

Weight Loss Methods - Poll of EpicureanFriends Results

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2023 at 10:00 PM

We have number of posts on weight loss, most recently the one posted by Kalosyni. I am wondering if people here have had particular success with any of the methods that have been mentioned, so I am listing them here:

Post by “Todd” of January 18, 2023 at 8:56 AM

I've never been overweight, so feel free to ignore my opinion.

I've been doing some form of carb restriction for the last 10 or 15 years. Not strict by any means. Mainly I just try to limit sugar and grains (also seed oils). I lift weights 2-3 times/week.

Post by “Titus” of January 18, 2023 at 10:28 AM

Quite interesting question, because I didn't eat anything on Monday and Tuesday. I did so because I was interested in the experience. Additionally, I had a weight loss of about 1kg.

In general, I would advice intermittent fasting. I do it "naturally" (because I very often skip breakfast) and have never had any problems eating what I want. Since I walk most of my distances, physical activity may also count.

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2023 at 10:41 AM

This is an interesting question because as I remember reading somewhere, Epicurus experimented with how much he needed to maintain his happiness and pleasurable living from time to time. Sorry, can't think of the citation off the top of my head.

Post by “Titus” of January 18, 2023 at 10:45 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

This is an interesting question because as I remember reading somewhere, Epicurus experimented with how much he needed to maintain his happiness and pleasurable living from time to time. Sorry, can't think of the citation off the top of my head.

I remember this, too. I also remember Epicurus comparing himself to Metrodoros, who wasn't able to eat as cheap as Epicurus. 😊

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2023 at 12:14 PM

Diogenes Laertius 10.7:

he spent a whole mina daily on his table, as he himself says in his letter to Leontion and in that to the philosophers at Mitylene.

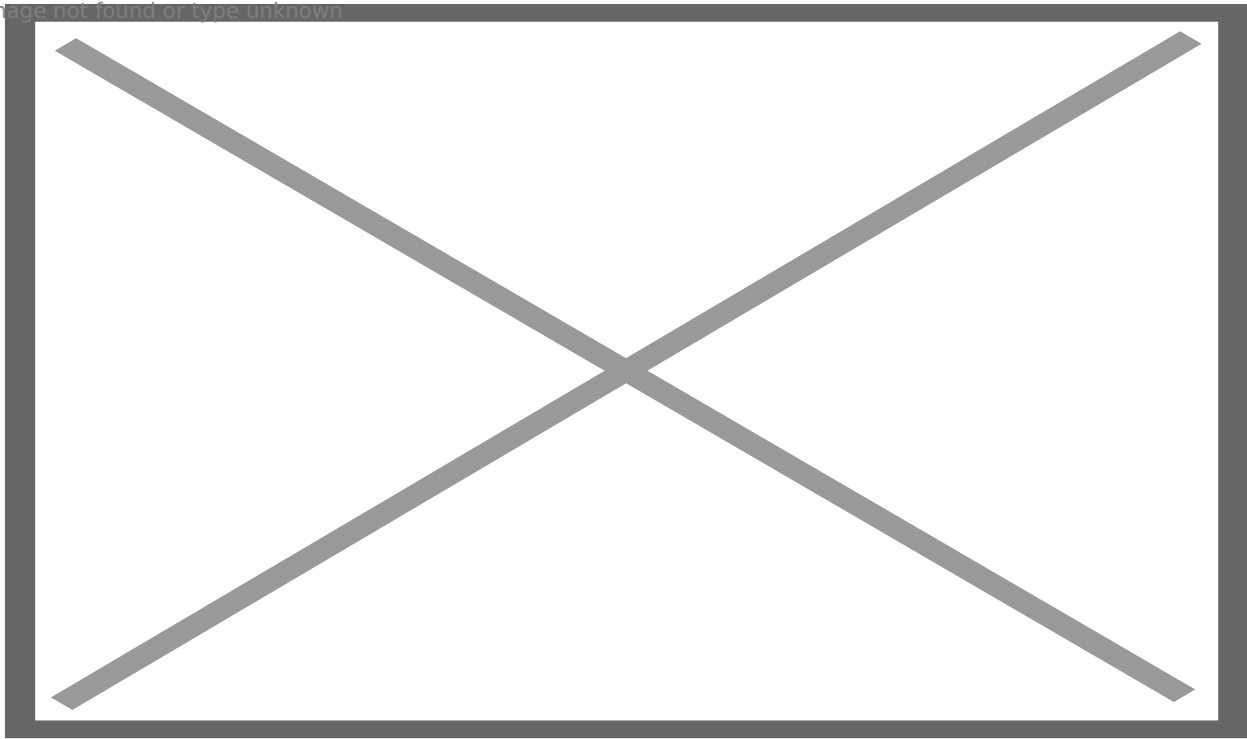
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Seneca, Letters to Lucilius, 18.9: The great hedonist teacher Epicurus used to observe certain periods during which he would be niggardly in satisfying his hunger, with the object of seeing to what extent, if at all, one thereby fell short of attaining full and complete pleasure, and whether it was worth going to much trouble to make the deficit good. At least so he says in the letter he wrote to Polyaeus in the archonship of Charinus {308 - 307 B.C.}. He boasts in it indeed that he is managing to feed himself for less than a half-penny, whereas Metrodoros, not yet having made such good progress, needs a whole half-penny!

And I'm going to have to find out from the Latin what those "pennies" actually translate.

[9] Certos habebat dies ille magister voluptatis Epicurus quibus maligne famem exstingueret, visurus an aliquid deesset ex plena et consummata voluptate, vel quantum deesset, et an dignum quod quis magno labore pensaret. Hoc certe in iis epistulis ait quas scripsit Charino magistratu ad Polyaeum; et quidem gloriatur non toto asse <se> pasci, Metrodorum, qui nondum tantum profecerit, toto.

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[As \(Roman coin\) - Wikipedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org

PS: According to some websites I found:

(1st Century A.D.)

1 one pound loaf of bread = 2 asses

1 sextarius wine (~0.5 liter) = 1 - 5 asses

Remember that it is Seneca using the as as the coin in question, and he lived 4 BC - 65 AD. So, technically according to Seneca's quotation of a letter by Epicurus, Epicurus didn't need a whole "as" to live on for per day. However, Epicurus wouldn't have used the "as" coin since that was a Roman currency. Without the original text, there is NO way of knowing how much money Epicurus was referring to. However, even if we take Seneca's anachronistic currency, if Epicurus were "experimenting" with eating bread and drinking water, he could have bought a 1 pound loaf of bread for 2 asses and it would have lasted him two days. A pound of bread is a pretty good-sized loaf.

In his Coinage and History of the Roman Empire (vol. 2, p. 21), Vagi reports that "around the time of its destruction in A.D. 79 the average pay of a laborer in Pompeii was about 8 asses (half a denarius) per day, though actual salaries ranged from 5 to 16 asses per day. Skilled miners in rural Dacia earned wages of 6 to 10 asses, which were supplemented by free room and board values at 2 to 3 asses per day, bringing their true salaries more in line with the workers at the resort town of Pompeii."

Post by “Martin” of January 18, 2023 at 9:49 PM

"Carbohydrate Restriction (Adkins or Keto)" may produce stunning weight loss but both Adkins and Keto are controversial because they are unhealthy for most people.

"Carbohydrate Restriction by cutting down sugar and starch and increasing complex carbohydrates with fibers but not animal fats" is a healthy version of carbohydrate restriction. It would incur reduction of total calory intake, too.

Post by “Todd” of January 19, 2023 at 4:17 PM

I think this thread was supposed to be about personal experience, but I want to say some more about it. Feel free to move this to another thread if that would be more appropriate.

Let's start with some facts.

Weight loss requires a caloric deficit (aside from surgery). All the rest is just about ways of making a caloric deficit easier to sustain.

All carbohydrates are converted into glucose.*

The human body prefers to use glucose for energy rather than fat. This is because...

Too much glucose in the bloodstream is harmful.**

I believe those are all generally accepted facts. Now, I will speculate a bit...

The body's fat burning mechanisms are not just sitting around waiting to be used whenever they are needed. Like muscle tissue, they have to be maintained, and maintaining them requires resources. The body doesn't like to waste resources. Like muscle tissue, when the fat-burning mechanisms are not utilized, the body will not devote resources to maintaining them.

If that is true...

Naive calorie restriction is difficult because when carbohydrates are consumed every few hours, the fat-burning mechanisms are not utilized to a sufficient degree to signal the body to develop them. When glucose runs out, even though there may be stored body fat available, the fat-burning mechanisms aren't capable of meeting the body's demands, and the body demands more glucose, like an addict.

The various forms of carbohydrate restriction make glucose unavailable for sufficiently long periods of time for the body to engage the fat-burning mechanisms. This burns fat, obviously, but it also signals to the body that these processes are going to be used, and that resources should be devoted to building and maintaining them.

To evaluate the poll options in light of the above:

Definitely effective, but difficult to practice:***

General Calorie Restriction

Likely to be effective:

Carbohydrate Restriction

Intermittent Fasting (temporary carb-restriction)

Carnivore Diet

Multi-day Fasting

Likely to be ineffective unless combined with an effective method:

Mediterranean Diet

Primarily Exercise

Vegetarianism

Out of scope:

Weight loss medication or supplement

Weight loss surgery

Finally, to be clear, all of the above is looking at this strictly from a weight loss perspective. I am not commenting on other health effects, positive or negative.

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*This is not quite accurate (there are non-digestible carbohydrates), but it's close enough for this discussion.

**This is why diabetes is bad. It is also why the body will burn alcohol for energy in preference to both glucose and fat: because alcohol in the bloodstream is even worse than glucose.

***I think of this like a natural but unnecessary desire. If you find yourself in a situation where calorie restriction is easy, like famine, shipwreck, imprisonment...go for it. Otherwise, there are probably less painful approaches to weight loss.

Post by “Cassius” of January 19, 2023 at 4:40 PM

Lots of good thought there Todd. As to this one:

[Quote from Todd](#)

Weight loss requires a caloric deficit (aside from surgery). All the rest is just about ways of making a caloric deficit easier to sustain.

Many of the low-carb people (like [Gary Taubes](#)) seem to me to argue that weight gain or loss is driven significantly by "type" of food consumed - their argument is that the primary problem is that carbs drive insulin and insulin drives fat storage, and that even the amount of food consumed is often driven by hormonal issues caused by the type of food consumed.

One way of summarizing their argument seems to be that the type of food ingested ends up affecting "hormonal" balances (insulin being hormonal) and that pure calories in / calories out does not describe the big picture -- given for example that babies do not grow up purely due to calories in / calories out but due to hormonal or genetic directives that control where and how much fat is deposited in the body.

I know things are much more complicated than that, but what is your viewpoint as to that line of argument, and that it is almost as important "what you eat" as it is "how much you eat?"

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 19, 2023 at 4:53 PM

[Quote from Martin](#)

both Adkins and Keto are controversial

Some people actually gain weight on Keto/Adkins because they are still consuming more calories than they burn. And people who lose weight gain the weight right back again after coming off the diet. Eventually you have to return eating some carbs -- life isn't worth living

without some carbs -- but you need to learn to enjoy complex carbs like brown rice and other healthy carbs.

I think that the problem happens when people want to lose weight in one month. So they are impatient and want it to happen immediately.

If you ate the Mediteranean diet for 6 months with a very mild calorie deficit, and then after 6 months you continue eating the Mediteranean diet because it is healthy. So you take on a permanent healthy lifestyle.

Post by “Todd” of January 19, 2023 at 5:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I know things are much more complicated than that, but what is your viewpoint as to that line of argument, and that it is almost as important "what you eat" as it is "how much you eat?"

I've not read Taubes specifically, but I've heard other people make this argument. So assuming they all mean the same thing...

I would say I agree, but I think you are somewhat mischaracterizing their argument.

You have to look at what they're saying in the context of arguing against the conventional advice to simply "eat less and/or exercise more".

I don't think they are saying that is factually wrong; they're saying it is not actually very helpful advice.

Post by “Novem” of November 14, 2023 at 11:56 PM

I've tried a keto diet for a few years, starting in 2020. I did gain a lot of weight, and alcohol consumption contributed to that weight gain as well. I've moved to a vegetarian diet this year, and I've pursued a fairly low-carb aspect to it but not going super crazy as before, I do eat real bread like Aldi's multigrain sandwich skinnies bread and generally accepted somewhat higher incidental net carb amounts, perhaps one could call it medium-term carb cycling. I've also

eaten less at meals, eat big salads to fill me up with low calorie-high volume foods, and ensure I get quite a bit of protein. It's also what I call lazy Mediterranean since I just get olives, feta and goat cheese, and Italian dressing or Balsamic vinaigrette from Aldi's. I eat only two meals a day, and I do have a couple of cups of coffee when I first wake up, usually with non-dairy milk or creamer, which are low-sugar and low-calorie.

There are times when I cheat but they are not many, which Epicurus would want us to do, go a little crazy once in a while with friends.

I have been walking more as well to boost the general calorie deficit, and so far I have lost a bit of weight, have more energy, and feeling a whole lot better.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 15, 2023 at 8:50 AM

[Quote from Todd](#)

Naive calorie restriction is difficult because when carbohydrates are consumed every few hours, the fat-burning mechanisms are not utilized to a sufficient degree to signal the body to develop them. When glucose runs out, even though there may be stored body fat available, the fat-burning mechanisms aren't capable of meeting the body's demands, and the body demands more glucose, like an addict.

It is important to eat protein with carbs. Otherwise insulin spikes too high with carbohydrate only consumption, and then will have a sudden crash (blood sugars can suddenly fall too low), which brings on food cravings for more carbs (eating oatmeal for breakfast always does this to me). So I think Todd is on to something about the body not being able to access fat stores.

[Quote from Novem](#)

I've also eaten less at meals, eat big salads to fill me up with low calorie-high volume foods, and ensure I get quite a bit of protein. It's also what I call lazy Mediterranean since I just get olives, feta and goat cheese, and Italian dressing or Balsamic vinaigrette

I do think that eating less calories at meals is very important for weight lose. Increasing the amount of vegetables is also great as Novem shared. Also not snacking between meals unless you are absolutely certain that you are actually hungry. How and what we eat is all about habits we develop (good or bad)...and it is just a matter of thinking through what is the best thing to do (and what leads to happiness and health of the body). Instead of snacking one could drink tea or go for a short walk. Also, I've observed that the pleasure of food is best (most intense)

when I eat when truly hungry. And that was one reason I stopped using a keto diet, because I lost all interest in food. I realized that I rather feel the pain of hunger so that I could truly savor the food that I was eating.

In the past two years I've been eating more calories than I needed, and gained 10 lbs. One thing that happens is that when I go out to a restaurant I tend to over-eat. Also snacking on nuts (which are high in calories! Plus I have a "sweet tooth" lol). My goal is to lose 10 lbs. and I have a food diary (which I started a week ago) to keep track of what I eat and then I can really see what I am eating. I also estimate the calorie content as well, and I will use a scale to weigh myself to see if I am making any progress.

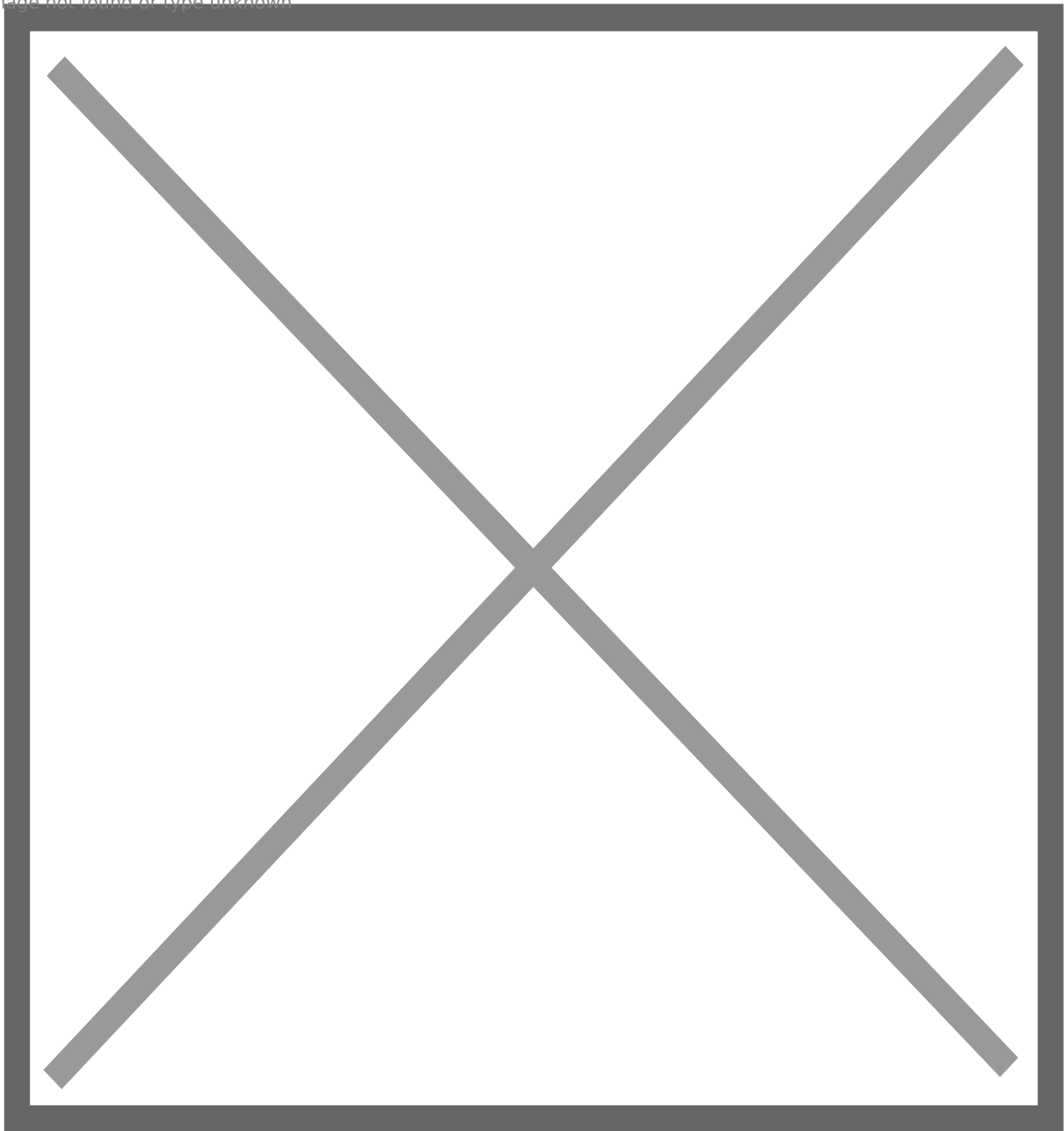
Edit note: My goal for weight loss is to aim for 1200 calories per day, which should give a slow reduction of weight over the next few months.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 15, 2023 at 9:23 AM

This website helps visualize calorie intake, plus has meal planning ideas:

For men:

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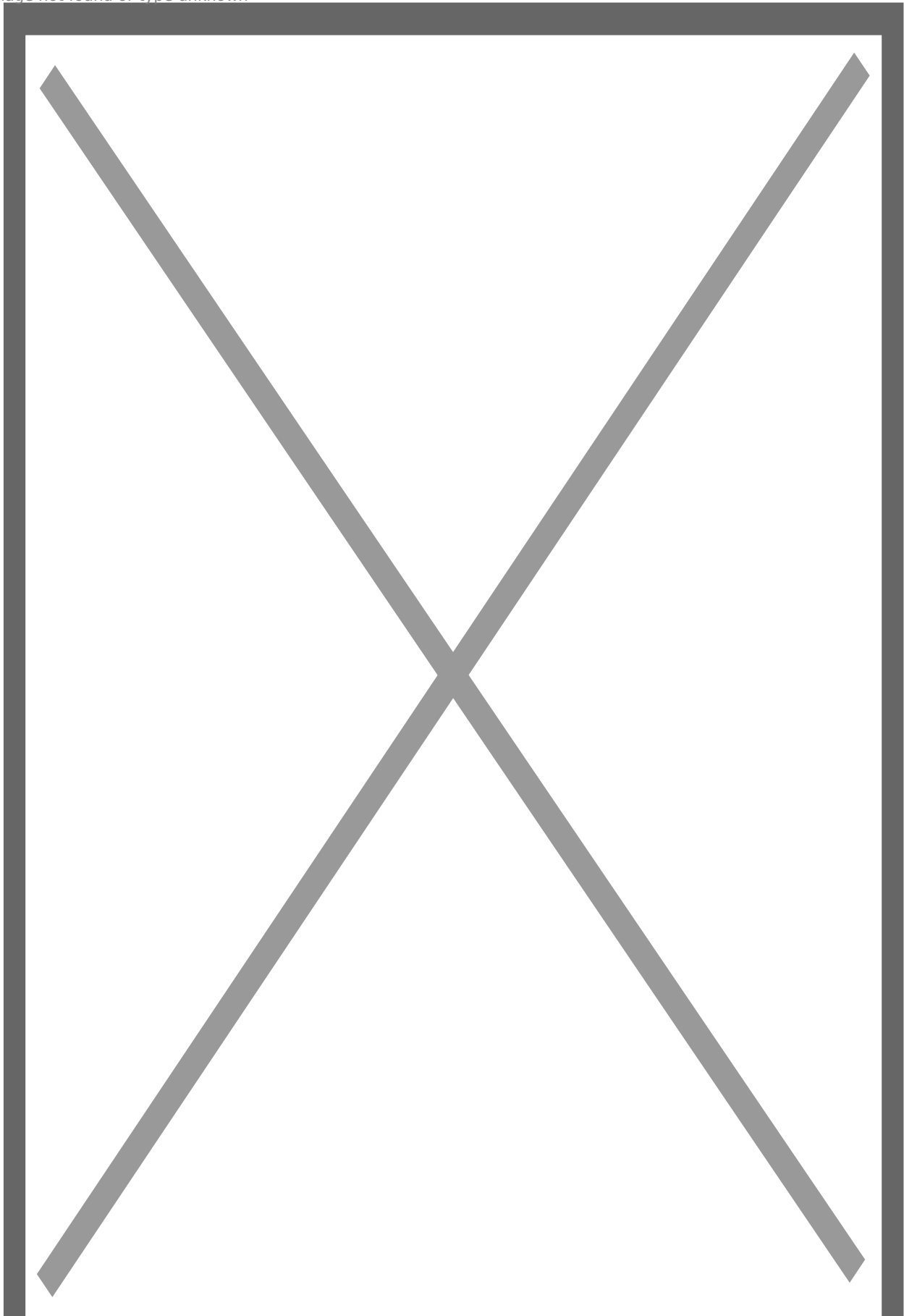
[7-Day Diet Meal Plan to Lose Weight: 1,800 Calories](#)

This 1,800-calorie meal plan is designed to help you feel energized and satisfied while losing weight. See what's on the menu.

www.eatingwell.com

For women:

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[What Does a 1,200-Calorie Diet Look Like?](#)

What do 1,200 calories look like? Check out this sample meal plan to help you lose weight with healthy ideas for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.

www.eatingwell.com

Edit note: Although, I would suggest swapping out grains and instead eating root vegetables for carbs, since grains can increase the hunger hormone ghrelin. Here are some recipes:

<https://www.foodandwine.com/vegetables/roo...getable-recipes>

Post by “Pacatus” of November 15, 2023 at 5:47 PM

I do intermittent fasting: try to get 14-16 hours for two or three days, then have a light breakfast for a day or two. It's comfortable for me because I'm not a big morning breakfast eater anyway. I start at bedtime, have just black coffee in the morning on fast days, and break my fast with a light snack midafternoon. And I try to get enough water (I aim for 64 fluid ounces).

I am also trying to follow more of a Mediterranean diet, and limit bread, pasta, pizza, etc. because I have a mild gluten response and those foods put on the weight fast. But it's a battle because I love breads, pasta, etc. 😭 I try to eat more intact grains. Leafy greens are a tough one for me because I don't like them a lot: salads work best with a light olive oil vinaigrette (with either vinegar or lemon juice, some garlic and herbs).

But I don't follow any strict regimen. I know when I've eaten badly because I feel it right away.



Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of November 19, 2023 at 6:25 AM

I have gone from about 110kg to 87 kg in about 6 months from just eating 500-700 calories less than my daily intake and doing either an hours walk or jog (at a leisurely rate not killing myself) the main thing is being happy when you feel hungry and saying to yourself "I am losing weight". At least for me even if I am at 200 calorie deficit I still feel very hungry so I had to accept it.

I also do IF so I eat from 1 pm - 9 pm

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 19, 2023 at 7:54 AM

Update...My food diary and reduction of calories was working (down 2 lbs)...until I went out to eat at a restaurant, and also bought some sweets (dessert items)...which brought up the calorie intake.

Nature evolved us to get pleasure from eating, but modern civilization has made high caloric foods easy to obtain...so then that leads to health problems (I can imagine that obesity is not a pleasant feeling).

Both of my parents are thin, and most of the times that I have gone for a visit I've ended up losing weight. They don't go out to eat very often, and my mom cooks her food without spices and very little salt. She serves up very small portion sizes, and also snacks are often apples, oranges, or other kinds of fruit, or small portions of healthy natural whole grain snack bars or crackers. Oatmeal or bread for breakfast with yogurt, or cottage cheese, or soft boiled egg. Lunch is often vegetable soup with bread or crackers, or a sandwich (egg salad, chicken salad, or peanut butter). Dinner is a small green salad, steamed potatoes, a cooked vegetable, and meat (chicken or pork, and occasionally beef, fish or legumes.)

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

the main thing is being happy when you feel hungry and saying to yourself "I am losing weight".

Yes! Sometimes we take on some pain in order to realize a greater pleasure in the future.

From Letter to Menoecus:

"This is why we say that pleasure is the beginning and the end of a completely happy life. For we recognize it as the primary and innate good, we honor it in everything we accept or reject, and we achieve it if we judge every good thing by the standard of how that thing affects us. And because this is the primary and inborn good, we do not choose every pleasure. Instead, we pass up many pleasures when we will gain more of what we need from doing so. And we consider many pains to be better than pleasures, if we experience a greater pleasure for a long time from having endured those pains. So every pleasure is a good thing because its nature is favorable to us, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen — just as every pain is a bad thing, yet not every pain is always to be shunned. It is proper to make all these decisions through measuring things side by side and looking at both the advantages and disadvantages, for sometimes we treat a good thing as bad and a bad thing as good." (St-Andre translation)