

CALORIE REALITY

Eating Healthier but Still **Gaining Weight**

by John Fairchild

Are you choosing healthier, more nutrient dense foods and discovering a few extra pounds? Organic, natural and "back to earth" foods are on the rise. Unfortunately, weight gain is too. According to the Center for Disease Control, the average weight for men in 1960 was 166.3 pounds and the average weight for women was 140 pounds. In 2002 the average weight for men rose to 191 pounds and to 164.3 pounds for women. If there has been an increasing effort to eat healthier, what seems to be the reason(s) for these statistics?

Contradicting information on what is healthy and which weight loss philosophies work the best may be a contributing factor in weight gain. Low-carb, high protein, glycemic index, blood type, acid-base, hormone, food-combinations, sugar busting, volumizing, metabolic, intuitive eating are all terms that you have come across in the media. What a head-spinning flurry of words and philosophies. Where is one to turn? What works best? The truth is any one of these methods can work for weight loss. The question is, "Which one will work for you over the long run?"

Any diet that cuts back on calories will bring about slight weight loss. Keeping the weight off is a whole other episode. Remember, the body recognizes a calorie as a unit of energy no matter where that calorie originates. People are smarter in changing their eating habits today and including more whole grains, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates. The information that is accessible via the web and from the government is continuously becoming more reliable. That may explain part of the recent upward trend in the purchasing of whole, organic and natural foods. Sales in these areas are increasing at alarming rates. So why are you still not accomplishing your goal of weight loss? Let's examine some healthy food choices that are also the culprits of added calories.



NUTS:

Packed with fiber, protein, and various minerals and vitamins, the nut family can supply up to 205 calories per ounce. That is the amount in twenty-four small almonds, seven shelled walnuts and less than a quarter cup of cashews. Try using nuts on salads, in sandwich fillings or eat out of the shell to keep the portion size under control. Remember to buy them raw and roast yourself to save on fat and added calories.

GRANOLA:

Wow, talk about a knockout blow, one cup can supply somewhere in the neighborhood of 550 calories. The trick is to use a very small amount with your yogurt, as a dessert topping, in parfaits, or as part of a trail mix for those long fall hikes. Most granola cereals are high in fiber, protein and potassium and usually contain a high amount of fat. Choose lower fat versions like *Quaker*.

PROTEIN BARS:

Decisions, decisions, decisions. Look at all the brands on the shelves today. This highly marketed product is showing up everywhere in all shapes and sizes. The problem with this is the calorie, fat and sugar amount included. It may be wiser (for your waistline) to choose a good old Snicker's bar at 280 calories instead of some whopping 420-calorie high protein "bulking" bar. There are also a lot of added ingredients in these bars like sugar alcohols and fractionated oils. Choose low-calorie, low fat bars that include five grams of fiber or more for a great filling snack.



DRIED FRUITS:

Dried means the water was extracted out of the product, along with most of the vitamin C. The natural sugar is concentrated due to the dehydration status; this means you have to eat more to get a sufficient volume. Shelf life is increased and the flavor is more concentrated. Read the food label and ingredient list carefully for added ingredients. A small serving of dried banana chips contains 218 calories and 14 grams of fat. The fat comes from the added coconut oil. That very small red box of raisins has 130 calories inside. Premium tropical pineapples contain 140 calories and sixteen grams of sugar (sugar is the second ingredient listed). Use a small amount of dried fruit products on salads or with string cheese as a balanced snack.

FRUIT JUICES:

Sugar, sugar everywhere! Reading the front of the container will leave you feeling like you are the healthiest person in the world for drinking juice. You will see a variety of health claims on the front. Read the label and the ingredient list to assure you are choosing the right product. Fruit juices are all sugar and carbohydrates. They do not include any fats or protein into your diet. Look for one hundred percent fruit juice products and limit them to no more than six ounces per day. A four-ounce serving contains 55 calories and 12 grams of sugar. Also, take a look at those sport drinks. A typical bottle contains 200 calories, 56 grams of carbohydrates and 440 grams of sodium. "Eat the whole fruit and nothing but the fruit."

Including healthier foods into your diet for optimum nutrition is something everyone should look at increasing. These healthy choices should not be piled on top of your current intake; they should replace foods that are nutrient poor. For managing your weight you should always keep focus on the food label and the ingredient list. Portion sizes should be the focus, like any other food choice, when adding these high calorie nutrient dense foods.



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