

# Permanent Weight Loss Takes More than Willpower

Columbia University researchers published a study in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. They discovered that when you lose 10% or more of your body weight, production of leptin — a hormone secreted by fat cells — plummets, setting off a series of physiological changes geared to restoring weight. Our skeletal muscles become more efficient while thyroid and other hormones are reduced, so the body burns as much as 20% fewer calories. There's also evidence that the brain's hunger centers are stimulated, producing a strong desire to eat.

A thousand years ago, when we didn't know where our next meal was coming from, this physiologic response was a helpful survival tool. It's only become a problem in the last 50 years, as cheap, calorie-dense food is around every corner (and we typically drive to get to it), sending obesity rates — and accompanying chronic illness — soaring worldwide.

**You Can Fight Mother Nature** but she has a huge advantage. Not only is our physiology working against us, but our modern convenience habits — ingrained over years or decades — can be extremely difficult to break.

**The good news: there are enough successful, permanent weight loss examples to confidently draw a path to long-term weight control. Data from the National Weight Control Registry — the largest ongoing study of significant weight loss — is enlightening. Here are some of the findings for individuals averaging a 67-pound weight loss over 5 years; they:**

- **Exercise 60-90 minutes a day**
- **Burn 400 calories a day through exercise (the equivalent of walking 3.5-4 miles)**
- **Maintain a relatively low-fat, low-calorie diet**
- **Weigh themselves regularly**
- **Eat breakfast**
- **Track what they eat**

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