

Vol 4, 2003 CEC ARTICLE
The Next FAD Diet?: A Review and Comical Look at History
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Disclaimer:

This is really nothing radically new, but a summary and some things to think about when talking to participants. It gives you some good anecdotes.

Introduction

I am personally very skeptical of diets and always go back to the food pyramid if possible. However, research is out on the set point theory for the body, which uses the premise that an individual's weight is regulated through biological signals to the brain's hypothalamus that drives the body to maintain a particular weight/body fat level. Blood glucose, lipid stores and body weight send signals to the hypothalamus to regulate appetite. If it senses a decrease in glucose or lipid stores, appetite is stimulate to re-establish the stores and conserve body fat. IE cravings. If you refer to the article reference in the industry news in American Fitness earlier in this newsletter it supports this theory. As do many of the new low carb diets out in the industry.

Bare to Bones Analysis

Let's ask the essential questions for looking at any diet.

1. Does it provide the basic nutritional needs?
2. Does it provide enough calories and exercise to not reduce the metabolism and keep or increase muscle mass?
3. Does it answer the question of cravings and feelings of hunger?
4. Does it adversely affect cholesterol levels, liver or kidney function?
5. Are there any health risks associated with it?
6. Is it maintainable or short term?
7. Does it provide alternatives and substitutes to allow integration?
8. Is it radical?

If the set point theory is to be believed than a "good diet" is actually reprogramming the body to want "good foods" and feel satisfied with those foods. It should not have any adverse side affects and should be maintainable for life.

History of the American Diet Recommendations

For those of us in the fitness industry (for several decades) we have seen these swings before.

In the early 80's there was a great concern that American were eating too much protein and not enough carbs and that was the cause of high cholesterol, heart disease, etc.

In retrospect, in the early 1900's the country was more a farming community. The diet was what you grew and raised on the farm. (eggs, chickens, pigs, beef, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, spinach, corn, wheat.....) However, the labor was manual and people were more physical on a day-to-day basis.

Along came the car, transportation, automation, and the introduction of fast-food. So fat gets added to protein, exercise goes down, bad food is cheap and fast. (I'll let you know a recent fact from "60 min.". In Japan, which has a diet based on white rice and seafood, the occurrence of childhood obesity was less than 1% until McDonald's and fast food came to town. Now it's on the rise at an alarming rate.) So in the 80's the view was the American's were eating too much protein and not enough carbs and not working out that was our problem. (Any of us early AFAA trainees were taught this one.)

Well over the next 2 decades the level of obesity has continued to increase in this country. They even changed the 4 basic food groups to a 6-category pyramid trying to help.

Now it's the late 1990's and early 2000's. Now carbs are out and protein is in. Why? What are they after? Many people say the proteins and fats without the sugar make them "feel" full quicker. Hmmm....

Let's bring in some other facts/research studies. Complex carbs with whole grains make you feel full; soups and foods with a lot of liquid (not cream – water) make you feel full. Vegetables and fruits raw or cooked lightly make you feel full.

Question 1? What keeps you feeling full longer? I can joke about glazed doughnuts. They are sugar, flour and fat (sugar coated lard balls) and you eat one and in 20 min. you're starving again. But lets look at orange juice versus an orange. Orange juice is temporarily filling, but an orange stays with you longer. Why's the cellular structure which takes longer to digest so stays with you longer.

Question 2? Why would something that takes longer to digest help? Well, it slows the introduction to your system so you don't spike your insulin or glucose levels. It stays in the stomach longer so you feel full. It takes more energy to digest and use (an extra benefit).

Well, steak and high animal fat food without the sugar make you feel full longer, BUT the cholesterol effect and strain on the liver and kidneys to process it is detrimental. The cellular structure of the meat takes longer to digest. The fat does not.

So we need cellular structure more slowly digesting foods to get that full feeling longer, but we have to pick wisely.

THIS IS WHERE ALL THOSE DIETS COME IN!

Problems:

1. Humans have a hard time avoiding cravings and hunger pains.
2. We need slowly digesting foods that keep the blood lipids, glucose and insulin levels more even
3. We need to satisfy nutritional needs.
4. We need to avoid harmful health side effects

What is missing?

Another interesting aside- In Europe much of the food is cheese, cream and starch based, but they do not have the same widespread problem with obesity. Why? Their societies are based on foot, bike and mass transit with smaller portions. They get more exercise per day in their commuting than the average American. Also, their food is not nearly as processed as ours. Maybe that is why most of those diet plans have in small print that you need to exercise too. All the aerobics industries promote that diet and exercise have to be combined to help change the set point and lose weight.

So what are most of these diets after? Resetting the set point.

Are carbs bad? Some are, some aren't but the best diets have the complex ones even if they are added in later. Highly processed carbs (simple sugars, white flour, white rice) have several problems, these lose some for their nutritional value in the processing, they get digested quicker (take less energy to digest), they spike the blood sugar levels, and they may have residual additives from processing. Think about them as being partially digested before you ever get them. (Disgusting, but makes a point.)

Are proteins bad? Some are, some aren't but the best diets emphasize lean ones and make sure all the essential amino acids are addressed. Too much protein from red meat is hard on the liver and kidneys and increases cholesterol.

So what's wrong with the food pyramid?

Nothing, but it needs guidance and more descriptions. American's are justifiers if we say 60% of the calories from carbs without specifying what kind. Most of them will justify pasta, white bread, and chocolate cake. If we say 10% protein doesn't a burger or chicken wings count?

Conclusion

A good diet does 5 major things. 1. It may change to percentages to help reset the set point but brings back in all categories of the pyramid. 2. It does not adversely affect health or compromise nutrition. 3. It helps educate the person and good and bad forms of the categories, suggests recipes, substitutes, restaurants and fast food guides... (Spoon-feed them. Leave nothing out.) 4. It is maintainable from beginning to end answering cravings and hunger. 5. It includes exercise.

CEC ARTICLE TEST QUESTIONS VOL 4, 2003: The FAD Diets

1. What is the set point theory?
2. T or F High protein diets are the current standard.
3. What are the 8 questions to ask about any diet?

4. How can a good diet affect the set point of the body?

5. T or F In the 1900's the industry recommendation was that there was too much protein in the American diet?

6. T or F In the 1980's the industry recommendation was that there was too many carbs in the American diet?

7. T or F white rice and fish oils are the cause of childhood obesity problems in Japan.

8. List 3 things that can make you feel full?

9. What are the concerns with red meat and animal fat?

10. T or F Cellular structure is an unwanted hindrance to food digestion.

11. What are the 4 major problems to address in a diet?

12. What is the difference between a good and bad carb?

13. What is the difference between a good and bad protein?

14. What do most of the diets leave to the small print that is extremely important to a successful reset of the set point and diet?

15. Why is processing bad for food and people on diets?

16. What is/are the differences in the American and European societies that make the obesity rates so different?

17. Why do good diets give restaurant and fast food guides?

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