

The 10 Biggest Food Lies That Are Keeping Us Fat and Sick

By Dr. Mark Hyman, MD

1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to weight loss, there's a ton of advice out there. The problem is, most of it is terrible, outdated and scientifically disproven. And if you believe it, it could be getting in your way.

So let's take a look at the Top Ten Food Lies that keep you sick and fat.

2. All Calories Are Created Equal



When I walked into an 8th grade class recently, I asked if them if there was a difference between 1000 calories

of [broccoli](#) and a 1000 calories of soda. You know what I heard? A unanimous, “Duh! Yes!”

The idea that, as long as we burn more calories than we consume, we will lose weight IS SIMPLY DEAD WRONG. The lie is that losing weight is all about energy balance or calories in/calories out. Just eat less and exercise more is the mantra we hear from the food industry and government agencies. It’s all about moderation. How’s that working for America?

The truth is there are good and bad calories. And that’s because it’s more than a simple math problem.

When we eat, our food interacts with our biology, which is a complex adaptive system that instantly transforms every bite. Every bite affects your hormones, brain chemistry and metabolism. Sugar calories cause fat storage and spike hunger. Protein and fat calories promote fat burning.

What counts even more are the QUALITY of the calories.

What are high-quality calories? Whole foods – fresh foods, foods like great-grandma made. Good quality protein: [grass-fed animal products](#) (not factory farmed), organic eggs, chicken, small wild fish, nuts and [seeds](#). Good carbs: vibrantly colored vegetables, the brighter the better (you can binge on these!). Fruits like wild berries, apples and kiwis.

And super foods like [chia](#) and hemp seeds. And good fats like avocado, extra virgin olive oil, nuts and seeds, coconut butter and [omega-3 fats](#) from fish.!

3. Don't Lose Weight Too Fast, You'll Gain it All Back



Slow and steady is what we are told. No quick fixes. Don't lose more than a pound a week. This is dead wrong.

Studies show the opposite – that a jumpstart leads to more weight loss over time.

If you reboot your metabolism with a quick detox from sugar, processed food and junk, you will reset your hormones and your brain chemistry making it much easier to sustain the changes.

The key is to use a healthy, sustainable strategy for weight loss that balances your hormones and brain chemistry and doesn't put you in a starvation response. That allows you to lose the weight and keep it off – I see it with my patients all

the time – if you see results, you feel empowered and get inspired to keep losing weight.

4. All You Need is Willpower

This is one of the most insidious lies pushed on us by the food industry and government.

Their mantra is this: Eat Less, Exercise More.



The implicit message in this idea is that the real reason we are all fat and sick is that we are lazy gluttons. If we just stopped stuffing our faces and got up off the couch and moved our butt, we would lose weight. It is moral failing, weak psychology, apathy or worse that prevents people from moderating their food intake and exercise. This is nonsense.

If you try to control your appetite with willpower, you will fail. We have short-term voluntary control and can starve ourselves but then our bodies compensate by slowing our metabolism and dramatically increasing appetite. It is unsustainable. If I asked you to hold your breath for 15

minutes – no matter how bad you want to make it happen, you're just not designed to pull that off.

When your taste buds, brain chemistry, hormones and metabolism have been damaged by sugar and processed foods, willpower alone won't do it. If you are [addicted to sugar](#) and refined carbs you cannot white knuckle it for very long. You have to naturally reset your brain chemistry and hormones so your body will automatically self regulate and the [cravings](#) disappear and hunger will be in balance.

When your metabolism has been hijacked you need to detox from the [addictive power of sugar](#) and flour and replace them with real, whole high quality foods. That will allow your appetite and weight to automatically regulate without willpower

5. Diet Soda Is Better Than Regular Soda



I call soda LIQUID DEATH. And you might as well call [diet soda](#) "New & Improved Liquid Death," because it may actually be WORSE.

In a [14-year study of more than 66,000 women](#), researchers found that diet sodas actually raised the risk of diabetes MORE than sugar-sweetened sodas. One diet soda increased the risk of type 2 diabetes by 33% and one large diet soda increased the risk by 66%.

The truth is, diet soda slows your metabolism, makes you hungry for sugar and carbs and packs on the [belly fat](#).

Stay away from all artificial sweeteners, even natural ones. Just add a little real sugar to your coffee if you want. It's not the sugar that you add to your diet that's the problem. It's the sugar that is added to your diet by food corporations.

Remember, if you consume one 20-ounce soda, you have to walk four and a half miles to burn it off. If you consume one super-size fast-food meal, you have to run four miles a day for one whole week to burn it off. If you eat that every day, you have to run a marathon every single day to burn it off.

The simple fact is that you cannot exercise your way out of a bad diet.

Editors note: Click here to [Find a Local Farmer](#)

The [low-fat](#) craze of the last 30 years has paralleled the dramatic rise in obesity and type 2 diabetes. When food companies took the fat out of the products it was replaced with sugar. And in those 30 years our sugar consumption has doubled. Fat actually makes you satisfied, curbs your appetite and a review of all the [research on fat and weight](#) found that fat does not make you fat.

The latest health buzzword is “whole grain.” Food companies add a few flakes of whole grain to processed foods and try to convince us its healthy. A whole grain Pop Tart? Really?

Most cereals are 75% sugar, even with a little bit of whole grain added. They shouldn't be called breakfast, they should be called dessert. And we are feeding sugary cereal to our kids for breakfast thinking we are doing something good for them. In fact, we are killing them.

My basic rule for food: If it has ANY health claim on the label, it's probably bad for you.

6. Foods Labeled Low Fat or Whole Grain Are Good for You

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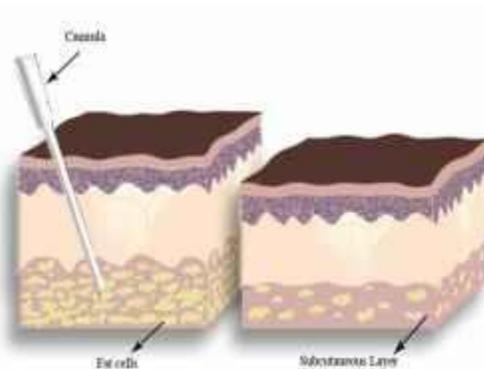
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7. It's All About Genetics



You may think if your mom is fat and your grandma is fat, that's why you are fat – you drew the fat card or the diabetes card in the genetic lottery.

But the truth is there are 32 genes associated with obesity in the general population and they only account for nine percent of obesity cases. So even if you had all 32 obesity genes, you would put on only about 22 pounds.

Plus, our genes only change two percent every 20,000 years. And by 2050 it is projected that over 50 percent of Americans will be obese (now it's about 35%). Our genes don't change that fast.

What changed is we went from eating about 10 pounds of sugar per person per year in 1800 to 152 pounds of sugar (and 146 pounds of flour) per person per year today. Those are drugs, doses of sugar and flour that hijack our metabolism and make us fat and sick.

The truth is that obesity is caused by all kinds of factors, but the least of them is genetics.

8. Eating Fat Makes You Fat



Fat is not a 4-letter word! Eating fat not only doesn't make you fat, it's critical to health and weight loss. Studies comparing an identical calorie high fat diet to a high sugar diet had totally different effects on metabolism. The higher fat diet caused people to burn an extra 300 calories a day. That's the equivalent of running for an hour without doing any exercise. Fat speeds up your metabolism. Sugar slows it down.

In studies of animals eating identical calorie diets of low fat (high sugar) or higher fat and protein show that the higher sugar diets lead to more fat deposition and muscle loss, while the higher fat and protein diets led to more muscle mass and fat loss. And remember that's while they were eating exactly the same number of calories.



The right fats are actually the preferred fuel for our cells, especially ones called medium chain triglycerides that come from foods like coconut butter. Yes, you need to stay away from trans fats, but good fats like extra virgin olive oil,

coconut butter, avocado, nuts, seeds and nut butters keep us full AND they lubricate the wheels of our metabolism.

So don't fear fat.

9. Milk Is Nature's Perfect Food



Milk is nature's perfect food only if you are a calf!

For many people, dairy causes inflammation, allergies, congestion, postnasal drip, sinus problems, eczema, asthma, acne and irritable bowel. It also may increase the risk of bone fractures and osteoporosis, increase the risk of type 1 and type 2 diabetes and causes certain kinds of cancers.

And it also spikes insulin, causing us to grow belly fat.

No matter what messages you hear from the dairy lobby – there is nothing perfect about milk! To read more about the dangers of milk, read my blog “Got Proof.”

10. You Have To Starve To Lose Weight



You do NOT have to starve to lose weight! In fact, that’s one thing that my patients love to learn about, they don’t go hungry when eating real whole food. There is no way even the Guinness World Record holder of calorie counting can accurately know their calorie intake. If you eat one extra mouthful of food a day, over 30 years you will become obese. You have to let your body naturally regulate itself by eating the right foods. You can’t count your way to health or weight loss.

In fact, when you balance your hormones and insulin by eating the right combination of proteins, healthy fats, the right carbs (low glycemic) and phytonutrients, you can not only lose weight without starving, you can lose weight without craving all the junk that was making you fat!

11. Exercise Is the Key to Weight Loss

If you think you can exercise your way to weight loss, I am sorry to say you are in for a big disappointment. Do you treat yourself to a post workout sugar-laden smoothie, muffin, or other “healthy” snack? Suck back some Gatorade to quench your thirst after your thirty minutes on the treadmill?



Relying on exercise to lose weight without changing your diet is asking for failure. You can change your diet and lose weight, but if you exercise and keep your diet the same, you may gain some muscle, improve endurance, and be healthier overall, but you won't shed many pounds.

Remember, if you consume one 20-ounce soda, you have to walk four and a half miles to burn it off. If you consume one super-size fast-food meal, you have to run four miles a day for one whole week to burn it off. If you eat that every day, you have to run a marathon every single day to burn it off.

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