

## **Taking the Yo out of the Yo-Yo**

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Ask 100 people the key to weight loss and 97 will say "eat less food." In our Keep Canada Slim consulting program, we find that 97% of our clients are actually already eating too little to have permanent success. Until you clearly understand and act on this apparent contradiction you will never gain control of your weight.

It's true that people initially gain weight because they eat too much, but losing weight and keeping it off is more complicated than simply starving yourself. And each time you go that route you make future attempts at weight control more difficult.

Suppose you need 2000 calories a day to support your life's activities, but you eat 2200 calories. You would store 200 calories each day. Since 3600 calories equals one pound, you would gain a pound every 18 days. Do this for a year and you have gained 20 pounds. Consider that half a large muffin is 200 calories and you can see how easy it is to gain weight.

So you go on a diet. Most commercial programs average 800 calories per day, so at this rate your body will burn 1200 calories from storage. This results in weight loss.

However, 800 calories is less than your Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) – the minimum number of calories you need to simply exist. You are actually starving and your body reacts by metabolizing muscle for energy. On a low-calorie diet up to one-third of the weight lost is muscle. This includes the muscles of the heart and other internal organs. (Anorexics often die of heart failure because they have lost so much heart muscle).

Muscle burns calories even at rest, so when you lose muscle through dieting you reduce your body's need for calories. Going back to our example, you would now need perhaps 1800 calories per day because you have less muscle. Resume your normal eating habits (2200 calories) and you are storing 400 calories per day and gaining weight at twice the previous rate. Soon you have gained back all the weight.

So you diet again, eating 800 calories a day. This time you lose a little slower, 1000 calories per day (1800-800), but eventually reach your weight goal. Again, one-third of the weight lost is muscle.

Now your caloric requirement has been reduced to 1600 calories per day and the weight comes back faster.

What's worse is that the weight you gained back is all fat, so your body fat percentage begins to increase, going from a healthy range of 11-19% (men) or 17-25% (women) to 30, 40, 50% or more. And this excess body fat and muscle loss is the foundation of almost all degenerative diseases, from heart disease to many cancers, diabetes, osteoporosis and so on.

So next time you decide to lose weight be sure to eat more than your Basal Metabolic requirements. This varies for everyone. Start at 1200 calories for a woman who wants to be 100 pounds, and increase by 50 calories for every 10 pounds of goal weight. For a man, start at 1500 calories to reach 130 pounds and add 75 calories for every 10 pounds of goal weight.