



A JO♡SR GUIDE TO

# WHY WE GET FAT

BY GARY TAUBES

And What to Do About It

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## What's it about?

For decades, the Western world has been fighting an obesity epidemic that just keeps getting worse. We have tried counting calories, cutting out fat, ramping up our exercise, and much more, but still our weight continues to rise. Some say that it is because we lack the discipline and desire to get lean, but when you dig a little deeper, it's clear that this isn't the case. Most people wouldn't willingly choose to be fat, and many of us try very hard to do what health professionals advise us to. The fact is, we just don't have a proper understanding of what it is that makes us fat. That is why our current fat-fighting techniques are not working.

The reason for this is that we may have been going about it all the wrong way. Weight gain isn't just about lacking the willpower to stick to a diet or exercise plan. Genetics and biology are what truly lies behind the science of fat. Unfortunately, some people are simply predisposed to gaining weight easily, while others are not. And the currently accepted "healthy" diet of the Western world is only making this worse. We are told by dieticians and health professionals everywhere that we need a diet carefully balanced between carbohydrates and proteins, with fat sparingly thrown into the mix. But this kind of diet is actually contributing to the problem.

*Why We Get Fat* is an exploration of the real cause behind our obesity epidemic: carbohydrates. The Western diet today is packed so full of carbs and sugars that our bodies are stockpiling fat, unable to burn it effectively. The more carbs we eat, the fatter we are getting, and the more long-term damage we are doing to our health. This book will teach you why you need to eliminate as many carbohydrates from your diet as possible, and start filling up with protein and healthy fats instead to become a leaner, healthier you.

## Obesity is about genetics and biology, not willpower

A common assumption regarding why people get fat today is that they must lack the discipline and willpower to stay slim and fit. This misunderstanding is very unfair to the people suffering from weight gain and obesity, because the real truth is that they can do very little to help it. Some people are simply naturally prone to weight gain. And when it gets out of hand it can quickly turn into obesity. It's not necessarily something these people are doing wrong. Rather, it is something their bodies are doing wrong because of their genetic makeup.

Every process in the human body is carefully regulated by hormones. If something is even slightly off in the levels of our hormones or the responses of our cells, then things start to go awry. This is what happens to people who get fat; their bodies don't process their food or manage their fat storage and energy use as effectively as they should—and the result is weight gain.

The way your body stores fat is genetically passed on to you from your parents, and will be passed from you to your children. As unfair as it sounds, if your parents had weight issues, you likely will too. But there's nothing *fair* about how different people store fat; it simply is what it is. If you are not fortunate enough to be a naturally lean, fuel-burning machine, that doesn't mean there is anything wrong with you. It merely means that you will need to manage your food intake more carefully.

The important thing to remember is that your weight gain is not caused by a mental deficiency or character defect in yourself. Clearly you don't choose to be unhealthy or overweight. Something is simply different in your body than in that of a leaner person. So, don't blame yourself: You just need to learn the right way to take control.

## **Balancing calories does not affect weight gain**

The most widely accepted myth out there in terms of dieting is that weight gain is directly related to taking in more calories than you burn in a day. This mode of thinking says that if you want to lose weight you must restrict your calorie intake, up your calorie burning through exercise, or do both at the same time. In fact, that's what a doctor would likely recommend. But, as many people discover, using this method will only make you miserable and provide short-term results that will fade quickly as your body adjusts.

One of the first things you probably tried or thought about trying was calorie restriction, right? You significantly reduced the amount of food you ate each day, and probably suffered from near-constant hunger as a result. And then eventually you went back to eating normally, and any results quickly disappeared. This is because the body naturally resists calorie restriction. If you reduce your food intake, then your body will react by burning energy more slowly to avoid weight loss.

And exercise doesn't really help either as far as weight loss is concerned. Sure, exercise burns calories, but it also works up your appetite. If you burn energy by working out, your body will seek to replenish it by eating. So by working out you are simply increasing your appetite. Combining calorie restriction with exercise only makes you feel starved. Plus, going back to a normal lifestyle after you have achieved the results you desire will simply cause you to gain everything back.

Calories are simply a measure of the energy your food gives your body. You don't get fat because of an imbalance of energy. You probably know a number of lean people who never count calories or bother to hit the gym and still manage to stay fit. That's because it's not

about the amount of food you are eating so much as the type of food you are eating and how your body is using it.

## **We get fat because of carbohydrates and sugars**

The majority of people today think that the cause of weight gain and obesity is fatty food. But if you take a look at the way your body processes food, it becomes clear that the real culprits are carbohydrates and sugars. In an ideal world your body would burn fat to make the energy it needs to function. However, when you fill yourself up with breads, potatoes, and sugars it is unable to use anything but carbs, causing the fat you eat to build up in your body, unused.

Fat is supposed to flow continuously in and out of your cells each day as you need it. Your body stores fat in the form of large lipids called triglycerides. When energy is needed, these triglycerides break down into small fatty acids which your body can then burn to create energy. In essence, you store fat every time you eat a meal, and then burn it between meals and while you sleep at night. Normally this would keep you lean, but when you eat too many carbs you disrupt this process.

Carbs are easier to digest than anything else, so our bodies burn them before fat. When you eat carbohydrates, they replace fat as the primary energy for your cells, meaning your unused fat builds up. If that wasn't bad enough, eating too many carbohydrates can cause your body to create additional reserve stores of fat.

Carbohydrates convert into glucose as they are processed, causing your blood sugar to rise. In response, your body produces insulin, which boosts triglyceride production and locks your fat into storage, enabling your body to burn carbohydrates. In addition, insulin creates brand-new fat cells when the existing ones are full, so that all the unused food you consumed



can be converted into yet more fat. In a nutshell, insulin decreases your ability to burn fat and makes you fatter.

So, every time you eat carbs, your body responds with insulin—clearly a hormone that has a very fattening effect on the body. And when your insulin levels are high, you will be almost entirely unable to burn your existing fat. Not every person has trouble with carbs, but if you are overweight then it is likely that you do. If this is the case, then perhaps it is time to re-examine your diet and eliminate that fattening food.

## **Overeating and sedentary behavior are caused by obesity, not the cause of it**

Another frustrating misconception about obesity is that it is caused by a sedentary lifestyle, a bad habit of overindulging in food, or a combination of both. As we've seen, obesity is in fact a disorder of the body; and like any disorder, it comes with symptoms. These symptoms often include overeating and a tendency toward inactivity, both of which are then incorrectly labeled as a fault in the thinking or habits of the overweight person.

When a person is obese, a sedentary lifestyle is almost sure to be present as a result. It's not that you don't want to be more active and move around, it's that you don't have the energy to do so. When insulin has locked away all of the fat in your body that should be used for energy, the only thing you have left to work with are carbs, and these burn fast and need to be replenished often in order to keep you going. When you lack access to the energy you need, the inevitable result is that you will feel more tired and be more sedentary. It's not laziness; it's a dietary imbalance.

Since the carbs you eat burn off quickly, you will be hungry much sooner after you eat than a lean person would. This probably means you will end up in the kitchen every few hours or looking for another carb-filled snack to give your body the energy it needs. If you are overweight, your body isn't efficiently burning your fat to stave off hunger, so you are almost certain to overeat. It's not that you are greedy; it's that your body is craving more energy.

These symptoms of obesity are too often thrown in the faces of the people who suffer from them. They are derided as personal deficiencies, and proof that overweight individuals don't really want to be lean. But

these problems are caused by obesity, and not the other way around. If you recognize these symptoms in your life, they are evidence that something is out of balance internally and you need to address the cause, not the symptoms.

## **Eating carbohydrates makes you crave more carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates are dangerous to your health for many reasons, but one of the biggest is that they are highly addictive. Like the drug cocaine, your body will crave carbs and compel you to eat them despite the serious consequences. Once you have entered the vicious cycle of carbohydrate consumption and weight gain, it is very difficult to break free.

The first thing you do is start thinking about eating something containing carbs, for instance a cinnamon-raisin bagel. Even just the *thought* of eating carbs causes your body to secrete insulin. This insulin traps your fat, stopping you from burning it in order to further stimulate your hunger. Now you are hungry, you go ahead and eat that bagel. This causes more insulin to be produced, while the carbs get digested and converted to glucose in your bloodstream. Your blood-sugar levels spike and yet more insulin is produced. All that insulin increases your fat storage, and consequently you get fatter.

The worst part is that once you have digested those carbs, you very quickly feel hungry again. But your insulin levels are still high and your fat is still trapped, so what do you think your body will be craving? You guessed it, carbohydrates. The hungrier you feel when you eat, the better your food tastes to you. So, those carbs feel twice as rewarding and will turn into a constant craving. The high levels of insulin in your body will keep you hungry and your beloved carbs will always seem delicious.

Like any addicting substance, you can kick the habit. But it is going to take some serious effort. It is very difficult to deny yourself something that seems so harmless and provides so much pleasure, but doing so is the only way

to break the cycle and take back control of your body. If you have a carbohydrate addiction, it's time to kick the habit and replace them with foods that will burn fat and help you get lean.

## **Find out which foods are full of carbs and get them off the menu**

It's no surprise that obesity has become such an epidemic when you think about how prevalent carbohydrates and sugars are in the modern diet. You probably have some of the more obvious carb sources in mind right now, but there may be others that surprise you.

The most recognizable sources of carbohydrates are those made with refined flour. These include products such as bread, cereal, and pasta. They are almost purely carbs, and you want to stay far away from these. The refined versions, like white bread and white pasta, are the worst, but even the wholegrain options are dangerous. It's better to cut out every possible carb you can. Forget the toast and oatmeal in the morning, and skip the spaghetti for dinner. Another area you need to pay attention to is starch. These include foods like corn, potatoes, and rice. The more of this you can cut out of your diet, the easier it will be for you to get lean.

Don't forget liquid carbohydrates, which can be a big problem. Fruit juices and soda are so full of sugar that they should be one of the first things to go. And unfortunately, beer needs to go too. Fruit needs to be monitored closely, and may need to be removed from your diet as well if it causes issues. Though it is full of vitamins, fruit is also full of fructose, which is the sugar that makes it sweet. Though this is a healthier sugar, people with weight issues may be thrown out of balance by it.

Start checking the labels on your food, or search the internet for a list of common carb-rich foods, so you can get a better idea of what you need to avoid. Carbs in the form of sugar can hide in heavily processed foods too, which is why you need to read those nutritional facts

very carefully. It certainly may seem like a daunting list, but you will soon find that there are plenty of delicious foods out there that make great alternatives to those fattening carbs you consumed before. It will all be more than worth it when you find that kicking your bad carbohydrate habit gives you more energy, better health, and a slimmer waistline.

## **Eat meats, leafy greens, and healthy fats to slim down**

When you remove all the carbs from your diet, you may find yourself wondering what else is left. The answer is foods that are rich in healthy fats and protein. The great part about switching to this style of eating is that you don't typically have to be restricted in how much you eat; you can enjoy these foods until you feel full and satisfied.

You can eat meat, poultry, fish, and eggs to your heart's content. The fat content doesn't matter at all, and these are great sources of protein, too. Eggs have been called unhealthy for containing cholesterol and fat, but these are actually good for your health and weight. Have as much of this great filling option as you like, scrambled, fried, boiled, or however you prefer.

Steak, pork chops, ribs, drumsticks, and lobster are just a few of many meat options available. Cook these any way you like, though you should avoid any methods that add carbohydrates, like breading or battering. Pulses such as lentils and legumes such as beans are excellent vegetable protein choices to add variety, though they lack the healthy fat portions in meat.

Leafy greens are technically carbs too, but they are complex carbs that don't cause insulin release and are important to rounding out your vitamins and nutrients. You should have some of these every day, whether that is in the form of spinach, lettuce, kale, or any other leaf. You could make them into a salad to accompany meat or fish.

Unlike most diets, you'll be happy to hear you can also enjoy, in moderation, things like cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, and avocado. These can give you healthy doses of fat and help spice up your meals. Nuts and nut butters, oils, and seeds are also good for you, so add in



some cashews, peanut butter (look for ones without added sugar), olive or coconut oil, and sunflower seeds.

It will be a big change at first, and you may find it helpful to look up some low-carb, high-protein and high-fat meal plans to get a good idea of the kinds of things you can eat. A no-carb diet with plenty of protein and fat is much more effective for losing weight and getting lean than the low-fat, low-calorie, carb-rich diets most people try today. If you can stick to it, you will lose weight, improve your health, and kick your fattening carb addiction for good.

## Final summary

Some of us simply can't process carbohydrates as effectively as others. And even if we could, they aren't really very good for us. When we eat carbs, our blood sugar spikes and our bodies release insulin, which ramps up our fat storage and makes it harder for our bodies to process anything except more carbs. No amount of calorie counting or exercise can correct this imbalance. Only a careful, vigilant diet that eliminates carbs in favor of protein and fat will do the trick.

A healthier meal plan of meats, eggs, fish, good fats and leafy greens will slim you down and make you feel better. Overeating and sedentary living are not character defects, but symptoms of a bodily disorder. When you adjust your meal plans to better suit your body's needs, you will be rewarded with greater energy and a more moderate appetite. Carbs only make you crave more carbs and trap you in vicious, fattening cycle.

No two people are exactly the same, so you need to find the balance that works for you. Some people can have a little sugar and some carbs in their dietary mix and still stay slim. Others need to cut them entirely and may still struggle with a few extra pounds. It's all genetics and biology. So don't blame yourself, but do take control of your health by re-examining your diet, reducing or eliminating carbohydrates, and embracing a more balanced protein-rich diet.

## Now read the book

*Why We Get Fat* by Gary Taubes is an accessible explanation of the science behind weight gain and a guide to what you can do for yourself to get it under control. Rather than casting blame on overweight people for the natural way their bodies react to the modern Western diet, the author points out where the real problem lies. He draws on research and observations by health professionals and regular people going all the way back to the 1800s, which show that the truth about carbs and sugar has been out there for years.

Unfortunately, it is not a truth widely acknowledged or shared by today's health professionals. Over the past 50 years or so, we have traveled down an unfortunate path of misconceptions that have led us to cast carbs as heart-healthy and fats as detrimental to our waistlines. In reality, it is the other way around—and the author wants to expose the truth.

Taubes takes the time to clearly and carefully explain your body's biological response to the different kinds of foods you eat, and shows you exactly how and why you should change your lifestyle. What he provides is an approach to food that will transform the way you eat, what you weigh, and how you feel each day. He gives you all the information you need to take control over your body.

*Why We Get Fat* will help you understand the genetic, biological, and dietary causes of obesity today. It will also help you learn how to alter your diet so that you can become leaner and more energetic while feeling free to eat enough to satisfy your hunger. Basically, the dietary Holy Grail!

## Key takeaways

- A tendency toward weight gain is caused by your genes and biology, not by a lack of discipline or willpower.
- Obesity is the cause of overeating and sedentary living, not the other way around.
- Carbohydrates cause us to get fat by increasing our insulin output and forcing our bodies to store more fat.
- If you eat more protein and fat while simultaneously eliminating carbohydrates, you will lose more weight than on traditional diets.

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