

# Interview: Why your Metabolism was Fast, but now it's Slow

**Melissa:** Welcome back to the Master Your Metabolism Summit. My name is Melissa Schollaert. We have a wonderful expert today. Her name is Catherine Crow. Another reason I invited her to our summit is Catherine is a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner and blogs over at Butter Nutrition. Her passion is education and her goal is to help guide you to improve your nutrition through strategic eating, not dieting, and without expensive supplements. Now, here's why you're going to love her: She has prepared an amazing talk for us today during her interview. She is going to teach us why your metabolism was fast, but now it's slow. Welcome to the summit, Catherine!

**Catherine:** Hi Melissa, thanks so much for having me.

**Melissa:** We are so excited to have you on the summit and to hear what you have to say today. There are a lot of people interested in this topic for sure, so I'm going to jump right in, and just ask what inspired you initially to get into nutrition and natural health.

**Catherine:** Absolutely. Well, so, growing up I never really had any health issues at all. And like so many people, you just really start to think that your body is invincible when it comes to health. But you know, when I got to college and I wasn't taking good care of my body, I was definitely in for a very rude awakening. So I started having chronic digestive discomfort. And maybe for me that felt like food just sitting like a brick in my stomach all the time.

I remember I was taking a yoga class at the time, and doing something as simple as yoga was so uncomfortable that at one point I remember strategizing to myself, "Well, if I eat three hours before my yoga class, you know maybe I won't have as much stomach discomfort." So that was when it really started to hit me that I had a health problem. And coming from a background where I was never even conscious of my digestion, and now here it was really interfering with my life? That just hit me pretty hard.

I think it's important to point out that because changes in the body happen so slowly since the body's always trying to maintain balance or homeostasis, you don't really understand that anything has changed. For me it was down regulation of the digestive system and metabolism, and so we were pretty far down that rabbit hole.

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So, I knew I had a problem, and I decided to see a naturopathic doctor because I live in Seattle where we have Bastyr the leading natural health college in the country. So there's a ton of naturopaths to choose from. So I went to see a naturopath, and I quickly ditched her after about one or two appointments because all I really got were expensive diagnostic tests that said that everything was okay and really didn't do that much for my discomfort.

So, naturally after that began the self-experimentation and reading. And so this took me through a number of common food philosophies, you could say, as I really worked hard to alleviate my discomfort. So I dabbled in these different nutritional paradigms, you could call them. And while some of the things that I tried alleviated my symptoms to some degree, you know in hindsight I think trying these different things just caused more problems and really ignored the root cause which was I just plainly wasn't giving my body what it needed and my metabolism and my digestion was responding and adapting appropriately.

So that whole experience during college was really what brought me into the natural health and nutrition world, and I really haven't looked back since.

**Melissa:** I'm guessing that there are probably some listeners who can really relate to your story, Catherine, and I thought it was so paramount how you kind of reminded us that you know sometimes this stuff kind of starts showing up, and it's kind of been on that journey for a while. And I think it's amazing how you sort of went down that road yourself and you experimented with all these different things because we are so trained to go "Doctor, fix me! Doctor fix me!" and that's just an incredible story.

Well, you definitely talked about down regulation of your metabolism and your digestion. So I know there are people out there that are kind of thinking, "What are the top causes of a slowed metabolism?"

**Catherine:** Absolutely. And I really think that there are top two factors. And first and foremost, I think, the biggest one is just simply not eating enough food and calories to support your body. So when the body makes the decision to slow the metabolism, it's really all about one thing, and one thing only, and that is survival. It has nothing to do with your body trying to conspire against you and you know, your desire to fit in your skinny jeans. It's really just all trying to keep you going for longer on less, because that's what you're giving your body for some of those who have a slowed metabolism. So, it's really the body sacrificing long term health for short term survival. Because of what you're feeding it, you're really telling the body that food is scarce. And so the body gets really smart and starts slowing metabolism and holding on to food as a protective mechanism.

And so to make an analogy, because I love analogies, I want you to think of your body like a house. If you're not making enough money to pay your electricity bill,

what are you going to do? You're going to turn down the heat in your house to compensate. You might turn off lights when you're not in the room. Or you might fail to perform regular maintenance because you simply just can't afford it. The body operates in a very similar way. When there aren't enough calories coming in, the body saves energy by reducing your body temperature; turning down digestive juices, making digestion weaker; reducing the pulse rate, slowing thyroid function; and these are all built in survival responses by the body to help you go longer on less food. And this really isn't a bad thing; it's actually a really good thing, because these protective mechanisms are going to keep you alive in a real emergency. But we just really need to learn to work with our body and not against it.

So, that's definitely the number one cause. And I would say a close second is definitely not eating enough carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are really the most important macronutrient when it comes to metabolism. And when I'm talking about macronutrients I'm talking about protein, carbohydrates and fat. So all of those macronutrients are extremely important and none should ever be limited in any intentional fashion. So really when you think of carbs, you need to think of them driving metabolism. And one of the reasons that adequate carbs in the diet is so important is because the conversion of inactive energy to active energy, which is T4 to T3 for the technical people, that thyroid hormone conversion is dependent on enough glucose, which is sugar, and stored glycogen in the liver. So you need sugar to really set the stage for that powerful metabolic conversion to happen.

So those are definitely the top factors that I think I see the most frequently.

Melissa: Awesome. Are there any other factors that we should also be aware of, Catherine?

Catherine: Well, absolutely. There's a bunch of factors that also play into this that you might want to think about if you're definitely eating enough calories and nutrients and carbs and still having issues. There's also the chance that your liver is malnourished just simply because you're not eating enough high-quality protein. And so this can be common with people with a history of a low protein diet. There's also the possibility that you have some serious nutritional deficiencies, zinc, potassium and taurine are big ones.

Aside from those, there can definitely be some digestive issues going on. It's because any time you're having problems digesting food, it's going to down to regulate your appetite due to bloating, digestive distress, constipation and what not. Any time that you're having that abdominal discomfort you're not going to be able to take in as many calories during the day or really have a regular appetite because most people when they're bloated just feel uncomfortable and they really don't want to eat.

You could also have a hormonal imbalance, which is low progesterone or estrogen dominance that can help contribute to a slowed metabolism. There's also, you know, you could have excess toxins in the diet or poor detoxification. There's also the possibility of stress because any time your body's under stress it's going to block energy production. And then there's also inflammation. And probably last but not least is over exercising. And according to Dr. Ray Peat, the slow heartbeat of runners is largely a result of adaptive hypothyroidism. So in translation, I think he's really saying, so what if the slow pulse of runners is not this amazing sign of physical fitness, but really just an adaptive mechanism of the body to slow the pulse rate due to excessive energy expenditure and not enough calories coming in to balance that. So that's absolutely a huge cluster of other factors that all are interconnected in a lot of ways but they're just some other things that you might want to consider.

**Melissa:** Yeah, that is so helpful Catherine because you're just bringing up such a wonderful array. Because you know, we've heard so much on the Master Your Metabolism Summit that we are all so different, so thank you for sharing those bio-individual factors that could be causing some problems. Of course, that leads me and I'm sure the listeners out there, to the next question, how am I going to be able to tell if our metabolism is low? What are we looking for?

**Catherine:** Absolutely. Well, there's a lot of things to look for, and I think the most common one when someone thinks of a slowed metabolism is just the inability to lose weight. That's what most people first think of. But there's also a lot of other things that can indicate it as well. And probably the most significant in my opinion is having a low body temperature. So that could display as a waking temperature of below 97.8 degrees, just first thing when you wake up in the morning and you're still lying in bed. Or if your body temperature is below 98 degrees during the day. You could also have a low pulse rate, digestive issues like we kind of talked about, or just feeling like your transit time is really slowing down, as well as cold hands and feet, or you could just be cold all the time. You could be really, really, easily stressed, or you could have hormonal imbalance and PMS. And that is actually because hormone synthesis, which is the rate at which your body makes hormones, is actually slowed when the metabolism is slowed. So it'll kind of result in some hormonal imbalances.

And last but not least is poor detoxification. And this could manifest in sluggishness, fatigue, chemical sensitivity, more digestive problems, blood sugar issues, as well as many other factors which we won't get to today. But so, of these other ways to tell if the metabolism is low I think the absolute best way is to do the temperature test that was coined by Broda Barnes who was an American physician who studied endocrine dysfunction in the 1900s. And so he has a simple thyroid test that I will put more details about on my web site, and I will share the URL at the end of the interview. But basically you want to make sure that you take your body

temperature with a basal thermometer first thing in the morning before you get out of bed for three to five days and really get a solid reading. But there's some other details of that test that you want to know. So you can definitely read more about it from me on my website later.

**Melissa:** Awesome, that's so helpful. Now, you are the strategic eating queen. Therefore, I have to pick your brain on this next one and I'm sure there's some folks out there that want to hear this too which is what are the most metabolic stimulating foods?

**Catherine:** Oh, absolutely. So Melissa, I actually have 8 favorite foods for stimulating the metabolism. And because the liver is so instrumental in facilitating the metabolism, any food that supports the liver supports the metabolism in my opinion. So, I mean, the liver has over 300 jobs and you know the ones that are the most metabolism-specific are converting that T4 to T3, which is your inactive to active thyroid hormone, detoxification, helping to regulate digestion, balancing blood sugar, and those are all key jobs that are going to affect your metabolism.

So I'll kind of go through these 8 foods and tell you a little bit about each one, but my number one food is definitely coconut oil. And that is because coconut oil is anti-inflammatory, it's anti-fungal, it's stimulating to the metabolism, it's incredibly easy to digest, and it's full of antioxidants. But you know, the reason that I really love coconut oil is because it can serve as a great replacement to get those vegetable oils out of your diet which are also called polyunsaturated fats or they're often called PUFA fats. And so those vegetable oils actually have a really detrimental effect on metabolism and can block hormone and energy production. So coconut oil is just a really good replacement for those vegetable oils.

And so there are two different kinds that you really want to have on hand. And the first one is the refined coconut oil, and that's going to be pretty flavorless. And so you want to use this one in cooking because it's stable at high temperatures and it's great for sautéing and baking when you don't want any coconut flavor. I also like to use this kind for making mayonnaise because I don't like my mayonnaise to taste like coconut.

So the other kind that you want to have on hand is virgin coconut oil, and I like to use that for things that I want to taste like coconut. So baking, making popcorn, I like to use it in skincare. But ideally you want to try and swap out the vegetable oils that you've been using if you have and try and use coconut oil in place of that.

And so my number two food is ripe and seasonal fruits. The reason that ripe fruits are so important is because they're especially therapeutic. And that's because when a fruit is fully ripe, the nutrients are at their peak, and the sugars are broken down, fully broken down. It's often disaccharide, which is a double sugar into single sugars. So in essence, ripe fruits are incredibly easy on the digestive system, as well as rich in nutrients, antioxidants, really making it your metabolism's friend.

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So number three is potassium-rich juices. You may be shocked by this one, but potassium-rich juices are one of the most metabolism supporting foods. However, this does not mean that any juice will do — I'm taking about PURE unadulterated fruit or vegetable juice without additives, fillers, and NOT from concentrate. If you can find the pure stuff, it's typically loaded with magnesium, potassium, vitamin C (that supports detoxification in the liver) and folate. Not getting enough potassium is one of the most common dietary deficiencies I see in my clients, so making any little changes you can to get more in your diet will do you wonders!

Number four on my list is beans. Beans can be a real superfood if you tolerate them well. Loaded with soluble fiber to aid in the binding and excretion of toxins and to feed your beneficial gut bacteria, beans support your gut-liver axis in incredible ways. Beans are also rich in the minerals potassium and molybdenum, making them a great addition to any diet. Important note though, if you have a lot of built-up toxicity in your liver, you will likely not tolerate beans well, so always listen to your body.

Number five on my list is organic or pastured eggs. Eggs are like nature's multivitamins containing everything that is needed to create life. Each egg contains about 6 grams of protein, vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin E, B2, B5, B12, choline, and cholesterol. Eating eggs every day is probably not evolutionarily consistent, but a few times per week can benefit most people that don't have a liver or biliary condition.

Number six, I have pastured/organic meat, as well as wild seafood. And so any time that you're choosing organic proteins or wild seafood they're going to be less likely to contain hormone additives and toxins, which is always a good thing. And so getting enough protein is absolutely instrumental to the metabolism and a healthy liver function as well as detoxification. And so of organic meats and wild seafood I would definitely say that shellfish is one of the most therapeutic because not only when you eat shellfish you're eating the whole entire animal. You know, you're eating the whole shrimp or you're eating the whole oyster. So it's really therapeutic and particularly rich in minerals that nourish the liver, like zinc and selenium.

Number seven I have as root vegetables and squashes. And so roots and tubers are not only incredibly nutrient dense but they're also very easy to digest. And some have a mild germicide that can be used as a digestive helper and actually help facilitate the detoxification of excess estrogen and endotoxin in the colon. So they can be a really good choice if someone tends to have digestive issues as well.

Another root and tuber that I really like is beets. And beets I love for the liver support because beets can help thin the bile which is essentially the river of toxins

that flow from the liver into your digestive system. You want that bile moving very smoothly to get those toxins out of the body.

And then, last but not least, number eight, my absolute favorite food for stimulating the metabolism is by far pastured butter. And so contrary to mainstream media advice that butter is bad for our health, it's actually quite the opposite, as it's rich in fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K2, saturated fat, lauric acid, as well as cholesterol which is actually an antioxidant and the primary building block for our sex hormones which I think is pretty important. So you want to look for butter from grass fed cows or look for the word "pastured" on the label. You also want to make sure to check for any natural additives that can sometimes be in your butter which I commonly see "natural flavors," but that just doesn't belong. Just remember that butter (as all dairy products) are rich and shouldn't be overdone, especially those that are at risk for [vitamin A toxicity](#).

So as you can see as I've gone through my 8 favorite foods for the metabolism, you might notice that there's kind of a common theme, and that is real fat, selective natural carbohydrates and a variety of really high quality animal protein. And all of these are- there's really a focus on having foods that are really easy to digest because anything that you're not digesting well is essentially working against your metabolism because it can back up the liver and just cause a whole pile of dysfunction. So you want to make sure that you're eating a really well balanced diet containing all the macronutrients.

**Melissa:** This is like, your wealth is knowledge. This is so appreciated. You've given us a ton of advice already, but I'm just going to sort of like, as we begin to wrap it up like, what last piece of advice would you give our listeners who are looking to master their metabolism?

**Catherine:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah, there's definitely a few things that I think it's just really important for everyone to keep in mind. And you know I think the most important thing is to just be aware of the signs that we talked about that could indicate that your current diet is not working for you. And like we talked about, these changes happen slowly, so you really have to kind of be on cue with your body just to kind of remind you, they were: cold hands and feet, low energy, low body temperature, low pulse, reduced transit time, digestive issues. I mean those are really your body's check engine light going off like crazy, so pay attention to them. And then, kind of piggy backing on that idea, you know, don't ignore your body and what it's telling you in favor of any sort of dietary dogma. You know, pay attention to what your body is telling you and if you're craving sugar, it's because if you don't consume it, you know your body is going to break down proteins and fats to make it, which is actually not preferred. And that's why your body is really smart and it's actually craving sugar because you need quick energy.



And then, you know, I think just lastly, really when you start to embark on a, you know, metabolism increasing adventure with your body, really be patient because you definitely didn't get a slow metabolism overnight, and a recovery won't happen in a day or in a month or in six months or even a year for some people. So really just be patient and know that your body's doing the best that it can to kind of reverse what's happened over the years. And as well, I wanted to let listeners know that I've created a page on my website for some additional information, as well as reading and resources for kind of everything that we've talked about. And so you can find that at [butternutrition.com/master-your-metabolism](http://butternutrition.com/master-your-metabolism). So [butternutrition.com/master-your-metabolism](http://butternutrition.com/master-your-metabolism), and I really hope you'll check it out if you are looking for more information on any of these things that we've talked about.

Melissa: Catherine, that is amazing. I personally love your blog, so I hope everybody goes and checks it out.

Catherine: Oh, thank you.

Melissa: Thank you so much for putting together those resources for us so that we have them long after this interview is over. It's so appreciated, and we just cannot thank you enough for sharing your wealth of wisdom and being a part of the Master Your Metabolism Summit. We want to thank everybody for listening. We hope you have enjoyed today's interview. And we hope that you will tune in next time and master your metabolism.

[End of interview]

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