

The Calorie Restriction Myth

The latest research is clearly showing that a calorie restricted diet does not in fact extend life, and may even shorten longevity by causing harmful stress. What is clear is that a calorie restricted diet makes you fat, and being fat greatly promotes illness and a shorter life.



Low-fat and low-carb diets are both high-calorie diets, but they are not necessarily healthy. Fat has at least twice as many calories as carbs or sugar. A low-fat diet is very high in calories by virtue of being high in carbohydrates. Equally, a low-carb diet is very high in calories by virtue of being high in fat.

A low-calorie diet is by definition a diet that restricts both fats and carbs. It has been falsely assumed for many years that if you consume less calories than you burn you will lose weight; this is simply not so because a lot depends on what is wrapped around the calories going into your mouth. A cookie will be more fattening than a sweet potato, even if both have exactly the same amount of calories. A lump of chocolate will be more fattening than a banana even if both have exactly the same amount of calories. "Everything you have been told about diet and exercise for the past 30 years may be wrong. No amount of exercise will reverse the obesity epidemic if the modern food system is not fixed. [It is] a Flawed Formula: You've heard it now for 50 years. When it comes to your weight, 'calories in must equal calories out.' 'Eat less and exercise more.' 'A calorie is a calorie is a calorie.' The problem is that this formula doesn't work, as evidenced by America's ever-expanding waistline". Source: J. Mercola, M.D., Documentary Exposes How Sugar and Our Food System Fuels Obesity, November 2014, www.mercola.com.

"Recent studies show that fructose-induced uric acid generation causes mitochondrial oxidative stress that stimulates fat accumulation independent of excessive caloric intake. These studies challenge the long-standing dogma that 'a calorie is just a calorie' and suggest that the metabolic effects of food may matter as much as its energy content". Source: Johnson RJ, et al, Sugar, uric acid, and the etiology of diabetes and obesity, *Diabetes*, 2013 Oct; 62(10):3307-15.

Study after study showed that reducing calories did NOT lead to weight loss. But it has never worked. The failure rate is 98%. Practical personal experience shows that this is likely to be true. So, whatever else you may believe, **caloric reduction DOES NOT WORK.** This is a proven fact. Proven in the bitter tears of a million believers. Patient after patient tried to lose weight by restricting calories with consistent

failure. Increased calories did not cause obesity so reducing calories didn't cause weight loss. Exercise didn't work either.... So what was the real etiology of obesity: insulin. A low calorie strategy for weight loss is guaranteed to fail. It has been proven by science long ago. The huge 50,000 woman randomized trial (Women's Health Initiative) of the low fat low calorie diet proved to be an utter failure for weight loss. The problem with this strategy is that it does not address the long term problem of insulin resistance and high insulin levels. Since the insulin sets the 'body set weight thermostat' – the body keeps trying to regain the lost weight.

Here's the bottom line. As you reduce calories, appetite goes up, and [fat burning] goes down. You reduce Calories In, but Calories Out goes down, too. This is failure guaranteed 100%. It's as stupid as cracking the safe of your own bank". Source (abridged extract): Dr Jason Fung, Insulin Causes Weight Gain, www.intensivedietarymanagement.com.



The traditional belief that a calorie restricted diet extends life is based on the idea that food consumption ages the body generally, and that by consuming less food you age the body less. This outdated concept ignores the human biological consequences of calorie restriction such as the real and harmful stress of being in a semi-permanent state of hunger, the biological 'starvation response' which makes the body store more fat, the harmful consequences of inadequate nutrition and so on. It is now generally recognized that calorie restriction is counter-productive and in terms of life extension it simply does not work.

The only way to restrict calories is to eat less carbs and less fat. But this galvanizes hormones that make you store more body weight. Losing weight is not about eating less food or fewer calories. Rather, it's a hormonal issue. And by eating the right kind of food your hormones will look after you and keep you slim, regardless of food quantity or calories.

When the body receives junk food, bereft of nutrition, it doesn't feel satisfied or satiated. When the body receives nutritious food, it is satisfying, filling and non-fattening. Junk food may fill you up for a moment, but it is superficial and short-lasting.

Nutritious food prevents hunger, over-eating and food cravings. Nutritious food fills you up so as to make you much less likely to fall prey to junk food. Anybody who gives up junk food and begins to just eat nutritious food can testify to this.

This begs the question: what is 'nutritious food'? Nutritious food is real, whole food, whether cooked or raw. Examples include, fruit, vegetables, legumes, salads, nuts, seeds, sprouted seeds, and (in moderation) eggs.

The point here is that by keeping to a highly nutritious diet, you will gradually avoid or minimize junk food, and food-cravings will disappear. You will feel much more energetic and soon you will experience a dramatic improvement in health. By default you will lose weight and maintain a slim body at your optimum body weight. And you will live a healthier and longer life.

When you eat less or when you try to restrict calories (or when you go hungry or go without food for more than about 5 hours during waking hours) alarm bells ring inside the body. Any kind of significant food deprivation makes the body 'think' that there is a risk of famine. The body doesn't know that you may have ample food available; it just knows it must take emergency measures to ensure survival.

Restricting calories means severely restricting just about all foods, since virtually all foods contain calories in the form of carbs and/or fat. As a consequence of significant food deprivation, the body switches into a fat-saving mode (this biological attribute is well known to medical science as the 'starvation response'). When you eventually eat, more fat than otherwise will be stored by the body, and it will not switch out of its fat-saving mode very quickly. In fact, the body will not switch out of its fat-saving mode until you are fatter than when you first started to deprive yourself of food!

Severe calorie restriction is totally counter-productive. This is why so-called 'yo-yo dieting' and calorie-counting diets never work. The blunt truth is that eating less actually makes you fatter!

"After completing the [food deprivation diet] the dieter is likely to experience the body's starvation response, leading to rapid weight gain of only fat". Wikipedia.

"It's not only your waistline that suffers from yo-yoing. Repeated crash dieting increases insulin and estrogen. These changes cause you to start putting on weight around your middle, which research has linked to insulin resistance, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease." Source: Andrea Pennington, MD, The Pennington Plan for Weight Success

In the context of weight loss there is another good reason to not eat less and not restrict calories: the effect of leptin.

We all have white fat and brown fat. White fat stores just that: fat. And brown fat stores muscle energy for everyday activities. Leptin is a powerful hormone produced by the body to control feelings of hunger. It is always circulating in the blood and its role is to keep body weight within a healthy narrow range. If your body-fat falls below the norm (the 'baseline level') leptin levels in the blood will go down to make you eat more by increasing feelings of hunger. If your body-fat goes above the norm, leptin levels in the blood will go up to make you eat less by reducing feelings of hunger.

Being on a very low calorie diet can bring a decrease in leptin which in turn makes you hungry and have food cravings, and will make you overeat or eat junk food when you eventually give up the low calorie diet. Conversely, eating a healthy nutritious diet will provide satiety and keep leptin at higher levels, promoting easier fat loss by not causing over-eating or making you fall prey to junk food. What about long-term calorie restriction as opposed to temporary crash-diets?

Much has been made of 'Caloric Restriction' and how it is the one true life-extension strategy currently available. In many articles and videos it has been given much attention and you may be disappointed to learn that this strategy is flawed.

"The anti-aging strategy known as caloric restriction may be a pointless, frustrating and even dangerous exercise. Today there are a lot of very healthy people who look like skeletons because they bought into this. Our study questions the paradigm that caloric restriction is universally beneficial. Contrary to what is widely believed, caloric restriction does not extend the lifespan of all strains of mice. Your energy expenditure and your energy intake should be in balance. It's as simple as that. And how do you know that? By gain or loss of weight. The whole thing is very commonsensical. For humans of normal weight we strongly caution against caloric restriction, it can actually shorten lifespan". Source: 1. Rajindar S. Sohal, et al, Lifespan Extension in Mice by Food Restriction Depends on an Energy Imbalance, J. Nutr. March 2009 vol. 139 no. 3 533-539.

"Measurements of animal responses when they cease restriction indicate that prolonged calorie restriction does not diminish hunger, even though the animals may have been in long-term energy balance. Neuroendocrine profiles support the idea that animals under calorie restriction are continuously hungry. The feasibility of restricting intake in humans for many decades without long-term support is questionable". Source: John R. Speakman , et al, Starving for Life: What Animal Studies Can and Cannot Tell Us about the Use of Caloric Restriction to Prolong Human Lifespan, J. Nutr. April 2007 vol. 137 no. 4 1078-1086.

A long term study (over several years) published in The Lancet on weight loss showed that virtually all the weight was regained. The study looked at two groups, one on a severe calorie restriction diet and the other on a not so severe calorie restriction diet. The first group lost weight more quickly than the second group. But both groups later regained their lost weight equally quickly. "At the end of the three year follow-up period the researchers found that most of the participants had regained most of their weight". Source: Martin CK, et al, Weight loss: slow and steady does not win the race, Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol, Volume 2, No. 12, p927–928, December 2014.

Some past research into mice shows that calorie restriction reduces obesity and extends life. But such studies tend to be flawed for two reasons:

1. Clearly if you restrict calories, an obese mouse will eventually lose weight. But the research usually does not say what happens when a normal diet is resumed for such a mouse. All the research into calorie restrictions in humans shows unequivocally that the body quickly recovers the lost weight (and more) when an unrestricted diet is resumed. The body's survival mechanism kicks in and you end up storing more surplus body fat than you had before.
2. As for extending life, virtually all the latest research is saying that severe calorie restriction and a permanent state of hunger stresses and harms the body, and that in fact calorie restriction shortens lifespan. There are no long-term studies showing that calorie restriction in humans extends lifespan. Some past studies using mice have shown that low-calorie diets with optimal nutrition protect against disease and extend lifespan. But these studies cannot deny the confounding fact that any protection against disease and extended lifespan may be due to optimal nutrition rather than calorie restriction per se.

Quite apart from the strong possibility that long-term severe calorie restriction is counterproductive to good health, to live a life in which you are permanently feeling hungry (in the hope that you may live a few extra years) is simply not practical or even feasible for virtually all human beings.

However it is fully recognized that 'temporary controlled calorie restriction' for a specific medical condition in which you avoid over-consumption, you avoid fasting, and you eat regular nutritious meals so as not to go hungry, can indeed be beneficial. There is a world of difference between severe (uncontrolled) calorie restriction and temporary controlled calorie restriction.

In summary, severe calorie restriction galvanizes hormones that make you store more body weight. Furthermore, such calorie restriction stresses and harms the body and is counter-productive and unnecessary in terms of losing surplus body fat. In any event, no kind of calorie restriction diet that always leaves you feeling hungry is sustainable in the long run. The solution to losing weight and improving health is to eat nutritious food and not go hungry.

The ideal diet for optimum health and a lean body should be high in carbs, high in fat and high in calories, provided that sugary foods and processed carbs are avoided.



Summary: Avoid low-calorie diets, they are counter-productive, they make you ill and they don't help you lose weight or live longer.

Source: The Science of Longevity by Russell Eaton.

For more information about extending your life visit our website at www.dragonfirenutrition.com

