

The Obesity Code: Unlocking the Secrets of Weight Loss

Book review by Connie Jasinskas, M.Sc.

Dr Jason Fung, an endocrinologist, specializes in the treatment of people with diabetes, kidney and liver disease.

Likes: Dr. Fung takes a refreshing approach to this sensitive issue. He removes the blame from obese individuals by substantiating the role of genetics, hormones, and our current food culture. I really enjoyed his use of relevant human research to support his statements and guidelines. He is not selling a diet. He reviews popular diets. He offers clear, simple guidelines to follow his suggestions for successful, permanent weight loss.

Dislikes: There is a lot of research detail provided in the first 18 chapters. This may be a *like* for those who want relevant proof. It may lose some readers/listeners who want to cut to the chase and learn what they should be doing. The narrator on the Audible version of the book mis-pronounces quite a few terms, which I found a little annoying.

Here's a brief synopsis of the content:

- Chapters 1 – 18 are not easy reading. Much of the information is a summary of research studies that support our understanding of nutrition and digestive bio-chemistry. However, if you want detail and proof, this section of the book offers an overview of:
 - Why **all diets work** short-term; **all diets fail** long-term.
 - Why diet + exercise don't work.
 - During dieting, the body creates a higher set-point and works to re-gain the weight.
 - How various foods are demonized to sell the next book or program.
 - He describes the typical pathway of dieting (with or without exercise), followed by a plateau, and eventual re-gaining of weight lost. Thereafter, it becomes more difficult to lose weight the next time, and so on.
 - **Why insulin resistance is the key to obesity.**
 - **Obesity begets obesity – the earlier and longer someone is obese, the harder it is to change to a different state of being.**
 - How insulin resistance is created by our current society's propensity for over-processed foods and perpetual snacking.
 - **In short, overweight people aren't slothful gluttons.** Their bodies have developed insulin resistance because of **what** (over-processed, sugar-laden foods) and **when** (too often) we eat.
- Chapters 19, 20, and the appendices that follow, offer Dr. Fung's solutions. References are given regarding relevant research found in previous chapters. If you prefer to skip to the solution, start at chapter 19.

Summary of advice based on nutritional research data:

- Obesity is a multi-factorial process, and different for each person. Contributing factors are genetics and hormones. Influencers are: stress management, wrong types of food, poor sleep habits, genetics, and constant snacking (**timing** of food consumption).
- Permanent weight loss is a two step process – weight loss **and** reduction of insulin resistance.
- The key: **the type and quantity of foods eaten, as well as the TIMING of eating vs fasting.**
- There is no one-single cause of obesity (excess calories, excesses in any of the macro-nutrients, insulin resistance...). All these factors cause hormonal pathways that lead to insulin-resistance.
- **Advice on what to eat:** eliminate sugars and refined grains (processed foods); avoid fast-foods, colouring and additives. Eat more fibre, more vegetables, more home-made foods; eat organic, and whole, un-processed foods.
 - **Reduce consumption of added sugars and processed foods** (remember sugar is a hidden ingredient in almost all processed food, condiments, etc)
 - **Moderate protein intake** is recommended.
 - **Consume natural, healthy fats:** avocado, nuts, virgin oils, animal fats...
 - **Fibre** (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, flax, chia, beans, popcorn, nuts, oatmeal, pumpkin seeds) **and vinegar** are protective factors against insulin-resistance.

Advice on WHEN to eat: adopt a practice of intermittent fasting.

- Diets fail because of their constancy.
 - The body will reduce energy expenditure to respond to constant low-calorie diets.
 - **The intermittency of fasting breaks this cycle.**
 - Feasting occasionally is OK, but should be followed by intermittent fasting.
 - **Stop snacking!** Eat 2 – 3 meals per day, and nothing between meals.
- Intermittent fasting changes insulin-resistance.

The author supports the health benefits of fasting and offers strategies for success.

- A schedule is offered for 24 – 36-hour fasts, interspersed throughout the week.
- Guidelines are given to support fasting and stress management.

In summary: Dr. Fung is not writing a diet book. He reviews various diets and offers research-based conclusions about why diets work and why they fail. He does not vilify obese people – just the opposite. I think this is useful reading for anyone struggling with appetite, weight loss and associated health concerns.