

# The 30 Pound Club

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## Rethinking Weight Loss

The British medical journal *Lancet* just dedicated a series of articles to a single topic: the obesity pandemic. One of the articles that got a lot of press was titled “Quantification of the effect of energy imbalance on bodyweight.” While it seems that article would be about as interesting as watching paint dry (and it was), what the author said in the press provoked my interest.

The typical recommendation for weight loss is to reduce 500 calories per day. In some cases, it combines energy output (exercise) and energy restriction to equal 500 calories, but it’s a standard recommendation from just about every leading health organization in the world. The idea is that 500 calories every day for a week would be equal to the calories in a pound of fat, which is about 3,500 calories. Not so, says Dr. Kevin Hall, the lead author. Actually what he said was, “Let me be very clear. This is wrong. This does not happen.”

The article talks about why the current recommendations are wrong. The authors’ primary reasons are that resting metabolic rate changes as we lose weight, and there are changes in physical activity that take place as we lose weight. The entire article is so fascinating that I’m going to write about it for the next few Saturday messages. There are some basic physiologic principles that I want to explain as I review the article.

So is this message just a tease? No. The point of the article is to introduce a formula which the authors say will be more accurate for estimating how weight loss will occur. There’s a link on the *Lancet* website that allows you to calculate how you will lose weight through changes in your diet and physical activity. I did it and the results were very surprising, so I’m going to ask you to do it as well.

Just go to this link—[www.thelancet.com/series/obesity](http://www.thelancet.com/series/obesity)—and you’ll see the calculator on the left side of the page. Click on it, and it will ask you to run the Applet. I did it on two of my computers, a Mac and a PC, and it worked fine. You can get an overview of how to do it, or you can just dive in; it won’t save your results so either write them down or press the “print screen” button.

The results I got were amazing, and I’ll share them with you in next week’s 30 Pound Club Message. But let me know what it says for you and what you think of it. Send comments to [30poundclub@drchet.com](mailto:30poundclub@drchet.com) or post to the 30 Pound Club group in Facebook.

Is the new thinking correct? Maybe—maybe not. I’ll give you my thoughts starting in the Saturday message.

One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

**Reference:** *Lancet*. 2011;378:826-837.

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