

Healthy Weight Loss Without Counting Calories ©
By Elizabeth Pavka, PhD, RD, LD/N, Wholistic Nutritionist

Conventional thinking and practices address the same old “calories in-calories out” causes for obesity. One definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over, and expecting different results. Have you ever wondered whether there are other pieces to the puzzle of weight management? The answer is: YES! As a wholistic nutritionist for 28 years, I could write at length about a dozen, non-calorie causes of weight gain. Here I share a “taste” of six.

First, specific foods -- even healthy foods -- for certain people cause weight gain through a sensitivity process mediated by the immune system. While each person, depending on her/his biochemical individuality, may be sensitive to any food, here are the two most common ones. Foods that contain milk – especially the protein fractions including casein, lactalbumin, and lactoglobulin -- can cause weight gain in many people. Another is gluten containing foods such as wheat, rye, oats, barley, as well as gluten hidden in hundreds of foods. Check out “The Gluten Effect: How Innocent Wheat is Ruining Your Health” by Vikki and Richard Petersen who write about 14 major health issues related to gluten sensitivity.

Next, continuously elevated levels of physical, mental and/or emotional stressors are directly related to higher levels of cortisol and other steroids which cause weight gain. One key cause of high stress is inadequate sleep. In other words sleep more – reduce cortisol -- lose weight.

Another piece of the puzzle is eating a consistently higher proportion of carbohydrates which elevates insulin levels in many children and adults. Higher insulin levels promote fat storage and weight gain. Primary culprits are all types of sugar and white flour foods which promote belly fat. New research suggests that sugar-sweetened beverages actually cause more weight gain than would be expected based on the calories consumed in those liquids.

Some prescription medications contribute to weight gain and/or prevent you from losing weight. The two primary groups are the antidepressants – Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil – and synthetic hormones like premarin. Ask your pharmacist to go through your list of medications and highlight any problematic ones.

Fifth, inadequate amounts of certain essential fatty acids (EFAs) set the stage for weight gain. Thousands of research studies indicate that these EFAs are beneficial for an amazing array of health conditions. How can that be? Two reasons. EFAs are primary building blocks for cell membranes and help determine the structure of the membrane. This structure, in turn, directs how efficiently the cell takes in oxygen and nutrients and

eliminates waste products. And, inflammation all over the body is modulated by the balance of EFAs. Omega-3 EFAs reduce inflammation, while omega-6 fats increase inflammation. Often a craving for unhealthy fats like chips, cheese, and fried foods indicates a need for more, better quality fats including wild salmon, fish oil, flax seed oil, extra-virgin olive oil, avocados, and walnuts. I've written more about this on my website.

Finally, one very common cause of obesity is eating in response to our feelings. Many people eat more food when they feel bored, sad, irritated, angry, helpless, upset, happy, annoyed, glad, stressed-out, or frantic. Some people find that once they begin eating a certain food they cannot stop. These are called "trigger foods".

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