

## Cheat Days: Good or Bad

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My doctor told me to stop my intimate dinners for four. Unless there are three other people – *Orson Welles* ☐

Let's face it, losing weight is no breeze, despite all the pills, diet shakes and magic devices flooding the market. One of the more favourite and seemingly successful innovations of late has been the 'cheat day', a supposedly reward for sticking to the unpalatable task of dieting.

Cheat day was never intended as a green light to pig out, yet not surprisingly, it's viewed by many as exactly that. A big binge day, no holds barred.

Scientists have now discovered that *controlled and well planned* 'cheat day' meals hold more benefits than simply a mental 'lifter-upper'.

The logic is quite simple. The fat cells in your body secrete a hormone called *Leptin*, which is responsible for maintaining your body's energy levels i.e. **energy in = energy out**. It does this by sending signals to the brain *I'm hungry I need more energy OR I'm full I have enough energy*.

*To lose weight, energy out must exceed energy in* which causes *Leptin* levels to drop, sending a message to the brain that more energy is needed. If this imbalance is maintained your body over time adjusts, going into *self preservation mode* and slowing down your metabolism so as to use less energy.

Obviously a *Bad idea* for weight loss. ☐

*Cheat days* trick the body into thinking that all is well! You're still taking in sufficient nutrition and energy levels are perfectly balanced.

The emphasis is on *controlled and well planned* cheat day meals, **for one day of the week only**. Without needing to feel guilty or condemned, it's a day you can happily munch on the foods that are otherwise excluded from your diet. The secret is not to binge and but stick to regular portions. Eating ice cream and choc chip cookies is all par

for the course. Gorging them down in mass quantities on auto pilot will only undo all the good you've done in the week.

There's a condition though! Cheating is only for those who *'did good during the week'*, for those who have earned it. The theory only works if you didn't cheat. It's a reward to yourself for sticking to your healthy eating plan.

As with all things weird and wonderful there are also the ***anti-cheat day*** proponents. One theory is that pigging out on junk food will only feed your addiction and set you up for failure. If you do have this problem Cheat Days will obviously not work for you.

Until proven otherwise I'll go with the cheat day theory. Eating food on the no-no list without feeling guilty sounds just great to me.

**'till next time, but until then your comments are welcome**

Steve

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