Easier to eat fewer calories than to burn them!

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- A recent study of middle-aged Americans finds that reading food labels could be an important tool in the quest for weight loss.
- Data from 3,000 men and women, who participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and were tracked from 2002 to 2006, were used in the study.
- Among those trying to lose or control weight in the study, 74% were obese or overweight.
- Almost 56% of those who were trying to lose or control weight were reading food labels, but only 17% were participating in regular vigorous physical activity as well.
- Women were more likely than men to read food labels when they purchased a product for the first time; they were also more likely to lose weight.
- It is possible that food labels provide important diet-related information that individuals are seeking in order to successfully lose weight.
- The combination of regular exercise and reading labels is the best method to achieve weight loss.
- Those who read labels but do not exercise are more likely to lose weight than those who exercise but do not read labels.
- The adjacent figure shows that changing behavior from neither reading nor exercising to at least reading the food labels is statistically significantly related to weight loss.
- Similarly, changing behavior from reading but not exercising to doing both is statistically significantly related to weight loss.
- Bottom-line: It is difficult to lose weight and many are often unsuccessful. But reading food labels can increase one’s dietary knowledge and can improve the chances of weight loss.

Distribution of reading labels and exercising

Note: The probability of weight loss was calculated after rigorous statistical analysis of the data. Complete methodology and results are available from the author upon request.

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Contact the author, Bidisha Mandal, for a copy of the complete study. It was published as ‘Use of Food Labels as a Weight Loss Behavior’ in the Journal of Consumer Affairs, Fall 2010, Volume 44, Issue 3, pages 516-527.


Read a report of this study on King 5 News website http://www.king5.com/news/Reading-food-labels-can-help-you-lose-weight-102973554.html