

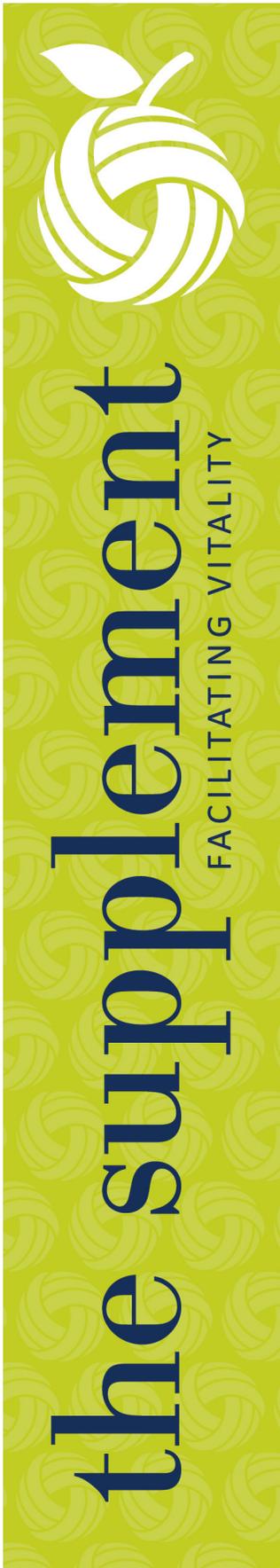
JUNE 2014

# ARE YOU A SUPER TASTER?

Have you ever gone to a restaurant with someone who takes forever to decide on what to eat or drink? Every menu item is pondered for flavor, texture and novelty. The wine list is scoured for just the right pairing. They start using descriptors like “buttery,” “pear undertones” or “cinnamon finish.” They make declarations such as, “I just can’t decide, surprise me!” That would NEVER happen to me. I decide what to order in less than a minute. After a quick scan, adjusting for offensive items (cheese, garlicky croûtons) and finding a decent French table wine, I am done. As a result of spend most of my waking hours guiding people toward better health, my dining companions are often compelled to ask: “Are you gluten intolerant?” Or they simply nod and mutter wise thoughts like, “Yeah, dairy is really bad for you.” or “Paleo, right?”

Good guesses, but wrong. The correct answer is: I am a picky eater. I always have been and in recent years it has gotten worse. It has nothing to do with how I was parented, where I live, the PhD in holistic nutrition, or any nutrient or hormonal imbalances. I have a genetic superpower, I am a super taster. A super taster is someone who is sensitive to the bitter taste of phenylthiocarbamide (PTC) and 6-n-propylthiouracil (PROP). If either compound is present, I can taste nothing else and will reject the food. Regardless of the prized end notes of cinnamon or pear, I can never get there. These subtleties are forever lost on me as I bemoan my burning tongue.

According to a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, approximately 25% of North Americans share my superpower. Among our food aversions are: cruciferous vegetables such as brussels sprouts, broccoli, and cauliflower; beverages which include black coffee and beer; most cheeses (particularly sharp-tasting varieties); brown bread, salami, anchovy paste (ouch!), kale and whipped cream. When I turn up my nose at such delights, people assume that I am being judgmental; that I must possess some super-secret knowledge and they are barreling their way toward lesser health. Or, as my friends and family may report, I am simply super high maintenance and should just be ignored.





**the supplement**  
FACILITATING VITALITY

Food preferences and aversions are determined by any number of factors, not just genetic super powers. We are predisposed to prefer sweet tastes. It is hypothesized that this preference helped our foraging predecessors to discern between nourishing and poisonous foods. After the age of four months, we develop a preference for salt, a mineral that is essential to life. There are sociocultural variables, geographic influences, attitudes and beliefs shaped by families, friends, colleagues and religious dictates. Nowhere on the planet are there more influences on eating behavior than in North America. We are multi-cultural, regional, and no longer subject to seasonal variability. The only two foods that transcend all American ethnicities and geographies are barbecue and corn bread. Ask anyone how they prefer these two dishes. You will get different answers from every person that you ask. The rest of our culinary traditions can best be described as mongrels. Where else in the world can you find Southwestern egg rolls? I actually like those, but I don't eat them. That IS a judgment call.

## DO YOU HAVE THIS GENETIC SUPERPOWER?

There are test strips available to determine your genetic predisposition to taste PTC and PROP. When placed on the tongue, your predisposition is immediately evident. Approximately 50% of North Americans taste something, but it is not offensive. The remainder is evenly split between people who taste nothing and those who are disgusted.



That's me. No denying I'm a supertaster. Ouch!



Ashley is a taster. This is equivalent to licking an envelope. Not offensive, but not good.

Sarah - how can you not be making a face? Lucky non-taster.

### RESOURCES



**PATRICIA M. FULLER, PhD,**  
Director, Wellness Engineering

Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 15 years to designing and delivering wellness programs as a project manager and contractor for PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP. Her training events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

[pfuller@bks-partners.com](mailto:pfuller@bks-partners.com) | **Have a Question? Email it to Dr. Pat!**

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.

