

Why Counting Calories Doesn't Work

For years now, we have been taught to count calories, to balance the ratio of our calories in vs calories out for the most effective way to lose unwanted pounds. But does this system work for the countless number of people around the world who are diligently counting calories?

Well, the simple answer is no. Here's why the calories model is outdated and what the new research is telling us to do instead!

Not All Calories Are Created Equal

While it seems simpler to try and think of each calorie having the exact same effect on our bodies, this is simply not the case. Not all calories are created equal. For example, the calories from an apple have a very different effect on your body than those from a snickers bar. Food is information for our bodies and every time you eat, every time you make a choice about what types of foods you are going to consume, you are sending messages to your cells and to your hormones that can have varying effects on a whole range of processes within your body.

Our hormones play a major role in the way our bodies process our food. They tell us when we are full and they signal our body to either burn or store fat. For example, your body has two fuel sources to choose from for energy: fat or sugar. If under stress, the body will produce excessive amounts of the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline. These two hormones signal your body to use sugar as an energy source as it is available much faster than fat, which is a slower releasing energy source. This isn't helpful if your goal is weight loss as it makes it difficult to burn fat regardless of what you

are eating.

It's Impossible To Accurately Count All Calories

If the calorie in calorie out model did actually work, then you would need to make sure that the calories you are counting are really accurate or risk gaining unwanted pounds. Realistically it's impossible to accurately determine the calories you eat and trying to can create stress or anxiety around eating. Just imagine you are out for dinner with your friends or family and while everyone is choosing what they want to eat, you are trying to figure out how many calories each meal has to fit into your daily target. Not fun!

Labels Can Be Inaccurate

Little do the calorie counters know, there is an allowable margin of error in product labeling. This simply means again that accurately counting the number of calories in different foods is almost impossible.

We Could Potentially Restrict Ourselves From Eating Healthy Foods

Some foods are high in calories but are high in essential nutrients that actually help your body burn fat, for example, foods like avocados, coconut oil, nuts, and seeds. These foods are full of healthy fats that help your cells function optimally. Adding healthy fats to your meal can also help you feel full faster and stay full longer. They can also help in controlling your cravings and your blood sugar levels. If we focus only on calories, we may miss out on the many benefits that we can get from these foods.

Counting Calories Is Not Sustainable Because It Does Not Address The Root Cause of Why People Overeat

There are several reasons why people overeat or become overweight. Emotional eating, eating when bored, food cravings – all can lead to making poor food choices. How many times have you gone for a muffin or a bag of potato crisps while doing menial tasks at work? If these underlying issues are not addressed, then those who are counting calories will quickly run out of calories before they hit dinner. They then have the option of skipping dinner or “cheating” and having dinner anyway. After eating dinner and feeling guilty, many will overeat or snack while vowing to “start again tomorrow”. This is not a sustainable or healthy way of eating.

In Order For Any Weight Loss Program To Be Sustainable, One Has To Focus on Developing Healthy Habits and Lifestyle

So if we are not counting calories, what works instead? The most effective way to make healthy sustainable lifestyle changes is to choose whole foods whenever possible, real foods like fruit and vegetables, healthy fats, whole grains, and organic grass fed or free range meat and dairy products.

All of our bodies are different, so learning to listen to and trust your body can be really life changing. Try to focus on eating only when you are hungry and not when you have nothing to do. Making a conscious effort to eat healthy foods rather than focusing on what you cannot have is an act of self-care,

and your body will thank you.

Also, look at other aspects of your lifestyle. Exercise not only helps boost your metabolism, it has a great effect on your mood and energy levels, which makes it easier to make good food choices. Keeping yourself hydrated at all times is also super important as is sleep! Find an activity that will better manage your stress such as meditation, deep breathing, or a restorative practice such as yoga. Don't get overwhelmed. Just take it one step at a time. The small things you do consistently every day will have a much bigger impact on your health than big changes you only sustain for a week.

Have you tried counting calories in the past as a weight loss method? We would love to hear your experiences in the comments below.

Further Reading:

- *How I Lost Over 150 Pounds, and How My Life Changed*
- *Detox Cheap and Easy Without Fasting – Recipes Included*
- *What Causes Chronic Inflammation, and How To Stop It For Good*