

Trouble Losing Weight? Try This

Individual variations in biology, not just willpower, may play a role in weight loss.

By Dean Ornish, MD



From [Reader's Digest](#)

Beyond Convention

Have you ever tried to drop a few pounds and blamed yourself for not having enough motivation or discipline? Well, maybe it's not entirely your fault. Individual variations in biology, not just willpower, may play an important role in weight loss, says David Ludwig, MD, a respected obesity researcher at Harvard.

In his new book, [Ending the Food Fight](#), Dr. Ludwig, director of the Optimal Weight for Life Program at Children's Hospital Boston, shares effective strategies for helping you lose weight and keep it off. I talked with him recently about his work.

Dr. Ornish: In your study, you found that the type of food, not just the amount, plays a role in weight. Why?

Dr. Ludwig: The conventional wisdom is that it's all a question of behavior, that people vary in their ability to stick to diets. However, biological factors other than genes could also play a role. To examine this, we assigned 73 obese young adults to either a conventional low-fat, high-glycemic-load diet (foods high in sugar and refined carbohydrates such as white flour) or a low-glycemic-load diet (one that stabilizes blood sugar after meals).

D.O.: What are some low-glycemic foods?

D.L.: Whole foods that digest slowly and release nutrients into the body in a slow and sustained fashion. They include non-starchy vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and grain products in their least processed state.

D.O.: What did the study show?

D.L.: People who secrete insulin slowly lost the same amount of weight on both diets. In contrast, people who secrete insulin rapidly and who were on the low-glycemic diet lost five times more weight, and kept all the weight off throughout the 18 months of the study.

When it comes to healthy eating, one size may not fit all. It may be unwise to recommend decreasing fat without adequate attention to the carbohydrates that replace them, and vice versa.

D.O.: So it's not low-fat versus low-carb -- both are important.

D.L.: Yes, an optimal approach may be a diet that pays attention to the quality of fats and carbs: high-quality, unprocessed low-glycemic carbs and plant-based proteins and fats.

Simple Summer Slim-Down

If you eat a diet that contains predominantly foods with a low glycemic index, it doesn't matter much if you secrete insulin quickly or slowly, as these foods won't provoke a rapid insulin response.

Whether you go to a farmers' market or a supermarket, shopping for summer meals can be a treat. With such fresh, fragrant fruits and vegetables, you don't need to do much to them. Here, three-course meals with whole foods low in fat and low on the glycemic index.

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

• Steel-cut oatmeal with fresh berries and bananas *or* an [egg white omelet with fresh vegetables](#)

• [French vegetable soup with basil](#)

• [White bean salad with zucchini, tomato and basil](#)

• Toasted stone-ground whole-grain bread

• [Arugula salad with corn and red onions](#)

• [Spring vegetable stir-fry with tofu](#) or [whole-wheat pizza with roasted eggplant and peppers](#)

• Orange wedges

• Sliced fresh peaches

• [Fruit salad with lime and mint](#)

For more information visit [Dr. Ludwig's website](#).

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