

# Generation to Generation



Charles E. Smith Life Communities

## Does Eating Less Boost Longevity?

From Atkins to The Zone, diets abound for every preference, yet all offer the same promise of svelte bodies. Now we have Calorie Restriction, a.k.a. The Longevity Diet. There's even a Calorie Restriction Society founded to promote the benefits of this approach to eating. "For calorie restriction, the motivation is longevity and health: forestalling aging and the onset of disease," notes Liza May, M.S., on the Society's Internet site.

### **The research**

In the 1930s, scientists demonstrated that rodents following a nutritional diet radically reduced in calories live 30% longer and age more slowly than animals in a control group. Subsequent studies with other animals have produced similar results. Researchers are now examining how monkeys fare on the diet in an effort to understand how and why hormonal and genetic aspects of aging respond to dietary restriction.



Hebrew Home of Greater Washington's Julia Mutter, RD, LDN, reviews dietary needs of residents.

### **Calorie restriction and nutrition**

Calorie Restriction is complicated: adherents slash 20–30% of daily calories but don't want to slip into malnutrition. The basics are:

- Eliminate simple sugars or flours.
- Eat plenty of green leafy and other vegetables.
- Select proteins and fat sources carefully.
- Get enough protein—but not too much.
- Strive for complete and balanced proteins.
- Eat monounsaturated fats and some Omega-3 fats; eliminate saturated fats.

**Bottom line:** Undertake the diet *only* under medical supervision. Dr. George Roth of the U.S. National Institute on Aging emphatically states that he "would not advocate it for most people who have trouble just staying on a prudent diet as it is."

### **Initiatives**

The task of dietitians at the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington is to help our long-lived residents maintain optimum nutrition and adequate caloric intake.

Dietitian Julia Mutter, RD, LDN, explains that she and her colleagues track weight, hydration and medical status for residents, and offer advice on nutrition and dietary supplements. Campus meals comply with Kosher laws and adhere to guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the American Dietetic Association, and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

According to Kristen Lichtenberg, who researched this article as a Hebrew Home/Sodexo Mid-Atlantic dietary intern, "It is imperative that dietitians understand popular diets so we may accurately and effectively counsel those in need of guidance."

## ***The risks of a calorie-restricted diet include:***

- ***Skeletal fragility***– Rapid weight loss can reduce bone mass.
- ***Cold sensitivity***– Tolerance to cold weather declines with decreased body fat and resultant lowering of body temperature.
- ***Compromised growth***– The diet impedes normal physical and mental growth in children, adolescents and young adults.
- ***Less protective “cushioning”***– Dieters are more vulnerable to high-impact blows. Sitting on hard surfaces is uncomfortable.
- ***Depleted energy reserves***– Dieters should carry emergency snacks.
- ***Acute hunger***– Cravings intensify and trigger food fantasies.
- ***Slower wound healing***– All wounds require greater care.

## ***In Perspective***

“...Anti-aging genes must have developed in primitive animals millions of years ago. (Scientists) think that organisms under stress, like not having enough to eat, activate a kind of cellular survival mechanism, which apparently helps fend off disease, and hence, the animals live longer. ”

~Tom Bearden, PBS Correspondent, 2005



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## ***Does Eating Less Boost Longevity?***

Restricting calorie intake to ensure a longer life and achieve optimum health is not as simple as it sounds! Does it work? Are there risks?

[www.smithlifecommunities.org](http://www.smithlifecommunities.org)