

# Why we eat (too much)

by Dr andrew jenkinson · Language: EN

Summary by booksummaryai.com — <https://booksummaryai.com/country/en/why-we-eat-too-much>

## Overview

Dr. Andrew Jenkinson's "Why We Eat (Too Much)" challenges the conventional wisdom that obesity is simply a matter of willpower and calorie balance. Instead, Jenkinson, a bariatric surgeon, argues that our bodies have a 'set point' for weight, which is primarily regulated by hormones, particularly insulin and leptin. He posits that the modern diet, rich in refined carbohydrates and processed foods, disrupts this hormonal balance, leading to insulin resistance and an elevated set point, making sustained weight loss incredibly difficult through traditional 'eat less, move more' approaches.

The book delves into the science behind this set point theory, explaining how our bodies actively defend their fat stores and resist attempts to lose weight if the underlying hormonal signals are not addressed. Jenkinson draws on his extensive clinical experience, scientific research, and evolutionary biology to illustrate why diets often fail and why certain foods are particularly problematic. He provides a new framework for understanding obesity, shifting the focus from individual failure to a biological malfunction driven by environmental and dietary factors. The book ultimately offers practical, evidence-based strategies to reset the body's set point, emphasizing whole foods, reduced carbohydrate intake, and lifestyle adjustments to achieve lasting metabolic health and weight control.

## Key Takeaways

- Understand that your body has a 'set point' for weight, which is largely controlled by hormones, not just willpower or calorie counting.
- Recognize that refined carbohydrates and sugars are primary drivers of insulin resistance and an elevated weight set point.
- Prioritize whole, unprocessed foods, focusing on protein, healthy fats, and non-starchy vegetables to improve hormonal balance.
- Consider intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating as a tool to reduce insulin levels and help reset your set point.
- Be skeptical of the 'calories in, calories out' model as the sole explanation for weight gain; hormonal regulation plays a more significant role.
- Address lifestyle factors like sleep, stress, and physical activity, as they also influence hormonal health and weight management.

- Focus on metabolic health and reducing insulin resistance rather than just chasing a number on the scale for sustainable weight loss.

## Chapter Summaries

### **The Obesity Epidemic: Why We're Getting Fatter**

This chapter introduces the global obesity crisis and argues that current advice, primarily focused on calorie restriction and exercise, is failing. Jenkinson highlights the frustration of patients who struggle despite their best efforts, suggesting a deeper biological mechanism is at play beyond simple energy balance. He sets the stage for challenging conventional wisdom and exploring the body's complex weight regulation systems.

### **The Calorie Myth: Why 'Eat Less, Move More' Isn't Enough**

Jenkinson debunks the simplistic 'calories in, calories out' model, explaining its limitations in addressing chronic weight gain. He illustrates how the body doesn't treat all calories equally and how different macronutrients elicit distinct hormonal responses. This chapter emphasizes that focusing solely on calorie numbers overlooks the crucial role of food quality and its impact on metabolism and satiety.

### **Hormones at Play: Insulin, Leptin, and Ghrelin**

This section dives deep into the key hormones that regulate appetite, metabolism, and fat storage. Insulin is presented as the master hormone for fat storage, while leptin signals satiety and ghrelin stimulates hunger. Jenkinson explains how chronic high insulin levels lead to insulin resistance and leptin resistance, effectively trapping the body in a fat-storing state and raising its weight set point.

### **The Set Point Theory: Your Body's Weight Thermostat**

Jenkinson introduces the concept of the body's 'set point' – a genetically and environmentally influenced weight range that the body actively defends. He explains how this set point can be raised by modern dietary patterns, making it incredibly difficult to lose weight below it. Understanding the set point is crucial for developing strategies that work with, rather than against, the body's natural regulatory systems.

### **The Modern Diet: How Processed Foods Disrupt Our Biology**

This chapter critically examines the impact of the modern Western diet, particularly refined carbohydrates, sugars, and processed fats, on our hormonal health. Jenkinson explains how these foods drive insulin spikes, inflammation, and gut dysbiosis, all contributing to an elevated set point. He argues that the convenience and palatability of these foods make them particularly insidious drivers of obesity.

### **Resetting Your Set Point: Practical Strategies**

Jenkinson moves from theory to practical application, outlining strategies to lower the body's set point. Key recommendations include reducing refined carbohydrates, increasing protein and healthy fats, and incorporating periods of fasting. He emphasizes that consistent, long-term changes in eating patterns are necessary to signal to the body that a lower weight is its new normal.

### **Food Choices: What to Eat for Metabolic Health**

This chapter provides specific guidance on food selection. It advocates for a diet rich in whole, unprocessed foods, including plenty of non-starchy vegetables, quality protein sources, and healthy fats. Jenkinson details which foods to avoid (sugars, refined grains, processed oils) and which to embrace, offering practical advice for grocery shopping and meal planning to support metabolic health.

### **Beyond Food: Sleep, Stress, and Exercise**

Jenkinson expands on the holistic nature of weight management, discussing the critical roles of sleep, stress reduction, and appropriate exercise. He explains how poor sleep and chronic stress can elevate cortisol and insulin, hindering weight loss, while certain types of exercise can improve insulin sensitivity. These lifestyle factors are presented as essential complements to dietary changes.

### **Sustaining Change: Long-Term Strategies for Success**

The final chapters focus on maintaining weight loss and metabolic health over the long term. Jenkinson stresses the importance of consistency, patience, and understanding that the journey is not linear. He encourages readers to view their new eating habits as a permanent lifestyle change rather than a temporary diet, fostering resilience and self-compassion.

## **Themes**

- Hormonal regulation
- Set point theory
- Insulin resistance
- Metabolic health
- Processed food impact
- Sustainable weight loss

## **Notable Quotes**

- "The problem is not that we are eating too much because we are greedy, but that we are eating too much because our body's set point has been pushed higher." — Explaining the core premise that obesity is a biological issue, not a moral failing or lack of willpower.

- "Insulin is the most powerful fat-storage hormone in the body. If you want to lose weight, you must lower your insulin levels." — Highlighting the central role of insulin in fat metabolism and the primary target for effective weight loss strategies.
- "The 'calories in, calories out' model is an accounting system, not a biological one. It fails to explain why different foods have different effects on our bodies." — Critiquing the simplistic energy balance model and advocating for a more nuanced, hormonally-driven understanding of weight.
- "Your body has a 'set point' for fatness, a weight it will defend vigorously. To lose weight sustainably, you must lower this set point." — Introducing and emphasizing the crucial concept of the set point and the necessity of resetting it for lasting results.
- "The modern diet, rich in refined carbohydrates and sugars, is the primary driver of insulin resistance and an elevated set point." — Identifying the main culprits in the current food environment that contribute to the obesity epidemic.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is *Why we eat (too much)* about?

The book argues that obesity is primarily a hormonal issue, not a simple calorie imbalance. It introduces the 'set point' theory, explaining how our bodies defend a certain weight, and how modern diets, especially refined carbohydrates, elevate this set point by disrupting hormones like insulin. It offers strategies to reset this set point for sustainable weight loss.

### Is *Why we eat (too much)* worth reading?

Yes, for anyone struggling with weight loss or interested in the science of obesity. Dr. Jenkinson provides a compelling, evidence-based alternative to conventional dieting advice, offering a deeper understanding of the body's weight regulation. It's particularly valuable for those who have found 'eat less, move more' ineffective.

### How does *Why we eat (too much)* end?

Spoiler: The book concludes by emphasizing that sustainable weight loss and metabolic health require a long-term commitment to dietary and lifestyle changes that lower the body's set point. It reinforces the importance of consistency, patience, and understanding the biological mechanisms at play, rather than viewing it as a temporary diet or a test of willpower.

### Who should read *Why we eat (too much)*?

This book is ideal for individuals who have tried numerous diets without lasting success, those interested in the scientific basis of weight gain beyond calories, and healthcare professionals looking for a new perspective on obesity. It's for anyone seeking a comprehensive understanding of why modern diets make us gain weight and how to reverse it.

### **How long does it take to read Why we eat (too much)?**

On average, it takes approximately 6 to 7 hours to read "Why we eat (too much)" at a typical reading speed of 250 words per minute.