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## Don't Rely on Diet to Prevent Weight Regain

**In study, people put lost pounds back on regardless of the amount of fat they ate**

**By Kathleen Doheny**

HealthDay Reporter

FRIDAY, Nov. 7 (HealthDay News) -- If you've just lost weight and are trying to keep it off, don't rely on diet alone to keep those unwanted pounds at bay. It may not be enough, no matter what kind of "maintenance" diet you follow, researchers say.

A team from Denmark found that people following three very different diets regained weight, anyway.

So to avoid regaining weight, "the best plan is to stick to a diet that works for you -- in combination with exercise," said study co-author Anette Due, a researcher at the University of Copenhagen.

The researchers followed 125 men and women, ages 18 to 35, who had lost more than 8 percent of their initial body weight and were trying to keep it off. They assigned them randomly to follow one of three diets.

One diet provided a moderate amount of fat, about 35 percent to 45 percent of total intake, with more than 20 percent of it from monounsaturated fats such as olive oil. Another diet was 20 percent to 30 percent fat, with no specifics on types of fat. And those on the "control" diet took in 35 percent of calories as fat.

All groups as a whole regained during the six-month follow-up, with the moderate-fat dieters regaining about 5.5 pounds, the low-fat (20 percent to 30 percent) regaining 4.8 pounds, and the control group, 8.3 pounds.

The study results are published in the November issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Researchers also looked at changes in risk factors for diabetes and heart disease such as blood sugar levels, insulin, cholesterol and triglycerides. The diet that allowed 35 percent to 45 percent of total intake as fat, with most of it olive oil-type fat, seemed to improve glucose compared to a normal Western diet, said Due.

The study received funding from a variety of sources, including The Danish Heart Association and the Danish Pork Council.

The findings weren't all that surprising, experts said.

"We know that most dieters have some weight regain despite the type of diet they may have been on," said Lona Sandon, an assistant professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. "The trick to preventing weight regain seems to be more in increasing exercise rather than diet strategies."

Until more research is in on the best "maintenance" diet, "the important message is the calorie message," said Connie Diekman, director of University Nutrition at Washington University in St. Louis, and past president of the American Dietetic Association. Dieters should figure out how much they can eat and how

much they must exercise to maintain a weight.

And eating the right breakfast might help keep the weight down, according to research published in the same issue of the journal.

In that study, researchers from Queens College of the City University of New York and other facilities collected data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, including more than 12,000 men and women. Their study was partially supported by the Breakfast Research Institute, sponsored by Quaker and Tropicana, which make breakfast foods.

Those who ate breakfast tended to eat healthier foods during the rest of the day. Women -- but not men - who ate breakfast had a lower body mass index than women who skipped breakfast.

According to Sandon, those findings may be especially good news for women. "For women, simply eating breakfast may help them control body weight and appetite throughout the day," she said.

#### **More information**

To learn more about fats, visit the American Dietetic Association.

**SOURCES:** Connie Diekman, M.Ed. R.D., director, university nutrition, Washington University in St. Louis, Mo.; Lona Sandon, M.Ed. R.D., assistant professor, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, and American Dietetic Association spokesperson; Anette Due, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; November 2008, The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition



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