

'How I beat brain cancer'

About the author:

May 2017 (Vol. 28 Issue 2) in *Brain tumour, Cancer, Environment, Health Success Stories, How I Beat*



Powerlifter Pat Reeves claims she beat two cancer death sentences with a combination of exercise and a raw vegan diet

Pat Reeves is not your average 72-year-old. She works 14-hour days, splits her time between the UK, US and Germany and, at the time of writing, has just competed in her first national powerlifting event of the year, where she successfully defended her world deadlifting title for her age and weight category, breaking her previous record and adding to her 160-strong trophy collection.

But Pat is used to defying expectations. She beat a cancer death sentence in the 1980s and another one in the 1990s, despite refusing chemotherapy, and claims to have reversed her own osteoporosis without conventional treatment.

So what's Pat's secret?

Vegan victory

"Focusing on nutrition, especially raw, living foods," is what Pat says has kept her alive and strong for all these years. "And exercise. No person can be healthy without exercise," she says.

Pat was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour in 1983 at the age of 38, and told she had just 18 months to live. "It was genetic," said Pat. "Tests showed there was an 85 per cent chance of me getting cancer before I was 40. They were chillingly accurate."

Instead of opting for chemotherapy—which she was informed wouldn't cure her, but might extend her life—she chose to focus her time and energy on researching alternative treatments, which led her to nutrition.

"I linked up with as many natural practitioners as I could across the planet," said Pat. "Lots of them advocated a raw, plant-based diet."

Pat was already vegetarian at the time but, based on her research, decided to follow a strictly vegan and raw diet, including plenty of nuts, seeds, green vegetables, and good fats like coconut and olive oils. She completely avoided

grains, sugar, dairy and any cooked or processed foods, and chose foods that were packed with nutrients and easy to digest.

"The body can't digest and repair at the same time," said Pat. "I needed to give it foods that were easy to digest and absorb so it could work on fixing me."

This line of thinking pushed Pat in the direction of fasting, in particular, the 42-day juice fast developed by Austrian naturopath Rudolf Breuss to "nourish the body but starve cancer", described in his book *The Breuss Cancer Cure*. It involves drinking special organic vegetable juices and herbal teas, and abstaining from solid foods.

Pat tried it for the recommended 42 days, then continued to incorporate fresh, green juices into her daily diet—three or four each day—and still swears by them now.

She also started exercising daily. "I didn't do any exercise till I was 38," said Pat. "I took up running. I averaged around 100 miles a week."

Good news, bad news

Pat's total commitment to a raw, vegan, plant-based diet and an active lifestyle was eventually rewarded. She'd partnered with a "brilliant Canadian immunologist" who had agreed to monitor her progress, and 12 months after her terminal cancer diagnosis, he gave her the good news that her brain tumour had shrunk. "A year later, no further evidence was found," Pat said.

Pat enjoyed good health for the next few years, even becoming an accomplished athlete during that time. She won several marathons and then switched to bodybuilding and eventually powerlifting—a strength sport in which competitors attempt to lift as much weight as possible with the squat, bench press and deadlift for one repetition.

Pat stuck to plant-based eating, despite it not being the typical powerlifting diet, and remained in remission for 10 years. During that time, Pat also became a nutritional therapist—so amazed was she by what she experienced with her own health.

But in 1994, following a particularly stressful time in her life, Pat developed a tumour in her knee and was diagnosed with osteosarcoma (bone cancer). Further tumours soon took hold—14 in total—and Pat suffered four heart attacks and three transient ischaemic attacks (TIAs, or 'mini-strokes') that were linked to the cancer. She was given just three months to live.

But again, Pat refused to accept the bleak prognosis and, instead, went about putting into action everything she'd learned about nutrition and health over the past decade.

Never give up

Pat returned to a very strict diet that involved intermittent fasting—only eating twice a day within a six-hour window—and especially made use of raw living foods like sprouted seeds and wheatgrass, which she'd recently been introduced to by Elaine Bruce, director of The UK Centre for Living Foods.

"Raw food isn't necessarily 'living'," explains Pat. "Food that is living grows when you add water, like broccoli seeds or lettuce still with its roots, and is rich in nutrients. I started sprouting seeds in jars and adding the living foods to my juices."

Pat supplemented her diet with high doses of antioxidants like vitamin C and coenzyme Q10 (ubiquinol), and also tried herbal medicine, under the supervision of a practitioner, including hawthorn extract, *Terminalia arjuna* and *Astragalus membranaceus* to help her heart.

But perhaps Pat's most valuable tool was her attitude, which has always remained positive and unrelenting. "I have continually trained, competed and worked," said Pat. "I have a fierce desire to win."

Winning streak

Although she has endured a long and difficult battle with cancer, it does seem like Pat is now winning against the disease. "I feel fantastic," said Pat. "My energy is amazing and I've been stable for six or seven years now. The tumours are still there, but they're inactive. And there have been no more recurrences."

Pat now spends her time helping others with chronic conditions as a nutritional and functional medicine practitioner in the West Midlands, as well as practising in the US and Germany, and also works as general secretary of the British Drug Free Power Lifting Association (BDFPA).

She still follows a raw, plant-based diet. "I don't even have any cooking facilities at my home," she says. But she's not as strict as she used to be, incorporating the odd cooked food like tempeh into her diet once or twice a week. "It's not a life sentence of no fun," said Pat. "But 80 to 90 per cent of the diet needs to be protective and create an environment that makes it difficult for cancer to recur."

As for powerlifting, Pat has no plans to retire in the near future. Fresh from her latest success, she is already training hard for her next world-record-breaking attempt.

Simple sprouting

Pat swears by sprouted 'living foods' like sprouted broccoli, sunflower seeds, buckwheat and lettuce. Here's her guide on how to sprout.

What you need

- Large glass jars (Kilner jars work well) with necks large enough to put your hand through
- Muslin cloth or nylon mesh plus rubber bands/string to seal the tops of the jars
- A draining rack that allows jars to drain at a 45-degree angle.

Alternatively, jars just for sprouting are available at healthfood shops, and can make the whole process easier and ensure better results. Special sprouting trays—usually a series of round or square tiers—which fit neatly into one another are also available.

Directions

- 1) Place the required amount of seeds/beans/grains into a container and soak them, covering them generously with two or three inches of water.
- 2) Soak for approximately eight hours (a little longer won't hurt).
- 3) Drain and rinse thoroughly under running water so that the seeds are churned around by the water's action. This will remove any wild yeasts present in the soaking water.
- 4) Drain away all water residues by placing the containers on a draining rack at a 45-degree angle.
- 5) Place the containers somewhere pleasant to grow: the worktop of a warm, sufficiently ventilated kitchen is best for successful sprouting. Avoid sunny windowsills, radiators and hot water heaters, as these will dry the sprouts out and put them under stress. In winter, avoid growing them near cold draughts and frosts.
- 6) Rinse and drain sprouts once a day for the next two to five days, or until they are ready to eat. In hot weather, you'll need to rinse them twice a day.

Pat's wheatgrass juice recipes

Wheatgrass was one of the cornerstones of Pat's anticancer plan. Here are three simple wheatgrass juice recipes from her website www.foodalive.org.

- 1) 4 carrots, 4 stalks celery, 4 spinach leaves, 2 apples and 3- or 4-inch round (bundle) of wheatgrass—juice all.
- 2) 2 oranges, 1 banana, 1 avocado (pitted), 1 lime and 3- or 4-inch round of wheatgrass—juice all.
- 3) 3 kiwifruit, 3 apricots, 2 cups strawberries, 1 cup pineapple pieces and 3- or 4-inch round of wheatgrass—juice all.

Pat's bone-building exercises

As well as beating two cancer death sentences, Pat claims she has also avoided osteoporosis by eating a raw, plant-based diet high in 'living foods', and taking up powerlifting, a form of anaerobic resistance training.

"A bone density scan showed significant deterioration," said Pat. But she refused drug treatment, and felt confident she could resolve the situation with diet and exercise.

"This is the period when I discovered living foods and did a total shake-up of my mineral input," said Pat. She also found that her anaerobic training "really impacted on my bone density in a positive way".

Her doctors were doubtful that Pat's approach would do any good, yet subsequent scans showed "indisputable evidence of bone regeneration", she said.

But you don't have to become a powerlifter to enjoy better bones. Now a nutritional and functional medicine practitioner, Pat recommends a set of simple exercises for strengthening bones—no big weights required: just do the following exercises twice a day.

- 1) One minute of skipping (can be done without a rope)
- 2) One minute of stepping (alternating feet)
- 3) One minute of side-to-side jumping
- 4) One minute of lunges, alternating feet
- 5) One minute of 'lady' press-ups (on knees)
- 6) One minute of shoulder press with hammer grip (lifting weights straight up, palms facing in)
- 7) One minute of bicep curls

**Exercises 4, 6 and 7 can be done with small dumbbells or bottles of water as weights*

Find out more about Pat's health journey in her book *A Living Miracle*, available through her website at www.foodalive.org.

Useful contacts and resources

Pat Reeves: Nutritional Therapy, Oakfield Cottage, Bromley Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 8JP; tel: 01384 270 270; www.foodalive.org

The Breuss Cancer Cure (Books Alive, Bantam edn, 1995), available online

The UK Centre for Living Foods; www.livingfoods.co.uk