# Moderation is key: Why drastically cutting calories can backfire in weight loss



A recent report from the Mirror highlights the complexities surrounding weight loss, urging individuals to consider that consuming too few calories may hinder their efforts rather than help. Health experts suggest that many people mistakenly believe that eating less is the key to shedding pounds, but significant calorie restriction could actually stall their progress.

The National Health Service (NHS) states that establishing a calorie deficit is essential for healthy weight loss. For most men, this would involve reducing their daily caloric intake from 2,400 calories to approximately 1,900. Similarly, women would move from an average of 1,900 calories down to about 1,400. This method is generally effective, resulting in a weight loss of between 0.5 to 1 kilogram each week. Despite this, some individuals grow impatient, opting to further slash their daily calorie consumption in hopes of accelerating their results.

Health experts caution that pushing calorie limits too far could lead to unintended consequences. Drastically cutting caloric intake may trigger the body’s survival mechanisms, causing it to enter a "survival mode" where metabolism slows down in response to lower energy availability. This physiological change is a way for the body to conserve energy during what it perceives as a period of starvation, potentially leading to fat retention rather than loss.

Additionally, insufficient calorie intake raises the risk of nutrient deficiencies, which can lead to malnutrition. Symptoms of malnutrition may include chronic fatigue, weakness, and increased susceptibility to illnesses. The NHS emphasises that to prevent malnutrition, it is vital to consume a variety of foods that encompass all major food groups, including fruits, vegetables, starchy items like bread and rice, and protein sources such as meat, fish, and eggs.

For those concerned about signs of malnutrition, it is recommended to seek guidance from a general practitioner or a nutrition specialist for tailored advice and treatment options.

The article concludes by reiterating that a balanced and practical approach to weight loss should involve a reduction of approximately 500 calories per day, ensuring that individuals can lose weight while still receiving adequate nutrition. Furthermore, the NHS stresses the importance of including at least five portions of fruits and vegetables in the daily diet, as well as two servings of fish, one of which should be oily, to maintain overall health during weight loss efforts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/losing-weight-getting-started/> - This URL supports the claim that establishing a calorie deficit is essential for healthy weight loss and provides guidance on recommended daily caloric intake for men and women.
* [https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/weight-loss-guide/',](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/weight-loss-guide/%27%2C) - Corroborates the NHS's recommendation for a balanced approach to weight loss, including consuming a variety of foods across all major food groups.
* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35443107/> - This study highlights the importance of maintaining a balanced calorie intake during dieting, as drastic calorie restriction may not be more effective than moderate restriction in weight loss efforts.
* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-01673-9> - Discusses the physiological effects of severe calorie restriction, which can lead to decreased metabolism and potential malnutrition.
* <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/malnutrition> - Examines the risks of malnutrition due to insufficient calorie intake and provides symptoms such as fatigue and weakness, emphasizing the need for a balanced diet.