

How Your Body Handles Food

If you struggle with over-eating and want to get healthy, you need to know how the body handles food. Otherwise, you could become discouraged because you are trying hard and seeing few results. Even if you are someone who struggles with under-eating and depriving yourself, this knowledge will be beneficial. Although this is not the place for a long discussion — there are many books for those who want to get down (or up) to a healthy weight—here are a few simple principles you should know.¹

1) As you no doubt know, we gain weight when we take in more than we burn off. God created our bodies to get hungry once we have burned off the food from our last meal. Thus, the most important principle is to eat only when we are hungry and stop when we are satisfied (not when we are stuffed!). When we learn to listen to those signals, we will then know how much food we actually need to run our body's engine. And once we realize that ideal balance, those of us who tend toward weight gain are often *shocked* at how much “extra” we've been eating.

2) That said, *what* you eat also matters. Some choices are obvious—an apple is a better snack than a bag of Skittles. But others are not, and this is where a little biology lesson makes all the difference.

In essence, everything you consume is broken down into sugar, which provides the energy needed to run your body. One important factor in energy production is whether a certain food choice becomes sugar quickly or slowly. If it is digested quickly, food acts like a sugar rush to the body. But the body only needs so much sugar at one time for energy—and it handles the “excess” by going through a process that, in the end, results in storing that extra sugar as extra pounds. By contrast, if a food is digested quite slowly, the sugar is released into the body at a manageable pace, with no sugar-rush “excess” to store. Every type of food is broken down at a different pace; for example, carbs are processed quickly, while proteins are processed more slowly.

Many people have been told to avoid carbs or fats, but our bodies need both. The key is to prioritize good carbs and good fats, rather than bad carbs and bad fats, because it turns out

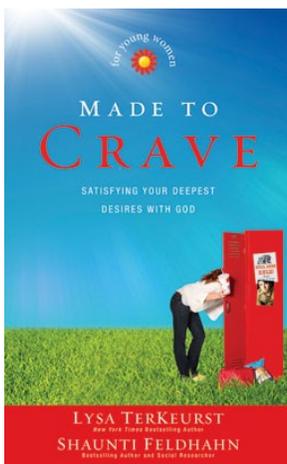
¹ This is a simplified outline. You can learn more about the biology of the body at books such as *The South Beach Diet* by Dr. Arthur Agatston, from which most of this information is drawn.

there are two things that slow down digestion and help the body process food into sugar more slowly: fat and fiber. And the presence of fiber and lean fats often means something is a “good” carb or fat, rather than a bad one.

For example, white bread is not a “good carb”; it is made with enriched flour, which means all the fiber is stripped out. To your body, the sugar break-down processes are so quick it is exactly like eating a piece of birthday cake. True whole-wheat bread, however, is indeed a “good carb”: it has the fiber still in it and will be processed more slowly. (Hint: a good-carb bread won’t say “enriched flour” under ingredients). Many vegetables and fruits are also loaded with fiber, another element of food that slows digestion. So if you have to eat a white-bread meal for some reason (maybe you’re at a friend’s house and that is what they serve), eat some vegetables or salad along with it if you can, to help counteract the white-bread sugar rush.

Similarly, our bodies need fats to run properly and burn off sugar instead of storing it; the good fats smooth that burning process, while the bad fats make us unhealthier. Lean meats and other proteins (like chicken, olive oil, or cheese) are good fats, which are essential for us to maintain a healthy weight.

Not only are these facts interesting, knowing the biology behind various food choices can help those of us who have felt a bit helpless about our weight gain at times make more-informed decisions. For example, if you’re going to cheat, at least *know* you are cheating! Once we discovered that our bodies treat white bread the same as a slab of birthday cake, we have largely avoided white bread and eat truly whole-wheat bread instead. We don’t know about you, but if we are going to have bad carbs ... we’d rather eat the slice of birthday cake!



For more information on this topic, read Lysa’s book, *Made to Crave for Young Women*.

Lysa TerKeurst is a *New York Times* bestselling author and speaker who helps everyday women live an adventure of faith through following Jesus Christ. As president of Proverbs 31 Ministries, Lysa has led thousands to make their walk with God an invigorating journey. For more information, visit www.LysaTerKeurst.com

To purchase this resource [click here](#).

© 2012 by Lysa TerKeurst. All rights reserved.