark, “Do you cut your own lawn?” No, he has a gardener. “Does your wife clean the house?” No, they have weekly maid service. “So, Mark, why don’t you have someone prepare your foods? You certainly can afford it. The cost of doing nothing could be as expensive as a \$100,00 heart bypass operation. Now does that make financial sense to a businessperson like yourself?”

Cooks can be found with a little effort. Ask around. Check with your local vegetarian society or your local natural foods store. Put an ad on their bulletin board or in the local newspaper. Hire a chef through the web site www.hireachef.com. Domestic help can make your meals outside of your home and deliver them weekly. Or this person can come to your house one day a week in order to prepare some of your favorites. Talk to a catering service in your town. Many caterers will use your own recipes (from Mary’s books and the web site) to prepare your meals for the week.

With some relatively inexpensive outside help, you now have a refrigerator filled with delicious sauces and soups. After a hard day’s work all you have to do is bring home a loaf of store-bought whole grain bread, boil some rice, or microwave a potato. To these basic starches add your pre-prepared soups or sauces. Bagged, washed salad greens and a low-fat salad dressing purchased in the market make a colorful addition. If hiring help is out of the question, then do it yourself. Take one day each week to prepare the basic sauces and soups for your meals.

Our Costa Rica Adventures Attract the Nicest People

People, who travel with us, and those who come to our Santa Rosa programs, always amaze me. I find myself saying, “I don’t know how we attract so many interesting, intelligent, and pleasant people.” Typically, our clients are well educated and successful. They also demand the best life can offer. Soon after they discover the importance of food, they make efforts to switch to a starch-centered diet. That’s where the McDougall Programs and Trips help. My final words of reassurance are: Our principles of diet and exercise are simple and basic—no gimmicks. The Program always works. But your success may require overcoming the common obstacles I witnessed during our recent trip to Costa Rica.

The names of people have been changed, but the accounts are real and from our July 2008 Costa Rica McDougall Adventure Trip.

You can find additional comments and add your own at my [discussion board](#) under the heading, “Comments on the latest newsletter and Star Mcdougaller.