



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Calories in, calories out: healthful eating in 5 steps

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**Cinda Williams Chima** Special to The Plain Dealer

Sylvia nibbled glumly at her low-carb bagel. "Awful," she said. "But it has only 3 net carbs."

I looked up from my Greek salad. "What did you expect?" I replied. "Bagels are supposed to have carbohydrates."

"Cinda, I have to lose weight! I'm going on a cruise in two weeks."

I put down my fork. "Syl, you don't have to give up real bagels to lose weight."

"Fine," she declared, shoving the bagel back into the bag. "You're a dietitian. Any suggestions?"

As a registered dietitian, I have long counseled patients, one on one. Now I can converse with many of you at once. Our dialogue will be driven by your questions about nutrition, weight management, supplements and diets for conditions such as high blood pressure or cholesterol.

Most importantly, it is about food and health: cooking techniques, recipe adaptations, label reading and the many specialty foods on the market.

Recently, I left MetroHealth System to become an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at the University of Akron. For the record, I am married, a gardener, weaver, an avid reader and writer of fiction and mother of two teenage sons.

What I am not? I am not the food police. I got into this business because I love good food and love to cook. And because my family health history said I might pay for that some day.

As for Sylvia? Here's what I told her and what I'd tell most anyone about the key rules for a healthful diet, dieting and weight control.

1. It's all about the calories. Calories in, and calories out. In studies comparing low-carb and low-fat diets, successful dieters took in fewer calories or burned more through exercise. Look beyond carbs and fat grams. Instead, look at calories.

2. Get moving. Reducing calories is the best way to take weight off. Regular exercise (30 to 60 minutes most days) is the best way to keep it off. Get the OK from your doctor, then alternate exercises that build muscle and tone your body (raising your metabolism) with those that raise heart rate (for increased cardio fitness and calorie burning).

3. Make weight management a way of life. Most diets take off weight because they are a

change from the habits that initially put on the weight. Temporary changes don't produce permanent weight loss. Make changes you can stick with.

4. Boredom works. Studies show that we eat less from a limited menu. That's one reason extreme diets take off weight. There's only so much grapefruit or steak a body can eat. But as more and more "low-carbohydrate" foods (or low-fat foods) become available, variety and intake increases.

5. It's NOT all about weight. Diet affects health in many ways. High intakes of fruits, vegetables and whole grains are associated with lower risk of cancer, heart disease and bowel disease. Low-fat dairy products are linked to lower blood pressure, stronger bones and weight loss. Be wary of any diet that asks you to give up those benefits.

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