

Caloric Balance Basics

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1. Achieving and maintaining your ideal body weight can be accomplished only by modifying your caloric balance—calories ingested minus calories expended.

A caloric balance surplus causes weight gain; a caloric balance deficit causes weight loss. Caloric intake in excess of caloric expenditure invariably results in energy being stored in the body, usually in the form of adipose tissue (body fat).

To lose weight, you must sustain a caloric balance deficit for some period of time. There are only three ways to create a caloric balance deficit—you can decrease your caloric ingestion, you can increase your caloric expenditure, or you can do both.

2. Overweight usually results from a very small caloric balance surplus sustained for a very long period of time.

Your caloric balance surplus might be as little as *50 calories per day*, on average, but when sustained for months or years the extra ounces turn into extra pounds, and the extra pounds turn into tens of pounds. An equivalent caloric balance deficit for the same period will reverse the weight gain completely.

Key Implication: Even a *very small sustained caloric balance deficit* will result in a *significant weight loss* over time.

To lose weight, therefore, instead of focusing primarily on specific dietary and exercise regimen components, focus on achieving and maintaining a *very small daily caloric balance deficit*, letting the extra pounds simply slip away.

3. It's what you do that determines your body weight, not who you are, how much money you have or what you believe. Change in body weight results from choices—choices that anyone can make.

Your body doesn't adjust its weight based on whether you are Caucasian, Asian or African, male or female, Mensa or mentally handicapped, a carnivore, an omnivore or a vegan, whether you believe that you are helpless to change your destiny or whether you believe that you are the master of your fate. If you are overweight, the only way that your body will lose the extra weight is for you to engage in actions that create a sustained caloric deficit.

Change in body weight is caused by actions, caloric actions on both sides of the caloric balance equation. Significant change in body weight results only

from a large number of small caloric actions sustained over a long period of time.

4. **Not all choices are equal, calorically-speaking. Some changes that you can make to your ingestion and expenditure behavior will have a magnified impact on your caloric balance and on your weight.**

This means that you can achieve a remarkable reduction in your body weight without starving yourself and without knocking yourself out physically. You simply have to do a number of things differently—by making several small, permanent changes to your behavior and lifestyle.

By selectively avoiding or reducing your intake of some of the high calorie, low nutrition foods that have become part of your dietary regimen, and by selectively increasing the frequency and the variety of the number of enjoyable forms of energy expenditure in which you partake, you can cause a magnified shift in your caloric balance. Small changes, huge results.

5. **Set reasonable goals and expectations. Don't set yourself up for failure. Start easy, then adopt small, incremental changes as you progress.**

Start with small, sustainable behavioral changes that affect both sides of the caloric balance equation, then gradually make the changes permanent and gradually add other changes, if desired.

You likely didn't accrue your overweight in a few weeks or a few months. Why try to reverse years of weight gain in a few weeks or only one month? Any caloric balance shift that would result in a weight loss of more than two pounds per week is likely to be based on a diet and exercise regimen that is unsustainable over time.

It is better to lose only one to two pounds per week for four to six months and to keep that weight off than to lose five pounds per week for a few weeks, then revert to one's previous habits and regain that weight or more.

6. **A marginal decrease in body weight can produce a magnified reduction in the risk factors for many degenerative chronic diseases, including Type II diabetes, coronary heart disease, and cancer.**

This is an incredibly good reason for acting early to make caloric balance behavioral and lifestyle changes before the adverse consequences of overweight become irreversible or fatal.

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