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5 Reasons Why Fat is Good for Weight Loss

Remember the low-fat diet craze during the 80s? Today, many people still believe you have to drastically reduce your fat intake to lose weight. The good news is this is not true. In fact, a 2007 review by Harvard researchers found that weight loss is possible with a variety of popular diets as long as people ate fewer calories, the diet didn't have to be low in fat.

That's right: Sacrificing fat is not an automatic win when it comes to weight loss. It might even be working against you. How? Fat intake and body fat stores influence your metabolism in a variety of ways, and getting too little can affect how you feel – especially when you're trying to eat less. Similar to protein, eating moderate amounts of fat can actually help you lose weight faster, without feeling deprived.

Here are five reasons why keeping the fat in your diet may help with weight loss:

1. **Fat keeps you full.** Think about the last time you experienced the fullness, not to mention satisfaction, of eating a high-fat comfort food. (Mac & cheese, anyone?) Fullness is actually a real feeling that's created during digestion, when fat triggers the release of cholecystokinin, a hormone that slows down how fast the stomach empties food into your intestines. This not only helps you get full but also ensures you'll stay full for a longer period of time. Consequently, you need less food to feel satisfied, compared with a diet lower in fat.

2. **Fat helps you balance blood sugar.** Your blood sugar impacts your levels, which can affect your mood, cravings and food choice. Additionally, eating a meal or snack with too many refined carbohydrates and not enough fat (and protein) can cause your blood sugar levels to spike and subsequently crash. Including healthy fats with your meals and snacks can help keep your blood sugar balanced throughout the day.

3. Fat helps you absorb nutrients. Obtaining the right balance or fat by choosing might be long term for

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2. **Fat helps you balance blood sugar.** Your blood sugar level impacts insulin levels, which can affect your mood, cravings and food choices. Additionally, eating sugary foods with too many refined carbohydrates and not enough fat (and protein) can cause your blood sugar levels to spike and subsequently crash. Including healthy fats with your meals and snacks can help keep your blood sugar balanced throughout the day.

3. **Fat helps you absorb nutrients.** Ordering that salad with low- or fat-free dressing might be doing more harm than good. Why? You need a little fat to absorb the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K), beta-carotene (a carotenoid that makes vitamin A) and other carotenoids found in leafy greens and salad veggies. If you dress your salad on the lighter side, make sure to throw in some healthy fats like walnuts or avocado.

4. Fat is essential for good health. Your body is capable of making its own fats, but there are some fats you must get from your diet or you risk becoming deficient. These are called "essential fats," and they include omegas-3 and -6. Most of us get plenty of omega-6 fats in our diets; however, omega-3 fats may be a little harder to come by. Consuming a low-fat diet can magnify the problem. As you're cutting calories for weight loss, choose fat sources rich in these essential fats because they are important for optimal functioning of our brains, hearts and body cells.

5. Fat is real food. Another compelling reason to keep fat in your diet is because fat makes food taste good! Fat is responsible for the creamy texture and amazing smell of the foods we love to eat. When you remove these favorite foods from your diet, you often turn to refined and overly processed substitutes. Such foods may contain large amounts of salt and sugar, added chemicals and carb-based fat replacers that mimic the flavor and texture of natural fat. When it comes to enjoying a high-fat favorite, you're better off sticking with the real thing and just eating less of it.

How to Choose the Best Fats

Not all fats are created equal, and some fats are better than others. Plant-based fats should make up the bulk of your intake, as they contain the healthiest types of fatty acids.

The plant-based fats listed below are a great place to start:

- Avocados and avocado oil
- Nuts and nut butters
- Seeds and seed butters
- Cooking oils (including olive, coconut and grapeseed)

Moderate amounts of animal fat are fine. When choosing animal-based fats, opt for:

- Fatty fish (including sardines, mackerel, herring and wild salmon)
- Lean cuts of meat for beef, pork, chicken, turkey
- Egg and low-fat cheeses (including part-skim mozzarella, ricotta and cottage cheese)

It's also important to remember anything can be overdone, even healthy fats. Just because a little bit is good, it doesn't mean a lot is better. Like any other nutrient, when consumed in excessive amounts, fat will lead to weight gain. MyFitnessPal sets your fat intake at 30% of your total calories, which is optimal to keep your body healthy and appetite satisfied.

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