

By Ruth Ostrow

Two contradictory positions keep looming in the headlines. On one side is the "anti-fat" lobby, which is continually highlighting fat-related diseases, decrying obesity in schools and pushing the position that "thin is in" for optimal health.

In the other ring, the "healthy fat" lobby emerging out of Europe is lambasting the trend to be thin, and is now making it mandatory for catwalk models to be a certain body weight and display clothes of a certain size, so as not to negatively influence young people's body image.

Meanwhile, we poor parents - the audience - are left trying to decipher fact from fad at a time when having "average" body weight doesn't seem good enough.

From my point of view, having spent the past five years attending longevity and health conferences all around the world, listening to countless professors speak on wellness, and digesting all the evidence for a lecture series I'm compiling, this is the conclusion I have reached.

It is very clear - based on cutting-edge scientific evidence - that the more we eat, the sooner we die, and the more prone we are to disease. Several academic papers submitted at last year's prestigious International Conference on Healthy Ageing and Longevity held in Brisbane showed that a very low calorie diet restores the digestive system (which uses most of our energy), staves off illness, helps the immune system fight degeneration, and keeps us young.

However, on the "healthy fat" side, Harvard associate professor Rose E. Frisch in her book *Female Fertility and the Body Fat Connection*, shows that when the body falls below a certain body mass index, menstruation stops or is delayed. A calorie-deprived hypothalamus is not thinking about reproduction.

Young women in particular have to maintain a certain percentage of body fat to make estrogen, stay fecund, and for all their hormones to be operating. It is therefore detrimental for young girls (and boys for that matter) to go against the laws of nature coming up to puberty and childbearing years by being too thin.

In my experience, for boomers and ageing X-ers, the choice to lower calorie intake is worth exploring. I feel amazing for my efforts. But for our kids? No way! Though a new report says our boomer brains are shrinking, we do have to use what little commonsense we have left to keep our kids healthy. That means not mistaking puppy fat for obesity. J

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