

Weighing In June 2016

Running on Empty

Just like the old Jackson Brown song says, "Running on empty" has a lot of connotations that we need to explore this month. Not a day goes by without someone saying, "I did not eat breakfast", or "I didn't eat lunch," or "I missed dinner." They are skipping meals thinking that they're going to be able to lose weight.

Doesn't work. Never has. Never will!

To those of you who say this, it makes sense on the surface. You start exercising first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, thinking that your body will burn the fat. But, with no fuel intake for 8 to 12 hours, you're in a fasting state. Your glycogen stores are depleted in the morning. Insulin levels are down, and your body has turned to other sources of power to carry out your workout or your daily activities. So, you think your body will turn towards stored fat for being, fuel. But, in a recent study by the Sports Nutrition Society this belief doesn't pan out. The reason is that it's a direct violation of the first law of thermodynamics: caloric balance is all that matters when it comes to dropping fat from your frame.

Think about it for a minute. You have to put fuel in the tank. It takes energy to break down fuel. So when you exercise or run or your daily activities, you need to make sure that you eat. Eating is actually a wonderful way to lose weight. I know it sounds crazy, but it's true. You need to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner—every day.

Eating enough will make you much happier and healthier, and it will cause your fat stores to diminish.

You will find articles that contradict what I am telling you. There are articles that say it's all about calories. Others say it's all about eating low-fat. Over the years that we've been helping patients what we teach has had the greatest benefit!

Protein is a key nutrition for weight loss. In fact, adding more protein to your diet is the easiest and most efficient way to lose weight. Studies prove that protein can help curb your appetite and keep you from overeating. Protein is the single most important nutrient we have in the battle of weight loss. This is because your body uses more calories to the totals protein compared to fat and carbohydrates. Also, protein also keeps you fuller longer and helps people eat up to 135 calories less later on in the day. In fact, an MRI scan has shown that eating a protein-rich breakfast reduces the signals of the brain that control the desire for food. Protein also helps you stay full; this is because it activates the body signal to curb appetite, which reduces cravings and overeating. This is due mostly to a drop in hunger hormone ghrelin and a rise in the fullness hormone peptide YY, GLP one and cholecystokinin. Multiple studies throughout the world of obesity have shown that a high-protein breakfast changes the hormones throughout the day. The bottom line is that a high-protein breakfast reduces caloric intake throughout the day to improve your level of appetite and regulates hormones, leading to reduced hunger and cravings.

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Another recent study showed eating a high-protein breakfast changes your cravings, and they also help you lose belly fat. Yes, that's right. Dietary protein is inversely related to belly fat, meaning the more quality protein you eat, the less belly fat you have. One international study of the obese Chinese teenager showed replacing a grain-based breakfast with an egg-based meal led to significantly more weight loss over three months. Those that ate a high-protein breakfast lost 3.9% of their body weight which is about 5 pounds, while the lower protein group lost only 1 pound. People on a weight loss program received either a high protein breakfast or a bagel breakfast –each with the same amount of calories. After about eight weeks, those eating the egg breakfast had a 61% higher reduction in BMI, and 65% more fat loss and a 34% reduction in their waist measurements than those receiving the bagel breakfast.

What this means is you burn more calories eating protein than eating carbs or fat.

It's a fact that a high protein intake has been shown to result in 80 to 100 extra calories burned each day. Eating protein each day can also prevent muscle loss and stop the starvation mode. So what should you eat for breakfast? Well, my favorite is egg and bacon. However, eggs, seafood, meat, poultry, are all great sources of protein for breakfast. Your body doesn't care. It just wants food. So let's go back to why people want to run on empty. Convenience is a part. They don't plan their day, and I guess all in all it could be laziness.

Some patients tell me that they feel emotionally empty before they begin craving carbohydrates. What's the solution for emptiness? What are you trying to fill your emptiness up with? Food? Or entertainment, alcohol, drugs, relationships. Many people use food to fill up a void in their life, and there's no doubt that it takes a toll on us. What we all need is adequate rest, proper nutrition, and appropriate exercise. Illness can take its toll on every part of our body, including our brains. And what about the heart of the struggle with emptiness?

Like the woman at the well in the bible, we go from one object to the next seeking fulfillment. Like Solomon, we seek after satisfactions in alcohol, sex, money or accomplishments only discover it's like trying to grasp the wind. What thirsty people need is our heavenly Father who quenches all thirst.

Too often we all take our eye off what God wants in our lives. "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me (the fountain of living water), and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13.) So, what's the final solution to our emptiness? It's allowing our thirst to drive us to God who can quench it. It is turning from broken cisterns to the fountain the can fill us up. As the Lord said through the psalmist, "I will have feed you with the finest wheat. I will satisfy you with wild honey from the rock." (Psalm 81:16.)

Are you using high carbohydrate foods to fill up your emptiness? Remember, God loves you so much that he is willing to fill you up with his purpose. So the next time you decide you're going to skip breakfast, lunch or dinner, remember that this decision will negatively affect you physically as well as spiritually. Our hope for you is that at The Weigh Station, we can meet you and help you get healthy both physically and spiritually. Here's to having a great summer.

Blessings,
Chuck Shaffer MD

The Skinny on Smoothies:

Can I make a smoothie for breakfast? It seems that I get this question weekly. With busy schedules and limited time, smoothies are often a go to for what is seemingly a healthy breakfast option. But are they appropriate for a low carb diet?

The answer is without a doubt no! There are a few reasons for this. The first is because when you drink liquid calories, your body doesn't have to work as hard to break things down. This could result in the ability of the body to absorb more sugar (thanks to a surge in insulin). Most people also drink smoothies quite quickly in relation to how much fruit it contains. It probably only takes a matter of minutes for someone to finish off a 20 ounce smoothie as opposed to taking at least 15 minutes to eat the equivalent amount of whole fruit and veggies that would have been used to make the smoothie. Since it takes time for the body to identify that it's full, this could result in the person finishing it off and becoming overly full after it's too late.

In addition, when you blend whole food, the pulverized fiber no longer has the same satiating effect as the intact fiber found in whole foods. This also results in a stronger insulin response, causing you to feel hungry a short time later. Studies have also proven that your body does not register liquid calories as food leading you to want something else shortly after.

Here's some more food for thought, a serving of fruit is about ½ cup but most smoothies are about 20-24 ounces in size. That's way more than a 4 ounce cup of fruit! You may be drinking several servings of fruit without blinking an eye. This can have dangerous consequences when it comes to following a low carb diet. It may not seem like much, but liquid calories can be quite deceiving!

Also remember that if you are ordering a smoothie from a restaurant it may be made from fruit concentrate, not whole fruit. These concentrates often contain added sugar, honey, artificial sweeteners or sweetened protein powder that can be detrimental to your weight loss progress. Take for example the "strawberry base" of Starbucks' strawberry smoothie, it consists of reconstituted strawberry purée, white grape juice concentrate, natural flavoring and lycopene coloring (it also contains banana, ice, milk, fiber and protein powder); the 16-ounce size has 300 calories and is laden with sugar.

Just remember, if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is! Summer is here and you may be craving a cool icy drink. Try a Weigh Station friendly Spritzer! Use naturally flavored sparkling water like Lacroix and blend it with ice and ¼ C fresh berries. You will be presently surprised by the bubbly flavor and refreshing taste of this drink. The best part?-it won't set you back weight wise!

If you have questions about our food list or trying a new recipe, be sure to address it with our staff! We are here to help you stay on track and feel great this summer!

-Tricia Foley, MS, RD

SPAGHETTI SQUASH-TURKEY DOG CASSEROLE

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

- ½ Small spaghetti squash
 - 1 garlic clove minced
 - 1/3 of a white onion
 - ½ Can of marinated red peppers
 - Turkey dogs (4)
- ½ C Artisan cheese (blend of provolone and mozzarella)

Directions: Cut squash and half and scoop out seeds. Place one half face down in a microwave safe dish with a small amount of water and microwave for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, chop onion and mince garlic and throw in a medium skillet with 4 turkey dogs (cut in half long ways). Cook over medium heat until tender and dogs are cooked. Remove from heat. Scrape squash evenly into casserole dish and add the turkey dogs, onions and garlic. Make your sauce pouring ½ can of marinate red peppers into a blender. Pour the sauce over the casserole and top with cheese. Place in a pre-heated oven (350 degrees) for about 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Enjoy!
