

Why fat free diets do not work at all.

Most people understand that it is wise to limit the amount of fat grams in their daily diet. The dietary reference intake amount for an adult ranges from 20% to 35% of daily calories; or about 44 to 55 grams per day. Since a single slice of pecan pie carries with it 27 grams of fat, and a mere tablespoon of thousand island salad dressing contains 8 grams of fat it is not surprising to see more and more people checking food labels and "overpassing" an order of onion rings as they try to lose, or maintain, inches and pounds.

However, the relentless avoidance of fat " even of healthy unsaturated fat " is creating a troubling scenario for many individuals. Instead of losing weight when they go "fat free", they are actually gaining weight.

Many people on the road to weight loss forget " or simply do not know " that the words "fat free" do not also mean "calorie free". As a result, many people ingest far too much "fat free" food, believing that it will not add weight, since, alas, it is dubbed "fat free". Yet it is the calories in these fat-free foods that cause the weight gain; not the fat grams themselves

A single gram of fat contain nine calories, which is more than double the amount of calories in a gram protein or carbohydrate. Therefore, mathematically speaking, an eater can consume twice as many protein or carbohydrate grams than fat grams, and achieve the same caloric intake. Since many high-fat foods contain an excessive amount of fat grams " such as onion rings " it has become a staple of dieting wisdom to reduce fat intake and avoid such oily, greasy foods

Yet it bears repeating that the reason to avoid fat-rich foods is not because of the word "fat"; it is because each fat gram contains a scale-tipping 9 calories. In other words: the weight-conscious reason for avoiding excess fat grams is because it leads to a higher caloric intake.

Dieters who neglect to realize this basic nutritional fact " that weight gain is about calories and not about fat grams themselves " fail to realize, and often at their eventual dismay, how the body actually gains and loses weight.

The typical adult male American diet calls for 2000 calories per day because this is how many calories are collectively use and burned (i.e. converted into energy) by the body each day. As an example, an average male dieter who consumes 1800 calories a day will "save" 200 calories per day. As there are 3,500 calories in a pound, the dieter in this scenario will "save" 3,600 calories over the course of 18 days (18 x 200 calories). This translates into a loss of one pound. Similarly, if this dieter consumes an excess 200 calories per day, a pound of weight will be gained in 18 days.

A dieter who is not aware of this mathematical formula may indeed avoid fat altogether and consume, for example, 6 tablespoons of "fat free" caramel topping per day; believing that this is not a part of the weight gain equation, because it is labeled as "fat free". This is not false advertising, as fat free caramel topping contains no fat grams. However, fat free caramel topping delivers 103 calories per two tablespoon serving

If this dieter is adhering to a diet regimen of 44 fat grams per day -- and does not count calories -- then he will simply not know that in these 6 mere tablespoons are a substantial 309 calories; or 15% of the total daily caloric intake for a 2000 calorie/day diet.

In fact, a dieter could subsist entirely on "fat free" foods, and easily exceed their target daily caloric intake by their second meal of the day. These excess calories are obviously not deriving from fat grams; but they are coming from another source, most probably carbohydrates.

Again, the message here that many dieters do not receive from the advertising and marketing media is that fat grams in and of themselves do not necessarily "cause" weight gain. Rather, fat grams contribute to the total caloric intake, and they should be counted alongside carbohydrates and proteins.

Adding an unnecessary layer of complexity here is that many "healthy foods", such as energy bars, contain an excessive amount of calories. A chocolate chip Energy Bar, for example, contains 230 calories; which is actually only 40 calories less than a Butterfinger candy bar . Unfortunately, because the Energy Bar contains 2 grams of fat and is therefore "low fat", some dieters eat several per day; and pack on 230 calories each time, despite the fact that virtually none of those calories come from fat. It does not matter; the dieter will still gain weight if his or her daily caloric intake threshold is surpassed. Dieters who expect yogurt-covered bars to be "healthier" are also misled; the yogurt-berry Balance Bar contains 200 calories per serving, despite the fact that only 25% of the calories come from its 6 grams of fat.

However, there are some responsible nutritional supplement products on the market that are engineered to be both low fat/fat-free and low-calorie. These foods are of benefit to dieters when they are losing weight, and also in the vulnerable period after the weight has been lost. Regrettably, many very well intentioned dieters who have made tremendous strides and sacrifices to lose weight regain it within the first few "post-diet" months.

While a number of factors influence whether a dieter will regain weight, including environment and genetics, one major culprit is that dieters are not provided with low-fat, low-calorie, and palatable food sources once they have achieved their weight loss goals. They consequently return to previous eating habits, and the unwanted weight returns within weeks.

However, as mentioned, there are intelligent nutritional supplements on the market that do fill this void, and ethically serve dieters and post-dieters with foods that they need to stay healthy, and fend off weight gain. For the sake of current and future dieters who are going to struggle with misleading "fat free" marketing, it is hoped that such intelligent companies, and their products, quickly become the norm of the future, rather than the exception of today.

Notes:

Fat grams contain 9 calories each.

3 grams of fat per onion ring!

As briefly noted above, many dieters fail to realize that there are healthy unsaturated fats that the body requires; the body cannot produce fat on its own, it must receive it through diet. Yet even unsaturated fat grams contain 9 calories each, and so the understanding the fats should be severely limited holds true.

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