



## Can This Diet Really Be That Effective?

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Common sense tell us that biology doesn't work like math, it works like biology. However, common sense doesn't always find its way into conventional wisdom.

There's no better example of this than "metabolic math" you've been taught for years: Calories In - Calories Out = Weight Loss. Saving biology for another day, let's stick with common sense and meet Beth, Jane, and Sarah, who show how frustrating the *Calories In - Calories Out* myth can be.

### **Beth's Calorie Math Story**

Beth is a 35-year-old, 140-pound woman. Beth has no job, hobbies, family, or friends, so she is able to spend all her time manually balancing calories. Thanks to her hours of free time and careful calorie counting, Beth is able to trim a modest 400 calories out of the diet that has kept her at 140 pounds for the last 10 years.

Four hundred calories per day for three years is 438,000 calories. According to the "metabolism is like math" myth, we divide 438,000 by 3,500 (the number of calories in a pound of body fat) and poof, Beth loses 125 pounds of body fat. She started out weighing 140 pounds and weighs 15 pounds after three years of cutting 400 calories a day.

Simple. But sadly, silly. There may be 15-pound 35-year-olds in the fictional fat loss world, but there are not any in the real world.

### **Jane's Calorie Myth Story**

Jane weighed 130 pounds on her 21st birthday. Fast forward 20 years and three kids later. Jane is now 41 years old and weighs 150 pounds. According to mythical manual calorie balancing, Jane gained 20 pounds over 20 years because she did not manually balance calories precisely enough. Specifically, she exceeded her calorie quantity quota by about 9.5 calories per day over the past 20 years ( $9.6 \text{ calories} \times 365 \text{ days} \times 20 \text{ years} = 70,000 \text{ calories} = 20 \text{ pounds of body fat}$ ).

If she had only cut her daily calories by three-fourths of a saltine cracker (9.5 calories), then she would have avoided gaining any weight even after having three kids and getting 20 years older. False. If that were true, then undereating by 100 calories per day would cause people to lose about 100 pounds every 10 years. Biology doesn't work like math.

### **Sarah's Calorie Myth Story**

Sarah is a 29-year-old accountant. To ensure that she accounts for every calorie she eats, Sarah only eats food with those little nutrition facts labels on them. Sarah is happy because she is able to do "fun" accounting every time she eats and thinks she is keeping an accurate count of her calories. Sadly, Sarah's calorie counting is not nearly as bulletproof as she believes, because food labels are at best 90 percent accurate.

That does not seem like a big deal, but in the fictional fat loss world it is huge. Like any normal person, Sarah eats about a million calories per year. The 10 percent margin of error of the nutrition facts labels could cause her to massively mess up her manual calorie balancing.

Ten percent times 1 million calories per year is 100,000 calories per year. In the mythical "metabolism works like math" world, incorrectly balancing her calories by 100,000 calories a year means an extra 28 pounds of body fat per year. So Sarah, who always counts every single calorie she eats, and who manually balances calories more precisely than anyone else in the world, could easily gain 280 pounds over the next decade because of reporting errors on nutrition facts labels?

Fiction.

### **Fat Loss Facts**

Jane, Beth, Sarah, you, me, and everyone else who knows the facts of fat loss, does not need to think about eating too much. We need to think about restoring our body's natural ability to regulate our weight automatically at a healthy level. If you focus on calorie *quality* and take care of your body, then it will take care of calorie *quantity* for you. Just like it does for every other species on the planet. Just like it has for every generation of people who ever lived prior to the current three.

Use more -- but higher-quality food -- to heal your body, and it will do automatically what is impossible to do manually.