

I mentioned in a recent article that appearance garners a great deal more attention from the average person, than does health. Ok, so let's talk about an issue that covers both topics, but I am going to be straight with you and some of you may not like what I have to say. The topic is weight loss. There is a lot of misinformation about weight loss and I will try to clear up some of this. It is a big topic (pardon the pun) and it will take several weeks to cover it properly, so here goes.

This week I will cover the basics. We store fat in our bodies for survival reasons. In years past, most people went through times of famine or at least limited food supply. During those times, the body would rely on stored fat to provide energy to run the multiple functions of the body. This is somewhat like the new hybrid cars. Normally they run on battery power, but when the battery gets low, the gasoline engine fires up and runs the car.

With modern food storage and preservation techniques as well as global transportation to ship foods from regions where food grows year around to areas where it does not, famine is no longer an issue, at least in the nations that can afford these technologies. As a result, when our bodies store energy as fat, we don't go through the natural cycle of low food supply that burns off that extra fat.

The body needs energy to function and that energy comes from chemical compounds found in food. Carbohydrates or carbs, are chemical compounds that are most readily converted to energy. They come from plants in the form of sugar and starches. Energy is also derived from fat, which can come from animals or plants. Fat is also used as a building block in the body as all cells are lined with a layer of fat and nerves are insulated by fat. Protein is the primary building block of the body, but it can also be used as a source of energy. When needing energy, the body will first burn carbohydrate stores, then fat and finally muscle or protein.

Calories are a method of measuring the energy of a food substance. Anything that can be used by the body as energy will have a given amount of calories. The higher the calorie content of a food, the more potential energy it will contain. That energy can be used for immediate use by the body or it can be stored by the body for later use. Continued excess calorie consumption results in accumulated body fat.

In the rest of this series we will discuss why diets fail and some growing concerns about surgery for weight loss, as well as weight loss medications and supplements.