

DIABETES

GRAVE RISKS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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“High carb diets with lots of potatoes, or rice or pasta, sweet potatoes or pumpkin are very cheap to produce but they are actually detrimental to people who might not be terribly active,” she said. “I know of one little girl in a home having pizza every night and she needs somebody to accompany her when she goes out but they are often not available so she just sits and watches television and her weight is very hard to manage. So these are very real issues and it probably comes down to the families trying to support them as much as possible in a setting where resources are limited.”

According to the Harvard report, while myths abound when it comes to diabetes and food, there is no special “diabetes diet”. The basics of any good diet were the same, it argued: eat a well-balanced diet that emphasises fruit, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein, while watching total calories and getting regular exercise.

“Dieticians and other health professionals give the same dietary advice to people with diabetes as they do to most people, but with extra emphasis on controlling blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol values as close to normal as possible,” the report said.

But leading weight-loss scientist and author of *The Don't Go Hungry Diet*, Dr Amanda Sainsbury-Salis said many people on traditional diets still found it difficult to lose weight beyond a certain limit. This was because dieting triggered what she has dubbed “the famine reaction” in some people, a defence mechanism in the brain which results in extreme food cravings, lack of energy and hormonal imbalances.

“Traditionally the advice is to restrict kilojoules and keep going until you get to the weight you want but what we know is that as some people do lose weight, even if they are

still overweight or obese, that the body will react as if it is starving” she explained.

So far researchers have been unable to find a drug that will suppress this reaction without serious side effects but Dr Sainsbury-Salis said people could learn to manage the reaction by working with their bodies, not against them. She advocates incorporating periods of greater food intake into a weight loss plan to “deactivate” the famine reaction.

“Being hungry while being on a diet is just not on,” she said. “Research shows when people are losing weight slowly, say half a kilo to two kilos a month, there is less of this famine reaction happening.”

Dr Sainsbury-Salis said there was some debate on whether it was even advisable for elderly people to diet given weight loss was linked with loss of muscle mass and could lead to a poorer life span and quality of life for people aged 60 and over.

“When someone loses weight, they lose lean mass as well if they don't include some weight training. This means they're more likely to fall and fracture a hip,” she said.

“What has tended to come out in the research is that if you have metabolic complications from weight, for example a high risk of diabetes, then weight loss is recommended but if it is just a question of being a little bit overweight, it would seem it is not as important at that age.” 🙄

Comparison of Weight-Loss Diets with Different Compositions of Fat, Protein, and Carbohydrates, Sacks FM, Bray GA, Carey VJ, Smith SR, Ryan DH, Anton SD, McManus K, Champagne CM, Bishop LM, Laranjo N, Leboff MS, Rood JC, de Jonge L, Greenway FL, Loria CM, Obarzanek E, Williamson DA

There is intense debate about what types of diet are most effective for treating overweight - those that emphasize protein, those that emphasize carbohydrates, or those that emphasize fat. Several trials showed that low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets resulted in more weight loss over the course.

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***The Don't Go Hungry Diet* by Dr Sainsbury-Salis, rrp \$34.95, Bantam Australia, 2007**