

ORGANIC LIVING

By

Robert Rodale

SLIM DOWN WITH WHOLE FOODS

Our hardy pioneer ancestors had legendary appetites. Yet being overweight was not the problem for them that it is for modern man. Did they simply burn up all those calories in physical labor, or were they also protected from obesity by the kind of food they ate?

An old-fashioned diet of whole, unrefined foodstuffs has a built-in cutoff switch that stops people from overeating. The secret is food fiber, the cellulose and other roughage that gives natural grains, vegetables and fruits their bulk.

"The extreme commonness of obesity in Western countries may be related to the fact that most dietary carbohydrate is refined and fiber-depleted," says British physician K. W. Heaton of the Bristol Royal Infirmary. "There has been a pronounced fall in the intake of starchy staple foods (mainly cereals and potatoes), and a pronounced rise in the consumption of refined sugars."

In contrast, primitive people have avoided obesity by eating high-fiber foods such as home-pounded rice, coarsely-sieved maize, unprocessed bananas, and plantains.

Heaton points out a number of reasons why fiber in the diet serves as an obstacle to weight gain:

1. Fibrous foods are so bulky they crowd out other calorie sources. Their fiber content is often associated with an extremely high water content. Thus their caloric content is more diluted. You would have to eat four medium-sized apples to ingest the amount of sugar in one cola drink, for example.

2. More chewing is required for high-fiber foods. The added effort slows you down, while releasing extra digestive juices that give your stomach that "full feeling" earlier. Many highly-refined, sweetened foods, on the other hand, require little or no chewing. They go down so easily, you hardly realize you're overeating.



3. Studies indicate that fiber-rich foods like wholewheat bread slows down absorption in the gut.

Diet shifts made with those factors in mind can bring gradual, but impressive results. In one South African study, 51 nondieting male office workers lost an average of three pounds each in five months when they eliminated all foods containing refined sugar (sucrose) from their diets. They were free to eat all they wanted of other foods.

Here are some things to consider if you'd like to try slimming down with whole foods:

Satisfy your craving for sweets naturally by eating fruit. The fruit sugar, or fructose, found in apples, pears, raisins, etc., is not nearly as concentrated as the syrupy sugars added to pies and other confections.

Eliminate refined spongy white bread, rolls, cakes and other white flour products. Cut out foods made with refined white sugar alos. Such products fill you with "empty calories."

Eat more whole grains. The germ and rough outer bran of wheat are important factors that belong in our diet, not on the milling room floor. Recent studies have found that fiber-rich, unprocessed wheat bran lowers the level of triglycerides (fats) in the bloodstream.

Self-indulgent, emotionally-triggered eating is a big factor in some people's weight problems. Instead of eating something rich, try munching on sliced carrots, celery sticks or some other raw vegetable next time you need a between-meals lift.

Increase your intake of seeds, nuts and fresh vegetables. It's easy to overeat when you're snacking on salty, refined foods like potato chips, but try eating whole, baked potatoes still in their skins and see how quickly you begin to feel full.

When you eat whole foods, you are getting the vitamins and minerals that processing depletes. Chromium is an example of a vulnerable trace element which scientists believe helps protect against diabetes and heart disease. Refined foods like white bread are stripped of much of their chromium and it's not replaced in the so-called "enrichment" process.

A high-residue, fibrous diet has still another advantage besides weight control. Studies of rural Africans indicate that such a diet prevents diverticular (lower bowel) disease, as well as cancer of the colon, appendicitis and ulcerative colitis.

Put more whole fiber-rich foods in your diet and see if you don't end up eating less. In these days of fad and gimmick reducing diets, it's good to know that sensible eating is still

the best way to stay trim and healthy.

Exercise and diet can work together to keep you trim. "Quick Steps to Fitness" is a 48-page booklet that will get you started jogging and bicycling. To get a copy, send 50 cents to Robert Rodale, Organic Living, in care of this newspaper. Please ask for the booklet by name and allow four weeks for delivery.

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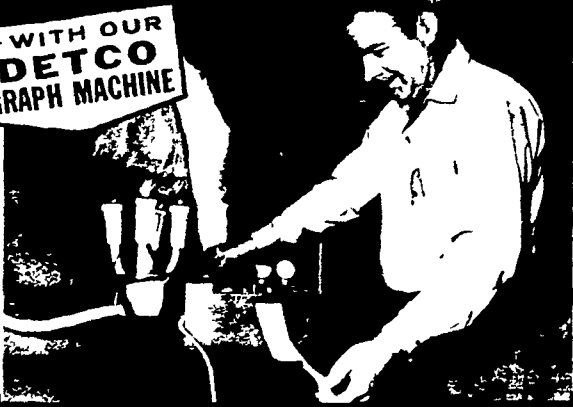
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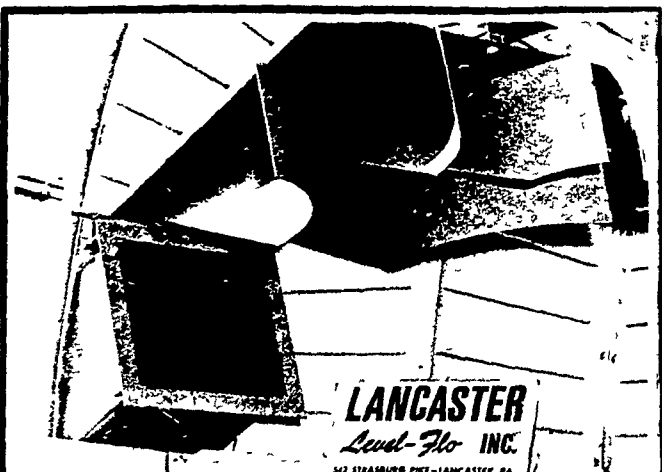


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