**EATING TO LOSE WEIGHT**

This chapter is about the most talked about topic in nutrition — how to eat to lose weight. The goal isn’t to give you all the possible information out there about the nutrition in weight loss, but rather the overview of the most important principles. It is as important to avoid common pitfalls of weight loss as it is to eat so the weight loss is as effective as possible. So let’s go over the principles one at a time.

Principle one: when burnt calories exceed eaten calories, weight drops. It is a common sense principle, but it often gets impossibly messed up in the yellow media and weight-loss business. Weight loss is based on a physical law of energy, and no miracle diet or pill can ever change that. Whatever diet, medication, or supplementation one is on, weight only starts to fall when eaten calories are less than used up calories. Of course, there are two sides of this formula: the burned calories and consumed calories sides. Both can be altered, and metabolically, it is always better to raise the burnt calories instead of dropping the eaten calories too low. Keep listening to find out why.

Principle two: our body prioritizes survival over weight loss — it adapts to lowered calories in food by slowing the metabolism. It’s called metabolic adaptation and it is extremely common in the midst of dieters, especially yo-yo dieters. Let’s say Roger wants to lose two pounds per week, and he calculates that he should eat about 3500 kcal less every week than his burnt calories, or 500 kcal a day. His weight-loss project starts out fine and Roger loses two pounds per week, but do you think Roger will vanish from existence if he continues this same diet? Of course not — our bodies switch into survival mode quite fast. That’s why all weight-loss projects usually have a fast initial weight loss phase, followed by slower weight loss plateau, and too often, new rise in weight. Our bodies use the process called metabolic adaptation — it slows down all non-essential processes to preserve energy. But metabolic adaptation isn’t unavoidable. Of course, some slowing of metabolism is normal when weight drops, but not considerable.

How do you eat to avoid metabolic adaptation?

* Enough protein — at least 0.9 grams per pound of body weight, or two grams per kg of body weight per day (except on ketogenic diet, which is another thing entirely)
* Always restrict calories minimally. For example, if your weight drops on -300 kcal, there’s no reason to drop them to -600 kcal. In fact, you should eat as many calories as you can while achieving your goal.
* Quality food — good fats, micronutrient rich foods, complex carbohydrates, etc. all help avoid metabolic adaptation.

Principle three: for successful weight loss, one should have a long term nutrition plan. 99% of diets fail cause they’re considered as “projects” and the natural long term habits revert back to their original state after the “diet is done.” Our self image doesn’t change in one to three months, but in years. The calorie restriction phase itself might last only one to three months, but it absolutely must be followed by a long-term maintenance diet, something that is as automatic and intuitive as possible.

Those are briefly the core principles of nutrition for losing weight. Notice that we didn’t go into the details of how much carbs you should eat or how many times a day. It’s because the principles are not dependent on the details. One can lose weight on many different diets and in many different ways. Whatever you choose for your weight loss, remember those principles without which you can’t succeed in a long run:

* Eat fewer calories than you burn.
* Avoid metabolic adaptation as much as you can.
* Have a long term plan for your nutrition and weight loss.