

Mary Perry:

Welcome to the Wellness Zone podcast. Today I'm here with Dr. Barry Sears and we're going to be talking about wellness. So, Dr. Sears, let's get into it. Let's just first walk our listeners through what wellness is.

Dr. Sears:

Well, it's very complex. We don't have very many good definitions for wellness. We have lots of definitions for disease by the symptoms they present. But how do you know if you're well? Most people might say, Well, I'm not sick, therefore I'm well. Not so quick. So one of the challenges we have in 21st century medicine, unless we have a good medical definition for wellness, there's no way we can maintain it for a lifetime. And so that's really the challenge. Now, one definition, I believe, that's medically definable is the absence of insulin resistance.

Mary Perry:

And how would you. What is insulin resistance for someone who's familiar with the term but doesn't quite know exactly what it is?

Dr. Sears:

It's a catch all term. It's a catch all term that says your metabolism is not working very well. Now, what does that mean? Well, first of all, what does metabolism do? Well, it converts the food we eat and the energy. It also controls our immune system. It controls our ability to repair damaged tissue. It controls our ability to live longer. These are all things you want. And you're only going to gain them by having an efficient metabolism. And if you have insulin resistance, you don't have an efficient metabolism. And your health future is bleak.

Mary Perry:

So would you say that the primary cause of insulin resistance is not having a metabolism that's functioning properly?

Dr. Sears:

That's true. Now, what's the cause of that? It turns out it's not a virus. It's not some type of, you know, bacteria. It's the diet. And because you find it more, it's a pro-inflammatory diet. A diet that creates inflammation in every one of your 37 trillion cells in the body. It's a diet that creates inflammation and causes your metabolism to become less and less efficient. And as that occurs now, you're more likely to develop chronic diseases in the future.

Mary Perry:

So that was going to lead me into my next question, because you just mentioned the increase in inflammation. So what are some of the metabolic consequences of having this uncontrolled or having high levels of insulin resistance?

Dr. Sears:

Well, the first one and most people can understand this, you gain weight. So I don't want to gain weight. It's not gaining weight. It's gaining weight basically in the abdominal region. Belly fat, that's your first sign that you're now have insulin resistance. Now, it turns out insulin resistance precedes that. It's not the weight gain causes insulin assistance. It's the insulin resistance that causes the weight gain. So usually years ahead of the weight gain, you basically have already developed insulin resistance.

Mary Perry:

Okay. So that's fair to say. If you're walking around with excess pounds, you probably already have the start. And that's kind of an easy indicator to go by.

Dr. Sears

And as we walk around the streets of America, say, we seem to have a lot of people who have insulin resistance.

Mary Perry

Right. And so, Dr. Sears, how do people go about reducing insulin resistance? I'm sure it's not as easy as just losing weight per se, but how do you go about reversing those numbers?

Dr. Sears

Well, first of all, we have to ask, what is a pro-inflammatory diet. Ok, it's really composed of one of three components. It could be too many things you're consuming like too many calories. It could be too many simple sugars. It could be basically too many omega six fatty acids or too much saturated fat. Any one of those will cause insulin resistance. But it also could be things you're not consuming enough of. You're not consuming enough of omega three fatty acids or polyphenols. Polyphenols are the chemicals that give fruits and vegetables their color. And finally, you have an unbalanced ratio of protein to carbohydrate in your diet. Now, the more of those three things you have, the more pro-inflammatory your diet is and the more likely you are to develop insulin resistance.

Mary Perry

How soon can you see the benefits of reducing the inflammation and bringing down the insulin resistance?

Dr. Sears

Well, that's the beauty of science. You're not guessing. You're actually testing. The data is pretty clear. It takes four days.

Mary Perry

Wow.

Dr. Sears

Easy peasy. That's the good news. Now, how long does it take for insulin resistance to reemerge? Probably not that long. About four days. Well, therefore, if I want to keep insulin resistance low or, really, not have any at all. That's the definition of wellness. This is a lifelong program. Basically, you're using food as if it were a drug to eliminate insulin resistance in each of your cells. And by doing so, you've done everything in your power—far more powerful than any drug to basically maintain wellness as long as possible.

Mary Perry

Now, what about supplements? We hear a lot about Berberine and some of these, you know, weight loss drugs that have impacts on blood sugar control. Do these factor into insulin resistance at all? Would you recommend them?

Dr. Sears

Well, some of these drugs you mentioned are basically supplements like Berberine. How's Berberine work? I don't know. It is used in traditional Chinese medicine. That's true. But how does it work? Now we know. It poisons your mitochondria.

Mary Perry

Well, that's not good.

Dr. Sears

That sounds bad! Yes, because it's the mitochondria in each one of your cells that produces the energy that keeps us alive. So I say, Well, if I take a supplement that poisons the

mitochondria, bad things can only probably happen. Correcto-mundo! And so that's why you're saying, that's probably not a good choice. What about this new generation of weight loss drugs? Well, what they do, they send signals to the brain to say stop eating. And if you stop eating, what's going to happen? You're going to lose weight. Now, that's good news. The bad news is there are some downsides. You're stop eating. And usually the first thing you eat less of is protein. And so now you start to unbalance the ratio of protein to carbohydrate. And as a consequence, about 40% of the weight loss, the people on these weight loss drugs see, comes not from fat, but it comes from lean body mass, which is not what you want.

So you say, well, what the heck is lean body mass? Well, lean body mass are things like the weight of your liver or your kidney or your heart or your brain saying, Oh, wait a minute, I'm losing weight, but it means I'm actually taking the weight from my vital organs. Correct. And so this does not have long term great benefits. It's a starvation.

So, can you basically replicate the benefits of these for, say, supplements like Berberine or gastric inhibitors by the diet? The answer is yes you can. And that's why I've been trying to do for the last 40 years to really crack this very complex puzzle of how our diet can affect our metabolism. And that's why I call this overall umbrella Metabolic Engineering. Once you understand the nuances of how our diet can affect our metabolism, we can go in there and re-engineer, we can reprogram the metabolism in each of our cells and what that does, it allows us to eliminate insulin resistance.

And what are the benefits to you? Yes, you will live longer. You'll live better, but most importantly, you'll lose excess body fat.

Mary Perry
And who doesn't want that?

Dr. Sears
Exactly.

Mary Perry
You know what I love Dr. Sears is you've talked about insulin resistance for decades now. You know, and it seems that you've really just continued to build on how important it is to keep it in the appropriate range and in the right zone. But this new idea around, you know, the metabolic engineering and the programing, you've really taken it to a new level here on what your diet can do at the molecular level to to change all these hormones and keep them in the right range.

Dr. Sears
And it's truly at the genetic level. And that's why the concept of the Zone has constantly evolved. Why? Because science is constantly evolving. And so we now begin to understand the power, the power of our diet. Not by saying, oh, I'll lose weight. No, the diet can control the expression of your genes. It's the ultimate expression of genetic engineering. So we say, well, look at those big biotech companies. That's like tinker toys. Diet and metabolism is incredibly complex. But if you have the right system, that's what we call Metabolic Engineering, then you have the ability to basically go in there and reprogram the metabolism of each of your cells. Let me give you an example. Let's say your car doesn't work. Would you take it to the doctor?

Mary Perry
You would not.

Dr. Sears
No. I don't know how to fix this. I'll take it to an automotive engineer. He's called a mechanic. He says, Oh, I'll twist this. I'll twist that, works like a charm. The same is true of basically

metabolic engineering. Most doctors have no knowledge of metabolism. It's incredibly complex. But with metabolic engineering, you can go to the heart of everything that cause you problems in this life. That is, I'm gaining weight, I'm not thinking clearly. I'm aging faster. I've got chronic disease. Each of these, this common soil of all of these, is increased insular resistance.

Mary Perry

Well, you've definitely expanded upon what people might define as wellness on their own as just in terms of a feeling. But, you know, I think what you've walked throughout is obviously what are the negatives of having uncontrolled inflammation, what happens with insulin resistance, but that the hopeful side is that within four days of just changing your diet, doing the anti-inflammatory diet, you really can start to reverse some of this and get your body into a state of wellness.

Dr. Sears

Yeah, that's the easy part. The hard part is doing it for the rest of your life.