

My History with Popcorn



I once went on a two week “popcorn diet.” What a dumb idea that was. My goal was to fit into a dress that was paper thin. They used to call it an “envelope dress” because if you folded it up, it would fit into an envelope. The dress was red. It was practically see-through. In my defense, it was the 80’s – enough said.

The diet worked like this; eat nothing all day. Then make a huge bowl of popcorn and eat it with just salt as a topping and accompany that with large amounts of diet soda. Like I said, it was a really dumb idea; but not for the reasons I thought.

I was under the impression that popcorn was a low calorie snack. I thought it was good for me. This is what the popcorn people will tell you:

“It’s hard to believe a snack food that tastes so good can actually be good for you! With suggestions from organizations such as the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the American Dental Association (ADA) and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (A.N.D.), there’s no doubt popcorn is a perfectly sensible snack to fit into any meal/fitness plan.

Air-popped popcorn has only 31 calories per cup; oil-popped

popcorn has only 55 calories per cup.

When lightly buttered, popcorn contains about 133 calories per cup.

Popcorn is a whole grain, making it a good-for-you food.

Popcorn provides energy-producing complex carbohydrates.

Popcorn contains fiber, providing roughage the body needs in the daily diet.

Popcorn is naturally low in fat and calories.

Popcorn has no artificial additives or preservatives, and is sugar-free.

Popcorn is ideal for between meal snacking since it satisfies and doesn't spoil the appetite.

3 cups of popcorn equal one serving from the grain group."

What they will also admit when you get to the nutritional information is that popcorn contains 22 grams of carbohydrates per OUNCE! That's a ticket to Fatville! Carbohydrates convert to sugar during digestion. Adding that much sugar to your system in one swoop will cause your pancreas to go into overdrive and convert all that extra sugar to fat. It has no choice.

I didn't get fat eating popcorn for two weeks because I didn't eat anything else, but I sure didn't do my digestive system any favors. Truth be told, it made me terribly ill. The first few meals of real food that I ate after the popcorn fiasco were a complete disaster. I'll spare you the digestive details.

I was not smart but I was desperate to fit into that dress.

During this same time began noticing that when I went to the

movies I generally walked out feeling really crappy. I usually didn't eat much (if anything) in the morning, and when I went to an afternoon movie I ordered a medium popcorn and a Diet Coke. That was what I considered a perfect diet lunch for me, to fill up on popcorn and drink diet soda.

Years later, this was still happening. I'd go see a movie and leave the theater feeling lousy. So I decided to investigate. I've always been an analytic person; some people would say I'm analytic on steroids. My close friends call me a regular Sherlock Holmes. Once I am curious about something, I do my homework. Why did I consistently feel like garbage when I left the movie theatre? What was going on with me?

I started with the process of elimination. I already knew I was sensitive, if not allergic, to caffeine. Diet Coke is chock full of caffeine. When you order a medium soda in a movie theatre complex you get the equivalent to a very large soda. They can't charge an arm and a leg for a soft drink and hand you a regular amount so they give you what feels like a gallon of soda.

The first thing I did was cut out the soda. I thought I was getting too much caffeine and that was making me ill. I started drinking sparkling water with my bowl of popcorn.

I still walked out feeling ill after the movie was over.

I popped popcorn at home. I did it with an air popper. I didn't get sick eating air popped popcorn when I drank sparkling water to go with it. So what gives?

It had to be the oil. The stuff they used to pop popcorn at the movie theatre was what made me sick.

I quit eating popcorn at the movies. It was hard at first. I smelled everyone else's popcorn. Even my husband sitting next to

me was downing popcorn by the handful. I just learned I had to sit there and enjoy my movie even though I could not enjoy the popcorn.

Since then I have learned not to eat popcorn because although it sounds like a great treat when you read what the popcorn people tell you about popcorn, I now know the carbohydrates in popcorn are a culprit that contributed to my weekend weight gain. There were certainly other things too, but popcorn was one thing wrapped in innocence that really was undermining my health and wellbeing.

Let's compare the crunch of popcorn to the crunch of an apple.

Remember I said that popcorn has 22 grams of carbohydrates per ounce. That's 6 grams per cup. I'm going to make a leap here and assume that most folks consume about 8 cups of popcorn before they stop eating it; or at least take a break. That's 48 grams of carbohydrates. Really bad.

Take a nice-sized apple. The apple is 85% water and 12% carbohydrates. That's about 21 grams of carbs, which is less than half of what the popcorn is. Most people will be satisfied eating one apple at a sitting.

On the glycemic index chart (which measures how much your blood sugar will spike when you eat something), popcorn will come in as high as 89. Pure sugar is 100 on the glycemic index. So eating popcorn at an 89 is almost like eating straight sugar! It doesn't taste sweet but that's how your body reacts to popcorn. How high it will rank is really dependent on what kind of corn it was made from and how it was processed but we already know that in the US we breed our corn to be as sweet as possible. The popcorn with the lowest glycemic index will come in at around 60. That's not enough of an improvement for me to eat it by the bowl anymore.

An apple will rank on the glycemic index at a 38. Anything with a score under 50 will rank as okay to eat in my book.

Now, when I sit down and watch a movie I make [Apple "Popcorn."](#) Sounds silly maybe, but think of it this way. You get the same crunch from an apple as you do with popcorn. You get a lot less carbohydrates and you have something to keep your fingers busy while you watch the movie. It's also sweet. The kiddies will love it.



Enjoy!

Cheers,