**HUNT AND GATHER ALL YOU WANT –**

**YOU STILL WON’T LOSE WEIGHT!**

* Hadza men and women burn the same amount of calories as we do
* Total energy expenditure was compared by lean body mass
* Conclusion: our bodies adjust to hold on to weight after a certain amount of exercise
* My take: Eat less, AND eat fewer carbs, while exercising and building lean muscle

The current Scientific American’s lead article, “The Exercise Paradox,” confirms what we already know: you can’t lose weight by exercising alone. You have to eat BETTER and LESS and change your body composition. What do I mean? Read on..

In this article, anthropologist Herman Pontzer and his colleagues investigated how many calories members of the Hadza tribe burn each day. The Hadza, from Tanzania, live as hunter-gatherers, much as we all did before “cows, cars and computers.” Men, women and children are all involved in finding food, whether from wild animals, distant sources of water, or wild berries and tubers.

So, these people MUST be burning a lot more calories than we do, right? After all, when was the last time you hunted and gathered for dinner (even if it sometimes feels like you’re in the jungle at Trader Joe’s)?

Turns out, not so much. The scientists got two dozen Hadza women and men to drink water labelled with radioactive markers. The concentration of these isotopes in urine reveals how much carbon dioxide, or metabolic activity, their body produced.

The Hadza men and women burn about 2600 and 1900 calories a day. That’s the same as we do. (Note to my patients: these amounts compare to your TEE or TOTAL energy expenditure on your printouts).

So, if you were thinking of becoming a hunter/gatherer to speed up your weight loss, that’s a great idea if you keep your calories down. Otherwise, don’t work so hard. Seriously, though, this only reinforces the point that our bodies have evolved through periods of mostly scarcity of food, and hold onto as much of what we eat as is possible.

Our job, understanding this, is to work with the bodies we have: eat less, eat fewer carbs, and exercise enough, incorporating strength training to increase our lean muscle mass. [Studies](http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1199154) show that diets lower in carbs burn about 70 calories more than do low-fat diets. That adds up to 7 pounds a year. Kind of like compounding interest. Not a lot in the short-run, but a ton over time.