

Fluctuating diet increases risk of sudden death

New research has revealed that binge eating then dieting may significantly reduce lifespan.

In a report published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, researchers at the University of Glasgow have found, for the first time, that despite having no effect on body size or reproduction rate, animals given a ‘binge then diet’ food regime could have a reduced lifespan of 25 per cent.

The study compared the growth rate, success of reproduction and lifespan of stickleback fish who were given a constant amount of food every day with those given the same overall amount of food in a more erratic feeding pattern.

Professor Neil Metcalfe said: “The fish on the fluctuating diet put just as much effort into breeding – the males became brightly coloured as usual and the females produced the normal number of eggs. However, on average their lifespan was three-quarters that of animals eating a constant amount every day.”

The research found that the difference in lifespan was not a consequence of more rapid ageing but an increase in the risk of sudden death.

Professor Metcalfe added: “It seems that uneven growth, due to the fluctuation in the amount eaten per day, is responsible for the increase in the risk of sudden death. This is possibly because the body tissues are more likely to have imperfections due to growth spurts.

Source: University of Glasgow

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