

# I know for a fact...

Dr Justine Butler continues the myth-busting with part four of her guide for know-it-alls

**Y**ou know that sinking feeling when a meat-eater finds out you're a vegetarian? You can see it coming...

## Red-blooded men need meat

A rather macho way of suggesting that veggie men are not as potent as their meat-munching fellows. Not so! In fact, the reverse is true. Veggie men are proud to stand up and be counted in more ways than one!

The main cause of impotence is blocked arteries caused by fatty foods, particularly meat and dairy products. Foods that clog up arteries leading to and from the heart also block the blood flow to other vital organs! These same foods increase the risk of diabetes and obesity – and they're linked to impotence, too.



On the other hand, a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, pulses, nuts and seeds, protects against blocked arteries, heart disease, stroke and many other conditions. Impotence affects one in 10 UK men and while surgery is an option, changing the menu is a much easier way of ensuring you can rise to the occasion.

## Chicken is the low-fat option

In the 1970s chicken was heralded as the 'healthy' option – lower in fat than red meat. It was a very successful campaign and we now eat three times more chicken.

Selective breeding and intensive farming ensures that farmers get the poor birds to our tables in a fraction of the time it used to take. This focus on rapid growth has changed the nature of chicken meat.

It now contains as much fat as a Big Mac, more than twice as much as it did in 1940! And organic chickens aren't much better! They may have more space than factory-farmed chickens but they're still fed the same high-energy feed and are bred for rapid weight gain.

## We are designed to eat meat

Western dogma describes humans as omnivores – they eat everything! It's true, many people do choose to eat meat but the way our bodies are made suggests that we have evolved eating fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables.

Carnivorous animals such as lions, dogs, wolves and cats, are built for short bursts of extreme energy, with strong jaws, sharp teeth and claws. Their jaws can only move open and shut and are designed for tearing and crushing.

They don't hang around chewing food either but tear off chunks of meat and 'wolf' them down whole! Their stomachs are more acidic than ours so they can digest bone and raw flesh and their short intestines allow them to quickly expel the putrefying bacteria from rotting flesh. Nice!

Herbivores such as rabbits, elephants, horses and sheep eat grass and other plants. Their bodies quickly start breaking them down, in fact it starts in the mouth with digestive enzymes. Carnivores don't do this.

Herbivores' jaws can chew by moving from side-to-side and they have much longer digestive systems so there is time and space for nutrients to be absorbed.

Next time someone insists we are designed for meat, ask if they fancy chewing a mouse – fur, bones, teeth an' all – because that's what real carnivores are built for.

## Vegetarianism leads to eating disorders

Complete tosh and there are almost no scientists who would give the claim a house of cards. Good vegetarian diets are right for every stage of life – childhood, teens, pregnancy, breast-feeding women, athletes and the elderly.

They help to prevent some diseases and can be part of the treatment for others, including heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and kidney disease. And then there's dementia, diverticular disease, gallstones, arthritis...

The journal *Eating and Weight Disorders* recently added its two pence after reviewing a mass of research. "No significant differences were found between vegetarians and non-vegetarians in measures of eating pathology or body image." In other words, vegetarians are no more likely to experience eating disorders than meat-eaters.

With an exploding obesity epidemic, time would be better spent worrying about the huge number of overweight children and young adults who can thank meat and dairy for much of their problem.