

Diet Yourself Fat?



The holidays can be a wonderful time of the year. It's a time for reflection, it's a time to be with friends and family, it's a time to EAT! In fact, most people will tend to gain weight during the holiday season. Some will respond to this weight gain by dieting once the season is over. Some will diet by drastically cutting their caloric intake without realizing that this will sabotage their effort. With insufficient caloric intake, one can actually "diet themselves fat". Now how can that be?

First we have to understand **starvation mode**. This is a term that describes the lowered metabolic adaptation to an insufficient caloric intake. So, once the body is not fed a sufficient amount of calories, it will automatically lower its metabolism to protect itself from starvation. Crash dieting will place people into starvation mode. Even the deprivation of 500 calories or one skipped meal can place people into this starvation mode.

Two terms are important when trying to understand a fat cell. **Lipogenic** fat cells store fat for future use. **Lipolytic** fat cells release fat for the use of energy. (A side note to this is that women have more lipogenic enzymes for fat storage and men have more lipolytic enzymes. Estrogen is responsible for increasing the amount of lipogenic enzymes in women.) Once a crash diet begins, the body is activated to multiply the production of lipogenic enzymes. The body is trying to store more fat. Research has found that low calorie diets double the lipogenic storage enzymes. Of course some fat will be lost when dieting, but the fat cells become less efficient at losing fat, again as a protective mechanism that ensures survival. And remember, the fat loss is only temporary until one starts eating more again.

Most men do not seem to have that same effect from extreme dieting. They still can get caught up in the starvation mode, but a man's fat cells react differently. When men go on diets, they have more of a tendency and the fat burning capacity to lose weight because they don't have estrogen to set off the alarm to store fat when caloric deprivation is being experienced.

The same research that shows an increase in lipogenic (fat storing) enzymes also shows a reduction of the fat releasing lipolytic enzymes as well. So not only is the body hanging onto every bit of fat that it can in preparation for the starvation mode, but it's also reluctant to release any fat for energy, again in its response to the starvation mode. Exercise is responsible for activating lipolysis (fat release for energy), so a dieting exerciser will experience less fat loss than a non-dieting counterpart, since the dieting exerciser's body is clinging on to fat for "survival".

Not only is this frustrating to the dieting exerciser, it may push that person to decrease their caloric level even more. This could be detrimental to one's success. With each dieting attempt, the effects are compounded. The production of storage enzymes is increased and releasing enzymes decreased with each dieting attempt. This is why each time a crash diet is attempted, weight is lost more slowly and the weight is gained back more quickly. This is the yo-yo dieting syndrome.

The best way to lose weight is slowly and through exercise, healthy eating and portion control. There is no short cut for permanent weight loss, and once one understands how the body can go into starvation mode, they'll learn to understand how one can literally "diet themselves fat".

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