What is Leptin?

Leptin is a hormone made from fat tissue and stored fat. It says to your brain, “This is how much fat I currently have in my body.” When leptin levels are low, it tells your body to seek out food and store fat.

What Can Happen if My Leptin Levels are Off?

After being consistently exposed to high levels of leptin, your body can become leptin resistant (a condition similar to insulin resistance). When the leptin signal isn’t functioning properly, you can overproduce leptin, which can lead to leptin resistance. That’s one reason why you eat…and eat…and eat, but your brain never gets the memo to stop.\(^1\)

How Do I Know if I’m Leptin Resistant?

Leptin resistance takes on different forms: carrying too much weight, constant cravings, snacking throughout the day, or a diet high in sugar and grains. Also, excess fat in the midsection can be an indicator of leptin resistance and seems to have a major effect on overall leptin levels in the blood.\(^2,3\)

What Else Might I Be Feeling?

Often times, leptin resistance brings additional health issues such as high blood sugar/insulin, increased stress and poor sleep hygiene. Leptin’s daily rhythm is opposite to that of cortisol.\(^4\)

So How Much Leptin Should I Have?

Leptin levels can vary throughout the day and can fluctuate with weight. In general, 4-25mcg/L is a healthy leptin range for women and 1-9mcg/L is a healthy range for men. That said, women typically have higher levels of leptin in their blood compared to men, and because fat cells produce leptin in proportion to their size, obese people also have very high levels of leptin compared to their thinner counterparts.\(^5,6\) Also, leptin concentrations in the blood are typically lowest mid-day and highest after midnight, so the amount of leptin you have can vary throughout the day and with weight.\(^7\)
How Do I Reset my Leptin and Become a “Leptinista?”

To maintain an optimal level of leptin, you should:

• Eat plenty of protein, healthy fat and fiber
• Enjoy three meals/day, spaced four to six hours apart
• Avoid snacking
• Exercise every day
• Eight to ten hours of restful sleep

All of this will increase weight loss—and help reset leptin signaling.

Another way to reset your leptin levels is to remove fructose from your diet, which will help those who have blood sugar issues or a fasting blood sugar number greater than 86.

How Long Does It Take to Reset Leptin... and How Will I Know When It Happens?

Resetting may take anywhere from six weeks to several months, depending on the amount on how much damage there has been to your “leptin meter” and how diligent you are at following a leptin repair protocol. When leptin is balanced, you may notice better skin, reduced mood swings, a lack of cravings and a reduction in appetite—not to mention an increase in energy levels and better sleep. That makes balancing leptin pretty attractive, doesn’t it?

How Important is the Rule of Eating 30 Minutes After Waking up? Can I Extend It to an Hour?

The answer to this important question is the same as other detox rules: Imperfect action trumps perfect inaction. If 30 minutes is too stressful and you can’t get it done, then do 45 minutes. Though we give guidelines for the greatest success, you should work out what’s best for yourself and the way your body responds.

How Important is Not Eating Between Meals?

Snacking between meals causes your insulin to spike, which keeps your leptin levels elevated. In some cases, that can lead to leptin resistance. By allowing four to five hours between meals, you allow your body to reset your leptin response and help avoid leptin resistance.

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1 from Dr. Sara’s Huffington Post article on Leptin
3 from Dr. Sara’s Huffington Post article on Leptin
5 Gunnars, Kris. Leptin and leptin resistance: Everything you need to know. Authority Nutrition. 2014.
About Dr. Sara

Dr. Sara Gottfried, M.D. teaches women how to balance their hormones naturally so they can rock their mission. She is a Harvard-educated physician, speaker and New York Times bestselling author of The Hormone Cure (check out the new paperback from Simon & Schuster, 2014). She is board-certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and is regularly featured in magazines such as O Magazine, Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Redbook, and Yoga Journal. Known for effortlessly blending the seriousness of women’s health with playfulness and humor, Dr. Sara’s mission is to help women lose weight plus feel great and vital from their cells to their soul. Work with her online by joining her semi-annual detox for 21 days! Learn more at www.saragottfriedmd.com.

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