

"What the heck is getting my HEC in Check all about?" (HEC = HUNGER, ENERGY, CRAVINGS)

Getting our "HEC in Check" is an important anchor for us to navigate together as we get your body aligned for long-term fat-loss.

Becoming aware of these 3 biofeedback signs (hunger, energy and cravings) on a day-to-day hour-by-hour basis gives us a fabulous sense for what's going on with the dozens of hormones that factor into the body's ability to burn-fat and help the body function properly.

If cravings are wild, it's likely cortisol is high for some reason. If hunger is wild, it's likely ghrelin and leptin, hunger hormones that work behind the scenes, are misfiring for a reason. If energy has tanked, it's likely insulin and cortisol imbalances are to blame. These could be due to lifestyle choices (do we go on that walk or lay on the couch crushing Netflix series?) or metabolic tendencies (how responsive is your metabolism?).

If we are having wild cravings, if hunger is out of control, if our mood and energy have tanked; we are getting signs that our body needs something from us before it's able to do what we want it to. ;)

Sometimes, we need to undo some of the damage we've done from over-exercising and over-dieting. In some cases, this may take a while. Other times, our tweaks are met with success very quickly and we're able to not just look but feel better, too. Mixed burners tend to have the fastest success getting HEC in check.

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As we reviewed in the Starter Guide, food is not just FUEL but also information to our body about what happens next.

Dieters often judge their food intake solely on the caloric values rather than the information this food relays to the body. A caloric-deficit (burning more calories than we take in) is key to fat-loss but it's not the whole equation. It's actually the quality of our foods that I want us to focus on most.

The type of food, the timing of food, and ok, yes, how much of it we eat...it all sends messages to our body. Messages like,

"I'm satisfied and full"

"I'm full and will stay full longer"

"I'm in a good (or bad) mood"

"I'm energized (or I want to lay on the couch)"

"My cravings are balanced (or wild)".

Everything we eat sends signals to our body and sets off a chain of events.

So, what and how much we eat for breakfast affects what and how much we eat for lunch...and further, what and how much we eat for dinner. It's a cumulative affect and it all has to do with the signals our hormones are getting from what we choose to eat (along with how we chose to move and spend our days).

In a perfect world, our diet is made up of delicious and nutritious foods, that create a caloric deficit while keeping our HEC in Check...thus, a way of eating we can sustain for some time.

I could dig deep and maintain a caloric deficit for few weeks but eventually, if I'm not paying attention to my HEC, I'm going to burn out because we can only be hungry and resisting all the cravings or so long. So, keeping our HEC in Check is not only chemically important to keep the metabolism healthy but it's psychologically necessary for maintaining a fat-loss diet.

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Let's talk about quality again for a second.

Let's consider the difference between a chocolate chip muffin and a chicken breast (skin on) and the messages they send to the body:

Chocolate Muffin: 250 calories, 20 g fat, 18 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein.
Chicken Breast: 251 calories, 11 g fat, 2 g carbohydrate, 37 g protein.

While the caloric value is very similar, which do you think might give you sustained energy, stabilize your cravings and balance your hunger more appropriately say if you were going into a morning of meetings? The chicken breast, right?

Now, because of the high protein content of the chicken breast, we likely wouldn't be able to overeat chicken. On the other hand, muffins may satisfy us and give us a pop of energy but for only a short period of time, due to it's virtually non-existent protein but high sugar content. The muffin would also lead to way compensatory cravings later.

So, the people on IG saying "#IIFYM" (if it fits your macros) or "I had 800 calories to spare today so I ate an ice-cream sundae!") are missing a bit of the point...what's going to happen to your hormones after that meal? Will you wake up starving and bloated? Will you be craving more sugar making it harder to reach for your egg-whites over the stack of pancakes?

This is the reason why we're not exclusively focused on calorie counting when we balance our hormones - we're really focused on eating more of the right foods, more often and noticing how our sleep, mood, hunger, energy and cravings are affected positively.

I'm often asked right off the bat what kind of 'diet' this will be; Low-fat? Low-Carb? Keto?

The answer is that it's a unique fat-loss diet and it totally depends. Which means, I

want to help you find the mix of macronutrients (fat, protein, carbs) that give YOU ongoing hormonal balance.

As we go, your documentation of your meal frequency, quality and their effect on your HEC has a lot to do with how well we can dial things in for sustainability and results.

Pay attention to your hunger, energy and cravings levels at all times during the day; when you wake, before and after meals, before and after workouts, at different points in the day. Try to start to notice trends and let's talk about those trends on our calls.

As a standard practice, I ask my clients to track their HEC on a scale from 1-10 (1 the worst, 10 the best) but I welcome any/all notes that apply such as what you're craving and when!