



## Why Don't We Recommend Dieting?

The short answer is that intentional weight loss attempts almost never lead to long-term significant weight loss or improvement in health, and often have negative side effects.

### Diets Don't Work

We're defining "dieting" here as any attempt to manipulate body size through food and/or movement – this would include short-term diets, "fat" diets, diets that eliminate foods, and diets that are referred to as "lifestyle changes." If the goal is to create weight loss through food and/or movement, it counts!

While most people are able to lose weight short term, almost everyone gains it back, with up to two-thirds of people gaining back more than they lost. So even if someone believes that becoming thinner would lead to health improvements (and that's a big "if") recommending intentional weight loss attempts is the worst possible advice, since it has the opposite of the intended effect the majority of the time.

### Weight Cycling Can Be Dangerous

Repeated dieting typically means repeated cycles of weight loss and regain. This is "weight cycling" (sometimes referred to as "yo-yo dieting") and it comes with its own negative side effects. In fact, the research shows that it is possible that the association between weight and health risk can be better attributed to weight cycling than body size. Weight cycling is

associated with a shorter lifespan, and has been shown to increase the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and heart disease.

## The Harm of Weight Stigma

Internalized negative attitudes about weight, known as weight stigma, is another mediator between body size and health. Studies show that weight stigma increases the risk of high blood pressure, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, high cholesterol, and eating disorders. This means that placing the focus of medical care on weight management is harmful and has the opposite of its intended effect on health.

## Dieting Leads to Eating Disorders

Dieting is one of the most important predictors of development of eating disorders. In fact, prescribing diets often equates to prescribing disordered eating behaviors. Dieting can lead to severe restrictive eating and malnutrition, cycles of starvation and binge eating, as well as other eating disorder behaviors and their medical complications.

## Weight Loss Pills and Surgeries Carry Risks

Weight loss medications may lead to short term weight loss, but cause weight cycling in the long run, along with other potential side effects. Weight loss surgeries carry a significant risk of many complications, including death. The research shows that there are more effective ways to positively impact health that do not risk lifelong side-effects.

## Health at Every Size Is a Research-Based Paradigm

The evidence that exists around weight and health shows that, understanding that health is not an obligation, barometer of worthiness, or entirely within our control, Health at Every Size interventions are health-promoting and carry a much lower chance of negative side effects.

**For a thoroughly cited review of the evidence, we recommend reading [this paper](#) as well as [this one](#)!**

Check out our Resources Page

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