

Why the Keto Diet Won't Get You Skinny, If Your Mind Thinks You're Fat



By Celina Pizarro

When it comes to dieting most of us think in terms of calories and macronutrients. Carbs, fat, protein and a fast or slow metabolism is thought to determine your success or failure when on a diet. But what if we have gotten it all wrong? What if it's not just food's nutritional makeup or the amount of food we consume that matters but our relationship with that food that will determine how our bodies will metabolize it? Yup, we are talking about your thoughts, feelings and emotions towards that bagel with cream cheese.

It's referred to as the psychology of eating and how your brain is in the driving force of your dieting efforts. Whether you know it or not we all have a relationship with food. There is comfort food – think mac and cheese; cheat

meals – it's pizza for me; diet food – salad, no croutons; Sunday meal – spaghetti and meatballs. All these meals create a different images in our minds and we associate different feelings and emotions with them which creating a psychological response in our bodies. Take a typical lunch plate of chicken, salad and rice. If you are on a 'diet' you will look at the plate and see calories, fat and carbs. You would probably eat the salad and chicken favorably and look at the rice in fear and avoid it. A weightlifter wanting to gain muscle would look at the same plate and see protein focusing on the chicken and pass on the salad. A vegan would look at the chicken in disgust and might not eat anything on the plate that is next to it.

All of these eaters perceive the same nutrients differently and what is amazing is that each of these individuals will metabolize the same meal differently in response to this inward talk and feelings towards the food thus determining the nutritional uptake.

This is the science of food psychology. Your brain and your central nervous system are connected to your digestive organs through a 100 million of little nerve cells called the enteric nervous system (ENS) lining your gastrointestinal tract from esophagus to rectum. This is why you get that 'gut feeling' or 'butterflies in your stomach' when you are nervous. The image of the food is sent to your brain and triggers an emotional response based on your beliefs towards that food and this emotion quite literally dictates your physiological response such as hunger, thirst, temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and release of digestive enzymes.

Say you are eating your favorite ice cream mint chocolate chip and you are so fully delighted by this exquisite scoop of ice cream. Your hypothalamus will send positive input to your salivary glands, esophagus, stomach, liver and pancreas which will stimulate fuller digestion and metabolic breakdown utilizing calories more efficiently. On the contrary if you

are eating the same mint chocolate chip scoop with a guilty feeling, shame or judgement your hypothalamus will translate those negative thoughts and emotions and will initiate inhibitory responses to the digestive organs prohibiting full metabolism of the ice cream and decrease your calorie burn causing you to store more fat. This is all modulated by hormones which are powerful metabolic chemicals, regulating insulin response, your endocrine system and thyroid which is the key to a healthy metabolism.

So you can see how you quite literally can gain weight (not burn fat calories) just by thinking about mint chocolate chip ice cream! If you combine the negative thoughts and emotions with stress, this is a recipe for weight gain. Chronic stress creates an increase in the amount of cortisol your body releases, which can lead to overeating and cause your body to store fat. In addition stress can exacerbate IBS symptoms gas and bloating. Under stress your body turns down unnecessary functions so your digestion is significantly less effective and it may slow or be temporarily disrupted, causing abdominal pain, decreased nutrient absorption and increased fat storage. I have said this many times, "You could eat the perfect keto meals all day, but if preparing/eating the food and adhering to the diet is stressing you out and makes you unhappy your dieting efforts will be sabotaged by your metabolism; you simply will not get the intended results."

Considering your beliefs and relationship to food is a good first step to stopping this self-sabotaging thought process. Take meat for example. When you see a ribeye in the grocery store or served at a restaurant, what inner conversation is going on in your head? "The steak is fatty so it will make me fat", or "Meat will raise my cholesterol". Or are you thinking "That steak has a lot of protein that muscles need." "Now that steak looks so juicy and tasty." Same steak, different beliefs. Check in with your beliefs. Do you like to eat steak? If so you might want to associate positive beliefs with that

steak to get the most nutrient absorption and calorie utilization while digesting it. The steak is just an example, this goes for all food.

I believe food is neutral- there is no good or bad food. And like all things the only meaning something holds is the one you give it. Now it is true some foods are more nutrient rich and superior in their health enhancing benefits but no food group should be completely wiped off your plate because its 'bad'. Don't be swayed by the food and diet industry's advertising. The science doesn't back much of their claims unless the 'scientific studies' are conducted by those same companies (which most of the time is the case). Eggs aren't going to raise your cholesterol. Carbs aren't going to make you fat-unless that is what you believe, you shame yourself while consuming them or if you overindulge of course.

I encourage you to take the time to be grateful and thankful when sitting down to a meal. Praying before a meal is an age old tradition and is great way to give thanks. You don't have to be religious to give thanks. A pre-meal prayer also reminds us to slow down and close your eyes, clear your mind and breathe prior to eating which is essential for optimal nutrient absorption and calorie utilization. Sitting with family, free of electronic devices and distractions simply enjoying each other's company is more essential to the health of you and your family than sometimes the meal itself. Eating slowly, enjoying the flavor and texture, chewing each bite completely and having gratitude for this time with your loved ones is the healthiest diet you can have in my opinion.

About the Author

Celina Pizarro is a Holistic Lifestyle and Nutrition Coach and a Money Mindset Mentor who is on a mission to help women get off Rx. meds, get fit mentally, physically and spiritually and "Live Well". Signup at www.cpfitpro.com to receive her newsletter full of health, wellness and fitness tips.