

# To Twinkie or Not to Twinkie?

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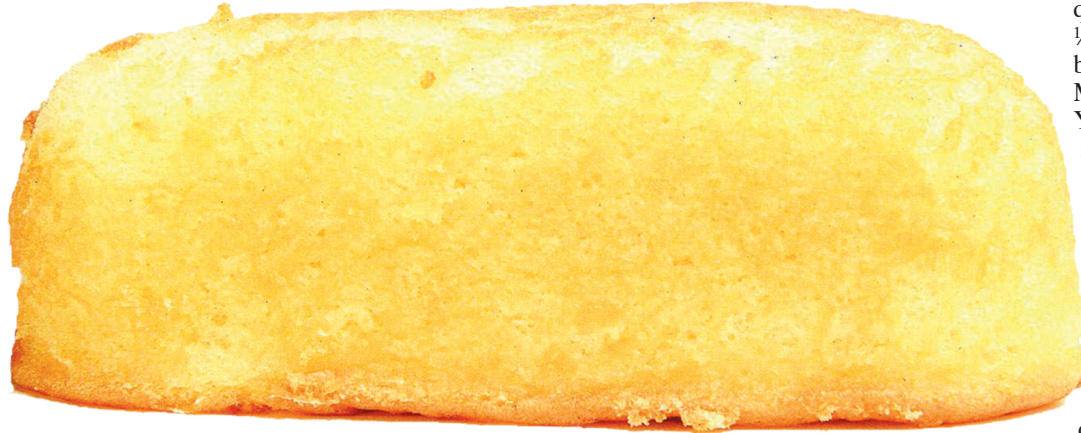
As a recent headline, “‘Nutty Professor’ lost 30 pounds on the Twinkie Diet” glared at me from my email inbox, my first instinct was to hit “delete” as quickly as possible. But a little like someone witnessing a bad car wreck, I felt compelled to read on. The short of the story is that a Kansas State University nutrition professor decided to go on a “diet” of Little Debbie’s Snack Cakes & Twinkies. His goal was to prove that if you keep your caloric intake less than what you are burning, you can lose weight no matter what you are eating. The nutty professor kept his caloric intake to 1800 calories a day- a total less than the number of calories he burns in a typical day and was successful in losing weight.

Living in the generation of “fad diets”, we see that there are a multitude of possible ways in which one can attempt to lose weight and often be “successful” at it. Yet we are still faced with an obesity epidemic, diet crazes and all of the negative health effects that come along for the ride.

**Problem #1:** Fad diets are generally not sustainable. No one wants to eat that way forever and quite frankly, no one should. Yet after individuals achieve their goal weights, they often go back to their old eating habits, gain the weight back quickly and then some. A fad diet frequently does not teach an individual what a healthy diet

actually entails. Instead it trades one set of bad dietary habits for another lower-calorie version.

**Problem #2:** A “Twinkie Diet” and others like it, are extremely low in nutritional value. A colleague said,



“There is no such thing as junk food. There is junk and there is food.”

Our bodies need real food with naturally occurring vitamins, antioxidants, proteins, complex carbohydrates and healthy fats. You may feel ok after losing the initial weight but down the road, without proper fuel the engine is going to break down, you are going to feel lousy and risk a number of possible health consequences.

**Problem #3:** The problem of being overweight isn’t always as simple as calories in/calories out. There are complicating factors for many individuals such as various hormonal imbalances. Individuals with hypothyroidism, for example, may not be able to lose weight no matter how much

they restrict their calories until the hormone issues are resolved.

So you get my point. There are many issues with these “diets” and I’ve just covered a few. With that said, some of these diets do have redeeming value. (And no, the Twinkie Diet is not included.) Like everything in this world, they are not all created equal, some are much better than others. Having an awareness of calories in vs. calories out is important. Encouraging drinking water,

increasing fiber intake, and getting sufficient exercise are often included and positive aspects of many diets. So how do you decide what is best for you?

Going back to the basics is always a good place to start. Portion control: use a smaller plate. Healthier eating: divide that plate into quarters. ½ of the plate should be vegetables, ¼ should be quality protein, the other ¼ can be whole grains, fruit or a healthy dessert. Make sure there is lots of color on the plate. Your food should not be an “all whitish gray meal”. Remembering that everyone is an individual, listen to what feels good to your own body. Check in with your naturopathic doctor or licensed nutritionist, see what they may advise. When considering a “diet plan” to follow, look at those that concentrate more on lifestyle changes, whole foods and finding balance within your dietary choices rather than just an extreme fad diet. For individualized diet recommendations and weight loss advice, contact True Health Medicine where creating sustainable health is our priority.



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