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Good Calories, Bad Calories



Synopsis

For decades we have been taught that fat is bad for us, carbohydrates better, and that the key to a healthy weight is eating less and exercising more. Yet despite this advice, we have seen unprecedented epidemics of obesity and diabetes. Taubes argues that the problem lies in refined carbohydrates, like white flour, easily digested starches, and sugars, and that the key to good health is the kind of calories we take in, not the number. In this groundbreaking book, award-winning science writer Gary Taubes shows us that almost everything we believe about the nature of a healthy diet is wrong. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

File Size: 3090 KB

Print Length: 640 pages

Publisher: Anchor; 1 edition (September 25, 2007)

Publication Date: September 25, 2007

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B000UZNSC2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #34,711 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #1 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Medical eBooks > Specialties > Occupational & Industrial Medicine #3 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Occupational #5 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Medical eBooks > Specialties > Obstetrics & Gynecology

Customer Reviews

I've worked in hospitals or have been in a teaching position in health care since 1972. That entire time I marched to the unceasing drum of dietary-fat-and-cholesterol-lead-directly-to-heart-disease, now called the lipid theory of heart disease. It never occurred to me to ask "Where is the hard evidence?" I assumed it had been irrefutably proven. Then factors in my own life led me to eventually question that ever present mantra. My own mother had her first heart attack when she was just 48 years old. In her seventies she was put on a statin for elevated cholesterol and became

someone I barely recognized; argumentative, irritable, forgetful, poor coordination and very depressed. Nothing in my own medical care education lead me to blame any of that on statin drugs. What was even more puzzling was that she had never been one to eat fatty foods or things laden with cholesterol. But I never stopped to think about that. I did know she struggled with weight her entire life and hence was vigilant in eating things low-fat, as well as only using polyunsaturated oils for cooking. But it is also true she had a problem with carbohydrates - they always were the majority of her diet. I lost her to a heart attack in 1995. Three years ago, as my own cholesterol nudged up a bit, but still within traditional normal range, I did not hesitate to comply with my doctor's suggestion to begin a statin (Lipitor). If anything, I felt I was getting ahead of the danger of losing my life as my mother had. But also like her, I struggle with my weight and like her I gravitate to carbohydrates. I was strictly avoiding all saturated fats and dietary cholesterol, cooking with the supposedly "healthy" polyunsaturated oils and always choosing fat-free or low-fat dairy products.

This book is one of the most important health books I have ever read. (My copy was called 'The Diet Delusion' which is the UK and Australian etc. title of this book, I think.) The author is incredibly intelligent and that this book took the author more than five years to write, shows. I've read few health books so intelligently written as this one. I thought I was quite well educated about diet and the need to restrict refined carbohydrates (for good health and to stop weight gain) but I learned so much from reading this book. This book is not a simple book offering practical advice and a diet sheet but a detailed analysis of why low calorie diets don't work and why restricted carbohydrate/high fat diets do. The book explains that: 1. The 'calories in, calories out' mantra is a myth 2. 'A calorie is a calorie is a calorie' is a myth 3. The 'just eat less and do more exercise to lose weight' message seems to be logical but is actually wrong and unhelpful 4. Overweight and obese people often eat no more calories, or even less, than their thinner counterparts 5. Low calorie diets also reduce the amount of nutrients in the diet 6. It is a myth that the brain and CNS needs 120 - 130 grams of carbohydrate as fuel in order to function properly, as the body can use fat and protein equally as well, and these fuels are likely the mixture our brains have evolved to prefer. 7. Restricting calories with a low fat/high carb diet just makes you hungrier and more lethargic and slows your metabolic rate. Weight loss is only maintained if the patients stays on a semi-starvation diet forever, which is impossible for most people and also undesirable.

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