From [Blood Sweat and Second Gear](#):

More Medicine for Motorcyclists

By [Flash Gordon](#), MD

My Aerostich Roadcrafter has been shrinking—and, strangely, only around my waist. My belts and the waistbands of other pants have been shrinking, too. Since replacing everything would be too expensive, I decided that losing weight would help. Unfortunately, just deciding to lose weight didn't do a thing. I realized I'd have to actually lose weight for this to work. I decided to review the medical literature, and found some startling information and interesting tricks that made it relatively easy to drop 28 pounds. Now my 'Stich fits fine. If you've noticed the same problem, the info I found might help you fit in yours, too.

Now, there are other good reasons for dieting besides fitting riding gear—better bike performance is one. Racers pay big bucks for titanium parts, carbon fiber bodywork, and the newest, most lightweight gear, because less weight equals better performance. Lowering total weight is the same as having more horsepower. I've even noticed a difference in my bike. Bikes aside, the best reason for losing weight if you're fat is your health. Do you want to live longer? Scientists have known for a long time that experimental animals live longer when they're thin, about 30 percent below their normal weight. Here's why.

It turns out that your body handles foods differently when you're in "negative caloric balance," which happens when you burn more calories than you eat. Positive caloric balance is just the opposite—you eat more than you burn. When you're in negative balance, your body handles fat and cholesterol differently. Instead of depositing cholesterol in your coronary arteries, the fats are broken down. You can even remove cholesterol that's already in your coronaries,

reducing your risk of sudden cardiac death, heart attack, and stroke. This is a big factor in extending lifespan.

It doesn't take much to change how your body handles cholesterol— it's been shown that losing a pound a year consistently will lower your risk of death from heart disease, stroke, or diabetes by about 75 percent. It's also been shown that men who maintain their weight at what it was when they turned 20 tend not to have the decrease in testosterone and sexual function that most men have as they age (and as they gain weight).

It's a given that overweight people who lose weight live longer than those who keep gaining. What surprised me was a recent study showing that overweight people who tried to lose weight but weren't successful lived longer than fat folks who didn't even try. It's not clear why this happens—perhaps those folks who are trying to lose weight eat healthier or exercise more, now and then. It could be that those folks who tried to lose weight achieved negative caloric balance more often than those who didn't, which helps. This directly contradicts the old saying "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."

Folks in America are gaining weight now more than ever. You've heard about the "epidemic of obesity." It's real, and it's not funny. Obesity-related heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and some cancers kill about 300,000 folks in the U.S. annually, and 59 million Americans are obese. So why is it so hard to lose weight? Here's my theory.

For most folks, feeling hungry is very unpleasant. That's due to several factors— both the actual, physical discomfort that's caused by being hungry, and the mental baggage that goes along with it. Many kids were punished by having food withheld. "You're going to bed without your supper, young man!" or, "No dessert for you!" This causes hunger to be associated with a lot of negative

emotions, which makes it tougher to tolerate when we're adults. But I noticed something that changed those negative feelings for me.

You know when your muscles are sore after a workout? Though they hurt, it's kind of a "good" pain—you feel proud of it (at least, I do). In the same way, after about a week of dieting and feeling hungry, I found I'd lost several pounds. Great! After that, I felt a sense of accomplishment when hungry. My body was saying, "Yes, you're succeeding in accomplishing some weight loss!" Pretty soon, the feeling of hunger became self-reinforcing. After that, the weight loss got easier. And I learned some tricks from research that helped, too.

Not surprisingly, there's been lots of research on diet techniques— almost a third of the men and half of the women in the U. S. are on a diet at any give time. A search for "diet" on Amazon. com comes up with more than 73,000 hits. So, which diet is best?

We hear a lot about the high protein and low carbohydrate Atkins Diet. Many folks have had good luck with it. Not long ago, eating a lot of complex carbohydrates (i.e., whole wheat bread vs. white bread) was popular. Some folks are on low fat diets. There's also the South Beach Diet, the Zone Diet, the Low Glycemic Index Diet, and many more.

But no matter what diet you're on, you'll only lose weight if you eat fewer calories than you use. In theory, that's simple. In practice, it's hard. (And in theory, there's no difference between theory and practice—but in practice, there is.) So what are calories? They're measures of the energy that your body can use to make your muscles move, your heart beat, your brain think, and keep your body temperature around 98.6º F.

The trick is eating fewer calories. Some diets are shown to satisfy hunger better. Eating protein tends to satisfy you for a longer time than the same number of calories from starch (carbohydrates). Bulkier food (that is, a bigger volume for the same calories) satisfies hunger better, too. A cup of raisins, for example, has about 500 calories. A cup of grapes, about 110.