



Is Dietary Fat Responsible for Obesity?

Joe Thomas*

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Hyderabad, India

Short Communication

It's no secret that the quantity of calories people eat and drink features a direct impact on their weight: Consume an equivalent number of calories that the body burns over time, and weight stays stable. Consume quite the body burns, weight goes up. Less, weight goes down. But what about the sort of calories: Does it matter whether or not they come from specific nutrients-fat, protein, or carbohydrate? Specific foods-whole grains or potato chips? Specific diets-the Mediterranean diet or the "Twinkie" diet? And what about when or where people consume their calories: Does eating breakfast make it easier to regulate weight? Does eating at fast-food restaurants make it harder?

There's ample research on foods and diet patterns that protect against heart condition, stroke, diabetes, and other chronic conditions. The great news is that a lot of the foods that help prevent disease also seem to assist with weight control-foods like whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. And lots of the foods that increase disease risk-chief among them, refined grains and sugary drinks-are also factors in weight gain. Conventional wisdom says that since a calorie may be a calorie, no matter its source, the simplest advice for weight control is just to eat less and exercise more. Yet emerging research suggests that some foods and eating patterns may make it easier to stay calories in restraint, while others may make people more likely to overeat.

Low-fat diets have long been touted because the key to a healthy weight and to healthiness. But the evidence just isn't there: Over the past 30 years within the U.S., the share of calories from fat in people's

diets has gone down, but obesity rates have skyrocketed. Carefully conducted clinical trials have found that following a diet doesn't make it any easier to reduce than following a moderate- or high-fat diet. In fact, study volunteers who follow moderate- or high-fat diets lose even as much weight, and in some studies a touch more, as those that follow low-fat diets. And when it involves disease prevention, low-fat diets don't appear to supply any special benefits.

Weight gain in adulthood is usually gradual, a few pound a year too slow of a gain for many people to note, but one which will add up, over time, to a weighty personal and public ill health. There's increasing evidence that an equivalent healthful food choices and diet patterns that help prevent heart condition, diabetes, and other chronic conditions can also help to stop weight gain:

Choose minimally processed, whole foods-whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, healthful sources of protein (fish, poultry, beans), and plant oils.

Limit sugared beverages, refined grains, potatoes, red and processed meats, and other highly processed foods, like nutriment.

Though the contribution of anybody diet change to weight control could also be small, together, the changes could add up to a substantial effect, over time and across the entire society. Since people's food choices are shaped by their surroundings, it's imperative for governments to market policy and environmental changes that make healthy foods more accessible and reduce the supply and marketing of unhealthy foods.

*Corresponding author: Joe Thomas, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Hyderabad, India; E-mail: joe.thomas@gmail.com

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