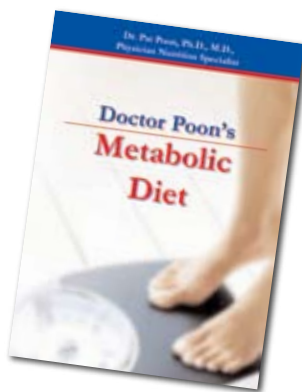


Meat-Friendly Weight Loss

High protein diet developed by Toronto doctor **treats** metabolic syndrome, Type 2 diabetes.

By Alan MacKenzie



When Keith Young visited his doctor on the day after his 72nd birthday, the Yes Group chairman and CEO found out the number 72 had more significance than just his age – it was also the amount of weight he'd lost since starting a new high-protein, low-carb diet just five months earlier.

On the recommendation of a physician he was seeing for high blood pressure, Young met with Toronto-based doctor Pat Poon and started following his specialized metabolic diet on July 28. At the time Young weighed 284 pounds. Within two weeks the meat industry veteran lost over 13 pounds, and as of Dec. 28 he weighed 211 pounds – just 11 pounds away from the target weight initially set out by Dr. Poon.

But the weight loss was not the most dramatic change Young saw as a result of the diet. "Prior to the start I was taking 78 units of insulin a day, and for the last couple of months I've taken none – absolutely zero," says Young, who was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes 15 years ago. He also now takes about half the amount of high blood pressure medication that he used to.

Poon has been running his diet program since 2000. The doctor says the diet was designed to treat metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes, not just weight loss. Poon notes that metabolic syndrome is a cluster of three of the following five signs: abdominal obesity, high blood sugar, high serum triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol and high blood pressure. His book, *Dr. Poon's Metabolic Diet*, says that, according to a study, men aged 42 to 60 that suffer from the syndrome are 2.9 to 4.2 times more likely to die from a heart attack than those who don't.

According to the American Heart Association, 47 million U.S.

residents have metabolic syndrome. While current Canadian data on the syndrome is not available, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada says the prevalence rate for the syndrome in 2004 was 25.8 per cent, noting that thousands of Canadians are affected. People over the age of 50 are more at risk, as are certain ethnic groups (Heart and Stroke said the prevalence rate among First Nations people is 41.6 per cent, compared to 11 per cent for Chinese).

"If you're just overweight you can go on any diet and you will lose weight, but not every diet is for certain conditions,"

"If someone has high cholesterol it is because they are eating too much starch, not too much meat. People have to understand that – then they won't be scared of eating meat anymore." – Dr. Pat Poon.

Poon says, noting that many commercial low-fat diets emphasize eating very little meat. "What happens if you go on that kind of diet? The patient loses muscle as well as fat. That is the big difference between this diet and any other – it has a high protein content so you gain the muscle that you have lost."

That makes Poon's diet very meat-friendly. In fact, Young says he is able to eat an "almost unlimited" amount of meat. However, the doctor stresses that the emphasis is on lean meats, such as chicken, sirloin steak and beef or pork tenderloin – unlike other low-carb diets that allow salty items like bacon.

"This is not just a low-carb diet," Poon

says, noting the difference compared to popular programs such as the Atkins and South Beach diets. "It is a low-carb, low-fat and low-sodium diet – all three things at the same time."

Dr. Poon holds regular seminars for individuals and medical professionals wanting to learn more about the program, but notes that there is a three-month waiting list to see him or any of the other eight doctors working at his two clinics (one in Toronto, the second in Richmond Hill). Among the topics covered in his seminar is the "misconception" that beef is high in cholesterol.

"If you go for a piece of fatty meat, of course (the cholesterol) is high, but try to eat lean," he says, noting that, according to data obtained by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, lean red meat is actually lower in cholesterol than in fish, which he notes many see as a healthier alternative to red meat.

"If someone has high cholesterol it is because they are eating too much starch, not too much meat," he says. "People have to understand that – then they won't be scared of eating meat anymore."

Poon's book is available exclusively through his website, poondiet.com. Much of its content is written for medical professionals, he notes, but the section on how to follow the three phases of the diet is easy for all patients to understand.

The amount of time spent on each phase of the diet will differ from individual to individual, Poon notes. In the first phase a patient's metabolism is changed from "fat forming" to "fat burning" – then they determine how much carbohydrate they can tolerate while still burning fat. The final phase is a life-long program that allows patients to eat a variety of foods, but still emphasizes that too many carbs can be problematic.

Young, who is about to enter the third stage of the diet – notes the weight loss has made him more active, adding that he recently joined a gym to work out. "Obviously after you lose all that weight you need to tone yourself up," he says.

An increased level of energy is a good thing for Young, who still works full days at the meat processing supplies company he founded in 1987. "I should be retired but I still come in here at 6:30 in the morning," he says. **M**