

Why Cheat Days Do Not Work and Why Healthy Eating Must Be a Lifestyle

Many people follow strict diets, cutting calories and avoiding unhealthy foods, only to indulge in a cheat day as a reward. This approach often backfires, erasing weeks of effort in a single day. The problem is not just the cheat day itself but the temporary mindset of dieting rather than embracing a long-term lifestyle change.

To lose weight, you need to maintain a calorie deficit, burning more than you consume. A pound of fat equals 3,500 calories, so a 500-calorie daily deficit leads to losing about a pound per week. However, a single cheat day can easily exceed 5,000 extra calories, wiping out ten days of progress in just one sitting. If this becomes a habit, weight loss stalls or even reverses.

Cheat days also encourage binge eating and cravings, making it harder to get back on track. The insulin spikes from overeating promote fat storage rather than fat loss. Beyond the physical effects, cheat days reinforce an all-or-nothing mentality, often leading to guilt, discouragement, and ultimately quitting.

The real solution is to stop thinking of healthy eating as a short-term diet and instead adopt it as a lifestyle. Rather than seeing certain foods as off-limits, focus on balance and moderation. Over time, your body will naturally crave nutrient-rich foods because they improve energy, performance, and recovery. When you listen to how food makes you feel, clean eating becomes its own reward.

Would you suggest a cheat day to an addict? If your cravings are taking control, the best approach might not be moderation but committing fully to breaking free from unhealthy eating habits. Think about what you are truly feeding. Are you nourishing your body's needs or continuing past addictions to processed and sugar-filled foods? The choice is yours.

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