



Ask the Registered Dietitian

Dietary Fads, *Weight Loss* and Energy Balance

Dieting is risky behavior

Fad diets are often ineffective and unhealthy. Most dieters will regain all the weight they lose and more within a few years. Weight cycling (losing weight and gaining it back) of as little as five to 10 pounds can:

- Increase blood pressure, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes;
- Increase risks of heart disease and gallbladder problems;
- Cause build-up of fat especially in the abdomen and upper body;
- Decrease bone density and lead to osteoporosis.

DIET stands for “Did I Eat Today”

Watch out for diets that make things sound technical — weight loss is simple: **Calories consumed must be less than calories used up.** BUT, avoid diets with extremely low caloric intake and watch out for any diet that promises dramatic weight loss in a short period of time. Your metabolism becomes highly efficient, you will have no energy for physical activities and your health (both mental and physical) will suffer.

Your body weight and amount of body fat is a result of the energy balance you have in your body. Energy balance is simply the balance between the calories you take in (that would be energy from food and drink) and the calories you use up (energy for your basic needs AND physical activities). If you are carrying too much excess body fat you likely fit into one of these energy balance categories.

“I weigh about the same as I did last year but my clothes are tighter than they have ever been.” OR “I seem to eat the same as I always have, but I have slowly gained weight over the last few years.”

A physically inactive lifestyle combined with a consistent surplus of food leads to steady weight gain over the years.

Your physical inactivity means that you lose muscle and gain fat, especially around your tummy. Your risks of diabetes and heart disease increase.

Did you know that an extra slice of toast day can lead to a 40 lbs weight gain in 20 years in someone who is physically inactive?

INACTIVITY DANGER ZONE

Calories IN

Calories OUT

“I have been switching between a low fat, low carbohydrate and a low calorie diet for most of the year and the only result is that I keep gaining weight.”

You are the person that keeps diet book authors and publishers rich. You are always trying some new diet fad to rid yourself of any excess fat. When you stick to the diet you lose weight but as soon as you stop the diet you put the weight back on and often, you put on even more weight.

Quick weight loss = Quick weight gain

WHY? When you diet, the limited amount of food that you eat (**Calories IN**) combined with an inactive lifestyle (**Calories OUT**) decreases your metabolic rate (how fast your body uses energy). This decrease in metabolic rate is your body trying to conserve calories to make sure that you never run out of energy to do the things that you need to do to survive.

The Low Carb Diet Example

- Food choices are very restrictive and strict long-term adherence is impossible and unhealthy;
- The diet is extremely low in carbohydrate rich foods (fruits and vegetables, legumes, grain products, milk and yogurt) and can lead to dehydration, a very low energy level, poor nutrient intake and potentially increase the risk of cancer and intestinal problems.
- The high fat content of the typical low carbohydrate diet increases the risk of heart disease.

Low Carbohydrate, Low Fat OR Low Calorie Diet

Calories IN

Calories OUT

Physical inactivity is a serious risk factor for coronary heart disease, on par with cigarette smoking, obesity, and high blood cholesterol. This sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of CHD by up to 200%*

*(DB Panagiotakos, C Pitsavos, C Chrysohoou, et al. J Cardiovasc Risk, 2001)

Registered dietitians (RD) are the experts when it comes to nutrition. Learn how to lose weight the wise way.

Eat smaller portions of a variety of foods so that you have the calories and the other nutrients you need to maintain a physically active lifestyle.

Accumulate 60 minutes of light activities such as walking every day. Add in some organized physical activities such as sport or fitness and conditioning programs (swimming classes, learn to run programs, cycling groups, etc).

Eat slightly less than you need and your body will use some of your body fat to get the energy it needs to keep you energized.

For healthy and long lasting weight loss, take weight off slowly — about 1/2 to 1 pound per week. Overall your energy and fitness levels will also improve. You will also feel better about your fit and healthy body.

Eat to lose weight

Calories IN

Calories OUT

Peak health energy balance

A Physically active lifestyle (health and fitness benefits) and a nutrient rich diet are the ideal approaches to weight maintenance.

The balance between a healthy amount of calories IN and calories OUT will maintain your healthy body composition.

Eating a variety of foods in moderation will fuel your physically active lifestyle and ensure that you get all the nutrients your body needs.

Bottom line: You feel GREAT and your risks of heart disease and diabetes have decreased.

Your attitude affects your ability to succeed

Calories IN

Calories OUT



Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity