

The Truth About Chronic Dieting

By Kepha Nyanumba



There is no doubt that dieting is ingrained in our culture. We live in the age of instant everything and there's a natural temptation to fall for a weight-loss plan that promises quick weight loss in only weeks rather than months. Chronic dieting involves dieting over a period of years with the goal of achieving or maintaining a certain (often unrealistic) weight or body type. The chronic dieter is always chasing a number on a scale with the thought that once they get there, they can finally relax and enjoy their life. Most people don't understand the health consequences of chronic dieting that is always camouflaged as a path to great wellness and health.

What are the Dangers of Chronic Dieting?

Chronic dieting erodes our health and well-being by contributing to medical problems such as hypertension, a slowed metabolism and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression.

The problem with fad diets is that they will most likely last just as long as it took you to lose the weight. Instead of losing weight gradually over time and being able to maintain the weight loss, these short-lived diets will actually end up costing you more than you bargained for. Because of their quick-fix results, many people unfortunately get caught up in the cycle of dieting for a specific event, gaining the weight back, and then trying a new fad the next time. To lose weight and keep it off, you must break the cycle of chronic dieting and focus on making healthy lifestyle choices. Losing just 5 percent to 10 percent of your current weight can lead to health benefits.

Some weight loss diets restrict certain nutrients such as carbohydrates or complete food groups, such as dairy. When you are not eating a well-balanced meal, you are likely

missing some essential nutrients that can lead to micronutrient deficiencies.

Chronic Dieting and Metabolism

Whether you follow a low-fat, low-carb or low-glycemic diet, all diets are associated with varying degrees of calorie restriction. When you reduce your caloric intake, your metabolism adjusts itself to the lower energy intake. A number of mechanisms influence your metabolic rate while dieting. Chronic dieting is associated with a decrease in muscle tissue and a decrease in thyroid hormone production. Your thyroid plays a crucial role in regulating your body's metabolism. It produces hormones that influence the rate at which your body uses energy.

Resting metabolic rate, also known as basal metabolism, refers to the amount of energy your body uses at rest. Even when you are lying in bed, your metabolism is at work using energy for a number of physical and chemical processes. These include breathing, circulating blood, digesting nutrients from the foods you eat and controlling blood pressure. Your age, sex, weight and body composition exert an influence as well. The only way to increase your resting metabolic rate is to increase your body's energy needs. Building muscle and engaging in regular exercise represent two good methods you can employ to increase your resting metabolic rate.

Chronic Dieting and Eating disorders

Chronic dieting is associated with eating disorders that commonly coexist with other conditions, such as anxiety disorders, substance abuse and depression. Eating disorders describe illnesses that are characterized by irregular eating habits and severe distress or concern about body weight or shape. There are a number of different eating disorders, all of which are life-altering and pose a risk, to

say the least.

The three most common types of eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder characterized by an abnormally low body weight, an intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted perception of weight. To prevent weight gain or to continue losing weight, people with anorexia usually severely restrict the amount of food they eat. They may control calorie intake by vomiting after eating or by misusing laxatives, diet aids, diuretics or enemas. They may also try to lose weight by exercising excessively. No matter how much weight is lost, the person continues to fear weight gain. Bulimia nervosa, is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder. People with bulimia may secretly binge eat large amounts of food with a loss of control over the eating and then purge, trying to get rid of the extra calories in an unhealthy way.

The Path to Recovery

The solution to sustainable weight loss is to start looking at health and weight from a lifestyle perspective. When I talk to clients about this, they feel scared, even terrified. They believe that if they give up dieting, they will lose control and gain a lot of weight. They don't. Understanding the difference between a healthy lifestyle and chronic dieting is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. If you want to change your health, you have to choose to stop buying into this system of deprivation dieting and chronic stress, and find a different approach that supports your long-term health and wellness.

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