BANTING SUCKS!
THE REAL SECRET
TO GENUINE
WEIGHT LOSS
[WHAT LOW-CARB & BANTING FORGOT]

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INTRODUCTION

Put down the CARBS and no one gets HURT!  
Banting info on Pinterest

South Africa is Banting country; many people have ‘put down the carbs’. There are Banting websites; Banting restaurants; Banting recipe books; and Banting Nazis who carb-check other people’s plates at braais and family gatherings. South Africans have found their dieting Messiah and they sing its praises in business meetings, swap notes about it on social media and talk about it in Parliament.

There is even a novel about Banting, called Death by Carbs (Paige Nick, N&B) where The Prof who started it all is murdered in the first chapter, to the intense joy of the Health Professionals’ Gang (who are suing him in real life).

Which is great, except that Banting is broken and only works sometimes for some people.

Banting is a hundred-year-old philosophy grappling with a complex modern problem. It has enough failings to suck on a grand scale.

• Banting often doesn’t work for women over the age of 40

• Weight loss plateaus affect more than 90% of all long-term Banters
• Banting demonises carbs and needlessly bans many healthy food choices

• Banting treats overweight as a dietary problem when it is in fact a hormonal imbalance

• Many Banters pile on the protein, which in excess can act as kindling for cancer

• Banting targets carbs because they stimulate insulin but is totally unaware that animal protein and some dairy products are bigger culprits

• Banting does not properly address insulin resistance

These omissions have crucial health implications, which are addressed by the evolved version of Banting explained in this book.

Read this book; it will show you how to keep the good part of Banting, avoid the bad, and teach you the alterations you need to make to achieve your goal weight and maintain your health over the long term.
‘A professor is someone who talks in someone else’s sleep.’
W.H. Auden

People have been Banting for the longest time

There is nothing new about the Banting concept. It was old when Robert Atkins slipped and died on an icy pavement. It was even around when the tubby undertaker William Banting had to slide downstairs backwards because he was so fat.

Believe it or not, Banting existed before William Banting was born. It just didn’t have a name yet.

The French Revolution

The term Banting is used to loosely describe a low-carbohydrate eating style initially conceived by French gastronome, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the true ‘father’ of Banting. He served on the National Assembly at the start of the French Revolution in 1789 and later wrote a famous book on food, in which he identified sugar and flour as the causes of obesity. His book, Physiologie du Goût (The Physiology of Taste) is still in print today, almost 200 years later.
Brillat-Savarin’s low-carb concept had to wait until the 1860s to become popular, sparked by Banting’s distribution of over 60,000 copies of his Letter on Corpulence (published, 1863). Banting published this pamphlet, written as an open letter, telling of his struggles to lose weight and his eventual success using a diet that avoided sugar and starch. The diet became so popular that the word ‘Bant’ became a standard word for dieting in many countries.

‘It was probably my misfortune, never to have heard of a celebrated work, La Physiologie du Goût, by Brillat Savarin’

William Banting
**Banting, schmanting, it’s all low-carb**

The Banting concept is loosely connected to many variations of low carbohydrate diets such as Paleo, Atkins, Dukan and LCHF (Low-Carb-High-Fat). While they all eschew sugar and processed carbohydrates, they differ in their individual acceptance or non-acceptance of high-fat, high-protein, certain fruits and dairy products. Some of the variants like Paleo are even further divided into Lacto Paleo (dairy products allowed), Low Carb Paleo (no honey and fruits allowed) and Vegetarian Paleo (no animal-based foods).

**Even Banting got Banting wrong**

As soon as Banting became popular, it started to attract criticism. Its most vocal critic was Dr Wilhelm Ebstein, a well-respected German physician. Ebstein’s clinical experience led him to believe that although Banting was on the right track, it allowed for too much protein to be truly healthy. (He was onto something, but more about protein later!) Ebstein’s version replaced much of the protein with fat, with an emphasis on the eating of pure butter. His patients found that the extra fat reduced their hunger and their weight at the same time.

**A circus of experts**

Imagine a circus act, performed by the finest nutrition experts and dietitians, each one trying to convince you, the audience, that their particular diet is the best for you. Just like politicians in a TV debate, they will lie, perform circus tricks, obfuscate and twist the facts. When questioned, they become as slippery as a bar of soap in a bath.
Look! The one in the clown suit guarantees that you will lose 10 kilos in a month or your money back. See the lady in the Uncle Sam stars and stripes suit! She says you must avoid all fat because fat kills; just buy the pills she is selling on her website and in a few weeks, you will look like a swimsuit model. Wait, there’s one wearing a Tim Noakes mask! He says you must eat more fat so that you can live longer and look more like him. And when you do, you won’t have to worry about your high cholesterol, because no matter how much your doctor panics, cholesterol doesn’t count because the higher it gets, the better it is for you; after all, it’s just a money-making conspiracy by the drug companies.

What’s a person to do?

It’s a confusing mess when the real experts, the professors, scientists and doctors can’t agree. For every professor who tells you to eat fat, another tells you fat kills. For every heart specialist who advises margarine there are two more who urge you to eat butter instead. Some doctors advise that meat is bad for you and tell you to eat poisonous soy instead. Others say eat more fruit, while their colleagues advise that fruit is too sweet and the fructose it contains will give you a fatty liver. I watched a leading nutritionist on TV the other day, sternly advising the nation to convert to vegetarianism, even as her belly bulged against the suit she was wearing. Then there’s my Paleo G.P. pal in the gym who tells me that eating meat three times a day will change my life.

Then it’s fish and then it’s fowl and all in all, who actually knows? We are at sea, tossed in different directions by currents of deeply felt, conflicting advice.
Professor Noakes is a standout example. No one can doubt his sincerity or his good intentions. Yet 10 years ago, his lecture on carbo-loading had me advising my cyclists to stuff themselves with muesli and sweet sports drinks for days before events. Then not long ago, I sat through another of his lectures where he advised us to ‘tear out the chapter on carbs’ in his book, *The Lore of Running* (Human Kinetics). He was now advising us to eat fats instead of carbs (something I heartily agree with, by the way) and he then suggested I train my cyclists to ride on water and snack on macadamia nuts and biltong!

And to make it worse it seems that...

**Any diet works**

As a pure weight loss tool, just about any diet will work for a time.

**Junk food works**: Are you up for a pure junk food diet? Mark Haub, a Professor of Human Nutrition at Kansas State University certainly was. He lived on a diet of donuts, Doritos, Oreos and other junk food for 10 weeks, while trying to prove that it’s not what you eat but how much of it you eat that makes you fat. It worked for him! He lost about 12 kilograms, supposedly because he ensured that his calorie intake was less than his calorie requirements.

**McDonalds works**: Not to be outdone, a science teacher called John Cisna dropped 16 kilograms on a pure McDonald’s diet. He too kept his calorie intake below 2,000 calories a day, while subsisting on a pure McDonald’s diet of Big Macs and ice cream sundaes.
These smart people believe that weight loss is about calories in, versus calories out, which certainly worked for them. But confusingly, the opposite tactic can also work…

**Unlimited fat works:** In 2009, Dave Asprey, the originator of the Bullet Proof Coffee recipe, set out to prove the opposite. He tried to show that you could eat a lot, do no exercise and still lose weight. His diet consisted of 70% fat with no processed sugars, which added an extra 1,500 calories to his previous daily average of 3,000. This provided him with almost double the daily intake of John Cisna, the McDonald’s guy. How is it possible to explain why, instead of putting on weight from eating too much, he steadily lost weight and ended up with a six-pack for the first time in his life? Dave claims that he kept this up for almost two years and only stopped because eating so much every day became too hard to sustain indefinitely.

**Grab your umbrella – confusion rains!**

When faced with these kinds of contradictions, how can anyone blame the average Joe or Jane when they decide to choose a diet or lifestyle based on a magazine headline, some arbitrary personal preference, family ties, the personality of the presenter or a simple financial incentive?

**How can you blame anyone who just picks a diet and hopes for the best?**
‘... to ascertain not only the advantages of the system now called ‘Banting’ but also any possible mischief in its application.’

William Banting (May 1869)

Close but no cigar

During the late 1950s, China struggled to feed its massive population and Chairman Mao began looking for ways to grow more food. He decided that China’s sparrows were a problem because they ate so many grain seeds before they’d had a chance to grow. His solution was to get rid of all the sparrows in China.

Thus was born the Great Sparrow Campaign. It was enthusiastically adopted by Mao’s people who set about destroying sparrow nests, smashing their eggs, killing their nestlings and shooting them out the sky. Some even resorted to banging drums and making loud noises in order to prevent flying sparrows from landing, forcing them to fly until they fell dead from the sky.

In three years, all the sparrows were gone from China.

So too were 30 million Chinese, starved to death in the resulting Great Chinese Famine, which was partly caused by massive
locust swarms that gobbled up the crops. By the time Mao realised that sparrows ate locusts as well as grain, it was too late.

Mao’s understanding of how the sparrows fitted into China’s ecosystem was incomplete; getting rid of the sparrows was the wrong answer.

**Banting is wrong about carbs**

Banting’s solution is to get rid of the carbs, which is also the wrong answer.

Banting’s understanding of digestion and the conversion of food into energy was a great step forward – 100 years ago – but it is now time for a new way of thinking. Singling out carbs as a bad nutrient group provides too simple an answer to a complex problem and, despite working reasonably well for some, it is not a solution that works for everyone.

**Banting tries to fix a hormonal imbalance by imposing a nutritional imbalance.**

It’s like fixing a rattle in your car’s dashboard by pressing on it close to where the rattle is coming from. As soon as you let go, the rattle comes back. This leaves you with an uncomfortable solution to your rattle that forces you to steer with one hand.

In addition to its uncomfortable carb fixation, Banting has another major flaw; it presents a one-dimensional solution to a multi-dimensional problem.

In the Banting view, you are but a mouth and an anus, joined by some digestive piping. This kind of thinking pays your stressful work and personal life no heed. It also says nothing about how you should move and interact with the physical environment
around you. In Banting terms, as long as you avoid carbs, all will be well.

You are a complex entity and your health encompasses much more than an arbitrary daily carb count or a series of carb avoidance strategies. Staying healthy is much more complicated than that. Soon, I will show you how to dispense with carb obsessions and how you can eat a much wider range of food.

At the same time, I will show you how Banting can be extended to cover two crucial areas: **mind and movement** in a way that will decisively transform your health and change your life without forcing you to take a course in personal training or read your way through the Internet.

But first, let’s look at what’s wrong with the Banting take on carbs.

**Banting is about blood sugar**

The foundation of Modern Banting is glucose management and the effect it has on insulin levels. It mistakenly singles out carbohydrates as the only food group that spikes insulin and thus prescribes a reduction of carbs to keep blood sugar levels as stable as possible. This reduces insulin spikes and, as a result, prevents fat production and promotes weight loss.

Unfortunately, the Banting theory is not accurate enough. It presses on the dashboard to stop the rattle but it fails to address the real problem, which manifests in two specific instances:

- A high proportion of women over forty struggle to lose weight on Banting.
- Almost every Banter eventually hits a weight-loss plateau.
Women over forty

‘I gained some weight even though I was doing everything right.’

*Low-carb consultant who worked with Dr Atkins for 30 years*

There is a whole weight loss industry that is sustained by legions of women over forty who simply cannot lose weight. The quote above from Jackie Eberstein, a registered nurse and life-long low-carb consultant, says it all; sometimes even experienced low-carbers can’t lose weight by Banting. She also says that when she trains professionals, the most common question they ask is how to deal with slow weight loss in older women. It is so widespread that it is actually a pandemic.

I recently received an email newsletter from a weight-loss expert and author of a bestselling New York Times’ diet book that promises a 15-pound weight loss in three weeks. Her mail discloses that she still struggles with tight clothes and has been forced to wear ‘Not Your Daughter’s’ jeans since she turned 45. She also admits to being recently measured at 30% body fat, which she blames partially on aging. This is shocking when you consider that many of my patients are unhappy at 25% body fat. Surely low-carb theory is missing something when even the experts can’t make it work properly?

I too have had my share of failures. Take Jo-Anne for example; a 41-year-old serial dieter, who worked as a receptionist, ate badly and did no exercise. She was 20 kilograms overweight when she came to see me and, despite my best efforts, she was still 20 kilos overweight two months later when she left. It seemed so easy in the beginning. I stopped her carbs, which were in everything
she ate. I upped her exercise from zero to walking twice a week. I even got her to move more at work by downloading an app on her phone, which reminded her to stand up every 30 minutes so that she did not sit for too long. Nothing worked. Her weight stubbornly remained the same until she decided that I was incapable of helping her and ditched me for a course of HCG injections, which she ordered on the internet.

Maybe Jo-Anne was cheating on me. I told myself that she was not following the diet properly and that was the reason she was unable to lose weight. Surely her lack of results could not be caused by my flawed dietary advice? For a while, the excuse of poor compliance allowed me to avoid facing the reality that my Banting B.S. only worked sometimes.

Then I met Celia the cyclist, who removed any notion I may have harboured about poor compliance as the reason for the diet’s failure. Celia was 55 years old and she was so active and so disciplined that it made my muscles ache just to talk to her. She rode her bike every weekday morning from 5 am to 7 am and still trained in the gym some evenings. Over weekends she would race her bike; once she rode 200 kilometres a day for three days just to get to an event. Still, Celia carried seven extra kilograms around her middle that would not budge.

Initially, I was sure that I could help her because she would be a model patient and would carry out my every suggestion to the letter. Yet despite her following an extreme low-carb diet combined with extreme exercise, she did not lose a single kilogram over six rigorous weeks.

Thus it became clear to me that it wasn’t the application of Banting low-carb theory that was at fault; the theory itself was to blame.
Weight loss plateaus

Almost everyone who goes Banting eventually reaches a plateau, at which point fat loss stalls and some weight remains. Many find that despite initial good results, they end up retaining some stubborn belly fat that just won’t go away. This effect seems to become worse with age.

The question is why does this happen?

Surely if the Banting principle is correct, then these weight loss plateaus should happen far less often. People who Bant properly for long enough should become lean, but few do.

While it is possible for some determined Banters to find their way past this point, most fail. Those who succeed often do so by employing extreme measures such as even greater carb restriction or a combination of restricted calorie intake and intense exercise. Many of the patients who come to me seeking advice are disciplined enough to have tried both these methods but still cannot achieve their desired weight loss.

Plateaus are big money spinners for weight loss practitioners. Many diet specialists claim to have methods that are ‘guaranteed’ to work and irrespective of their results, they never seem to be short of customers.

The Doc’s spare tyre

When it comes to plateaus, I am a good example. I adopted a low-carb (Banting) lifestyle in 2012 and quickly experienced a weight loss of 10% of my original body mass. Over the next three years, I followed a strict low-carb diet, never consuming more than 25 grams of carbs a day. I also exercised intensely, working
out five or six times a week; yet despite this regime, a few kilos of stubborn belly fat remained.

Sure, the spare tyre was small enough to hide or explain away as ‘old age’ but it still irked me. Just as it had done for most of my patients, low-carb solved most of my weight problem but still did not return a completely satisfactory result. This was especially true on a medical level because my waking blood sugar levels hovered stubbornly at the upper limits of normal.

I struggled with this problem for months, obsessively trying to understand how it was possible to have almost diabetic blood sugars when I was not eating any sugar. It took me a long time to finally accept that it was Banting that was flawed and not my application of it.

Which gets us to the point…

**Why does the Banting take on digestion suck?**

It sucks because it targets blood sugar levels and singles carbs out as the sole culprit, which is simply not good enough.

Banting holds that the consumption of high-carbohydrate processed foods results in weight gain in most, but not all, people. This is equivalent to Mao’s observation that crop yields are reduced because the swallows eat grain seeds. Both assumptions mirror reality closely enough to be useful in certain circumstances; however, neither assumption is correct.

William Banting’s ‘high starch intake makes you fat’ observation has been vindicated by medical research as well as a multitude of treatment successes stretching from the 1860s to modern times. On top of this, medical science has proved countless times that the consumption of high-carbohydrate processed
foods spike blood sugar levels, which then spike insulin levels and lead to the inevitable accumulation of body fat. The main suspect has always been sugar and the lens through which we look has always been the level of sugar in the blood.

Blood sugar levels are easy and inexpensive to monitor and all diabetic treatments are primarily based on lowering these levels.

While it is indisputable that high blood sugar levels are unhealthy, what if we have been victims of a classic Hollywood misdirection? What if we have been duped into focusing all our attention on the obvious suspect and, because we have achieved some success with this reasoning, we have allowed the real murderer to escape?

The usual suspects

Have you ever watched the most famous misdirection movie of all time? ‘The Usual Suspects’ tells the tale of an enigmatic psychopath called Keyser Soze, seen through the eyes of Verbal, a pathetic cripple who is one of Soze’s victims. As the movie unfolds, we are introduced to a variety of likely suspects, but the one character we never suspect is the weakling Verbal. At the end of the movie, as Verbal is released from custody, he drops his cripple pose, lights a cigarette and strides purposefully toward the black luxury sedan that has arrived to fetch him. A voice in the background says ‘The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist’.

In recent years, we have always regarded fat and sugar as the usual suspects. Many clues point to them, but what if they are just red herrings and the real killer is hidden in plain view?
What if we are so blasé about the real killer that our doctors dole it out by the bucketful, ordering dose increases over the phone or tossing casual prescriptions across their desks? What if we are so hoodwinked by the killer’s innocence that most doctors don’t even measure its levels during routine check-ups?

What if some experts are so comfortable with its safety that they add it to the drips of diabetic patients who are being treated in ICU after suffering a heart attack? Who would suspect that by doing this they virtually guarantee the future death by heart attack of every second patient treated with it?

**What if the real devil is insulin?**

Let’s take a quick look at our real enemy.