

Are diet 'cheat days' ever a good idea

People diet for many reasons, including to lose weight, gain muscle or improve sporting performance. The requirements of these diets can be worlds apart, but there's one thing they often share: 'cheat days'.

A cheat day is a scheduled break in a diet. The concept emerged around the same time as 'clean eating', and is based on the idea that a dieter can 'cheat' for one day a week as long as they eat to their diet plan for the remaining six days.

Two main motivations for #cheatmeals are identified. First is the theory that cheat days boost your *metabolism*, causing you to burn more calories. Second is the theory that cheat days help you stick to your diet. The theory goes that cheat days help keep your leptin (the hormone responsible for suppressing feelings of hunger) levels up. Both these ideas suggest that cheat meals should be planned into a diet rather than being a spur-of-the-moment thing.

metabolism 新陈代谢

However, wanting a cheat day can also be a "reflection of a very restrictive and unenjoyable diet", says Emma Randall, a mindful eating consultant. Randall suggests a moderate weight-loss diet that doesn't leave you craving cheat days is likely to be more beneficial for physical and mental health than a very restrictive diet with cheat days.

A review suggests the most effective strategy for long-term weight-loss and heart health is a healthy dietary pattern that's compatible with what you like to eat and your lifestyle. It's about finding what works for you.