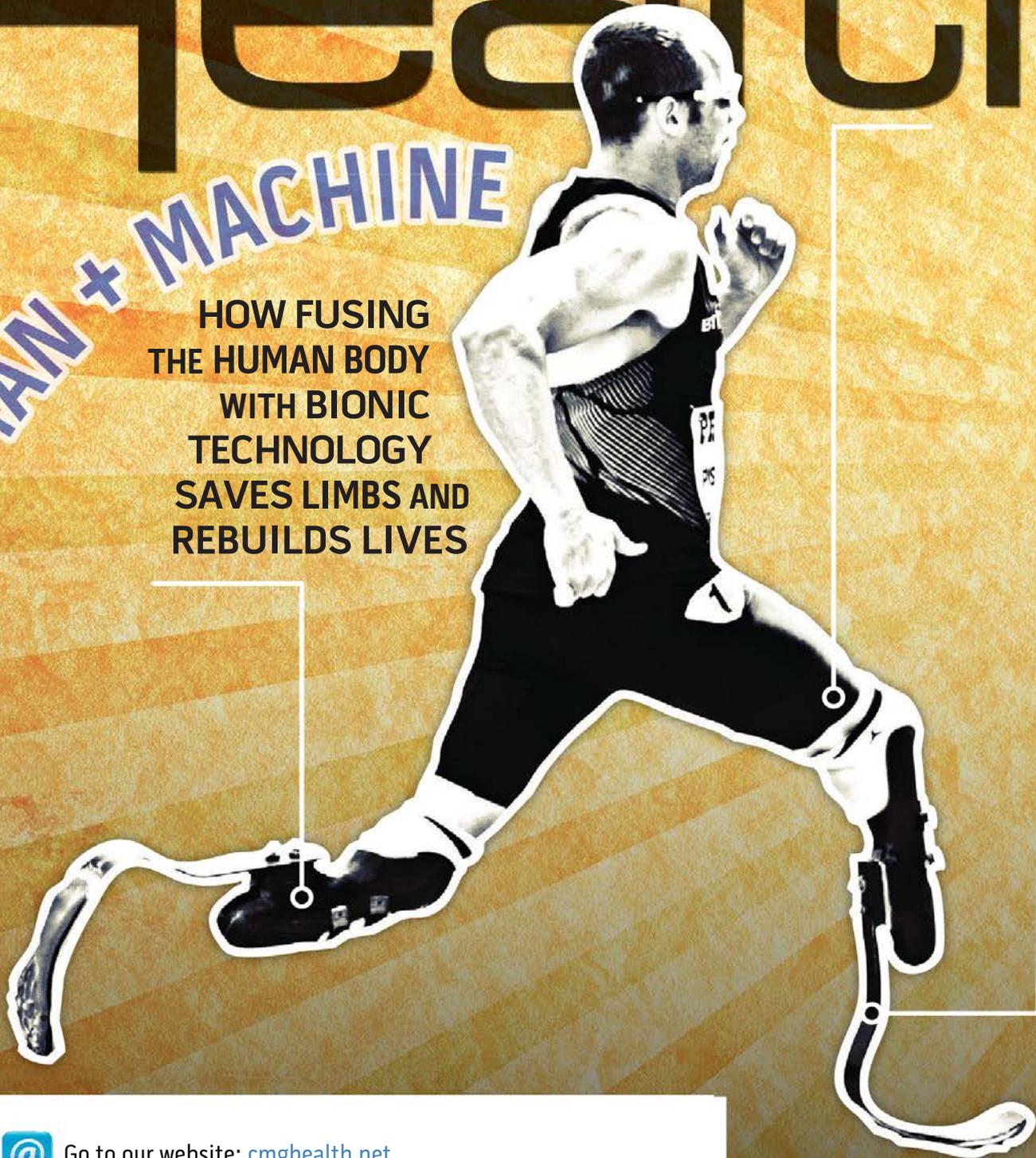


Community Health

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MAN + MACHINE

HOW FUSING THE HUMAN BODY WITH BIONIC TECHNOLOGY SAVES LIMBS AND REBUILDS LIVES



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THE Calorie Balance

Tip the scales in your favor this holiday by understanding what makes you gain weight

BY CLARE WALTERS

Every dieter's dream is to find the secret to losing weight and keeping it off. And the fight to fend off pounds ramps up around the holidays. You're feeling warm and fuzzy, celebrating with friends and family. So why not have a second—or third—plate of cheesy potatoes and stuffing? But you might want to skip the spuds. A study released by the Harvard School of Public Health now tells us what foods can help us lose and gain weight, and why you don't have to give up dairy and nuts.

GET SATISFACTION

The study followed more than 120,000 men and women over the course of 20 years, to pinpoint what foods contributed to weight loss and weight gain. What they found may not shock you—yogurt, nuts, fruits, whole grains and vegetables play a part in weight loss, while potato chips, potatoes, sugar-sweetened beverages, red meat and processed meats make you gain pounds. But it's not just the amount of calories a food contains that may make the difference. It's the amount of satisfaction your body gets from the food.

Megan Madden, a New York-based registered dietitian, says while weight-friendly foods help dieters achieve their goals, it's more important for them to be mindful of how much they eat and how they prepare foods.

"I generally don't like to say there are good or bad foods for weight loss," she says. "If you overeat anything, it could become a bad food. Or it could be the preparation that makes it become a bad food."

The researchers found there are categories of food that may increase or decrease your chances of gaining weight over time. Dairy and potatoes sometimes are demonized by dieters. And while the study found starchy spuds deserve their reputation, dairy is not the weighty culprit many think it to be. The science behind this anti-potato, pro-yogurt recommendation is complex, Madden says.

"The mix of carbohydrates and protein in dairy products helps keep blood sugar levels level, and helps ward off hunger," she says.

Yogurt and most low-fat dairy products also enhance metabolism at the cellular level. And they're rich in vitamin D, which helps break down fat. Though you may expect to be more satisfied by heavy potatoes, they actually don't keep you feeling full for very long, because the starch in spuds breaks down quickly.

But Madden says potatoes can have their place in the dinner lineup. "They don't necessarily need to be excluded from our diets because they have a lot of good calories," she says. "Potatoes get a bad rap because they're usually eaten fried, or topped with high-calorie toppings."

THE TIPPING POINT

To find success in weight loss, you have to get your calories from the right places, says Cathy Alessi, a registered dietitian and nutrition specialist at the Food and Nutrition Information Center in Maryland.

"Those successful at weight loss achieve success because they pay attention to calorie balance," she says. "To achieve weight loss, people should increase nutrient-dense foods by eating more whole grains, fruits and vegetables."

Nutrient-dense foods, sometimes referred to as "super foods," provide eaters with a host of vitamins, minerals and other substances that are low in calories and boost the body's efficiency.

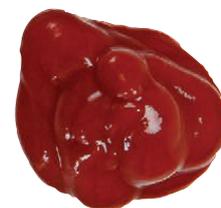
Turkey sidekicks like spinach, kale, carrots, bell peppers and radishes serve up tons of vitamins, minerals and other micro-nutrients you need to build a nutrient-dense meal, Alessi says.

Losing weight involves more than maintaining a certain daily caloric level, but concentrating those calories in nutrient-dense foods. Americans tend to struggle with weight by consuming a majority of calories from sugary drinks and foods with added sugar, Alessi says. By refocusing your caloric lens onto foods such as those outlined in the Harvard study, you can stay satisfied and lose or maintain weight.

READ BETWEEN THE LABELS

The top five sources of calories among adults age 19 and older are grain-based desserts, yeast breads, chicken and chicken-mixed dishes, soda and energy drinks, and alcoholic beverages, according to the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Registered dietitian Megan Madden says you should read labels to find out where your calories are coming from. "There's a misconception that low-fat or sugar-free products are always lower in calories," she says. "Even if a label reads 25% fewer calories, it still might be bad," and push the bounds of your daily allotment. These tricky foods can rack up the calories, too.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Protein bars | Ketchup |
| Salad dressings | Hard candy |
| Fruit juice | Coffee creamer |
| Soda | Restaurant salads |
| Mayonnaise | |





YOU GAIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME

According to a study by the Harvard School of Public Health, foods that contribute to weight gain include:

- Potato chips
- Potatoes
- Sugar-sweetened beverages
- Red meat
- Processed meats

Foods that contribute to weight loss:

- Yogurt
- Nuts
- Fruits
- Whole grains
- Vegetables

The mix of carbohydrates and protein in dairy products helps keep blood sugar levels level, and helps ward off hunger.

DIETITIAN MEGAN MADDEN

YOU BETTER THINK

Little changes can really re-balance your calorie-nutrient swing, so think about simple substitutions. “Eat whole wheat over white bread, avocado over mayo, and olive oil over butter,” Madden says. “It might take a while to train your taste buds, but it’s important.”

Simply being a more mindful eater can kick-start weight loss. Cook at home instead of dining out. Don’t eat in front of the TV. Chew each bite longer. Don’t place serving platters on the table, so it’s not so easy to shovel more onto your plate. If you are tempted to get a second helping, wait 15 minutes after you finish your first helping before you decide.

“Take your time and enjoy your food,” she says.

Developing these habits, along with a focus on nutrient-rich foods, puts dieters on a path to a real lifestyle change, which Madden says is necessary to sustain a weight-loss plan and then keep off the pounds.

“People are grasping for anything to make a very difficult weight-loss process easier, but it really comes down to working out more and eating less,” Madden says. “If there were a magic pill or supplement, then everyone would be on it. But there’s not. It really is a lifestyle choice, and it’s long term, especially if you’re going to sustain weight loss.” 

QUICK TIP

Kick-start your weight loss by eating more spinach, kale, carrots, bell peppers, radishes and other foods that serve up tons of vitamins, minerals and micronutrients.

