

## The Fundamentals of Weight Loss



So, you want to shed some pounds. What's the skinny on effective weight management?

Well, let's begin with jettisoning the idea of dieting. A diet is a temporary fix often packaged as a magic bullet solution to weight issues.

The problem is that once you come off the diet, we often go back to the ways of living that created the weight problem in the first place.

A more sustainable approach is to cultivate healthful behaviors that will allow you to keep off excess pounds forever. Typically, this amounts to a strategy where the central aim is not weight loss but successful lifestyle (or behavior) changes driven by the implementation of a customized healthy eating and exercise plan. Weight loss occurs as a result of this process.

Conventional wisdom indicates that food intake and exercise are the primary shaping factors for managing weight because these are the activities that most affect the body's energy budget. In other words, if I consume more food energy in a day than I use to fuel my metabolic and physical activity, the excess energy will be stored as fat. And similarly, if my food energy intake is less than the energy expended in activities then I will lose stored fat.

Let's do the math: For every 3500 excess calories consumed, I store 1 pound of body fat. If I want to lose weight, a deficit (in providing for the body's total energy needs) of 500 calories a day for 7 days (3500cal/wk) is enough to lose a pound of body fat a week.

However there is more to the story than this. Listed below are 7 conditions which trigger fat accumulation.

1. **CHRONIC DIETING.** Yo-yo dieting encourages fat stores around organs. Why? One major factor is a mischievous hormone called ghrelin which makes itself felt whenever there is severe caloric restriction. It is responsible for stimulating your desire to eat, also known as appetite. Ghrelin can inspire overeating upon completion of diet. In addition, recent studies reveal that ghrelin reduces fat utilization.



To modify the impact which ghrelin has on your eating behavior, consider giving up dieting. Seriously. Instead, strive to eat foods which are nutrient dense which will minimize the volume of food required for satiety.

Also, be advised that the rest of the following conditions tend to increase the levels of ghrelin in the body

2. **STRESSFUL REACTIONS** to life events occur when cortisol (the 'stress' hormone) is released into the bloodstream. High cortisol levels are detrimental to weight loss and promote weight gain.

Cortisol causes the abundant availability of fuel (glucose) for 'fighting, fleeing or any activity consisting of physical exertion.



The thing is, we are living in cultural contexts where we have been conditioned to have 'fight-or-flight' responses to situations which are NOT demanding physical exertion from us. The consequence is we have chronically elevated cortisol levels in our bloodstream as well as unutilized glucose which cannot be restored to their preactivated form (glycogen) inside of the liver and musculature.

The body's solution is to convert the unused fuel into fat. At the same time, the body notices its storehouses of glycogen are steadily depleting so it sends a hunger signal to the brain. And the dysfunctional cycle perpetuates itself.

Obviously, exercise, a consistent program of physical exertion helps to mitigate stressful reactions to life events.

Meditation is also key, as is any technique which allows you to reprogram a more skillful response to those life challenges not requiring physical exertion.

3. **INSULIN RESISTANCE** is an early but critical stage in the downgrading of your body's ability to manage its blood sugar load. Under healthy conditions the insulin hormone allows sugar



to exit the blood and enter cells. Blood glucose levels are thus maintained within an optimal range.

However, Due to long term glucose overload caused by poor nutrition habits, the body requires greater amounts of insulin to adjust for optimal blood glucose levels. This is insulin resistance. As it worsens, there is a failure to maintain blood sugar within the optimal range despite significantly elevated insulin levels. At its worse, the condition is known as type 2 diabetes.

Insulin also facilitates fat storage. Being in fat storage mode means that the body is NOT in fat burning mode. Perpetually elevated insulin levels militate against weight loss. Period.



Therefore, awareness of your insulin resistance status is necessary to undertaking an effective weight management program. Consider asking your doctor about tests (A1c, fasting glucose test etc.) which will help you make that determination.

Of the 3 macronutrients (proteins, fats, carbohydrates), fats create the least insulin spike and carbs, the most. Consider designing low carb meal plans featuring generous portions of healthy fat sources such as avocados, almonds, oily cold-water fishes (salmon, mackerel, tuna) just to name a few.

4. **POOR DIGESTION** means that your body is not fully extracting the nutrients in the food consumed. This can cause the body to interpret its condition as one of nutrient famine and go into fat storage mode. Again, eat nutrient dense foods. Generally, choose to eat higher percentages whole and live foods rather than their highly processed and overcooked counterparts.
5. **TOXICITY.** Toxins from medication, alcohol, cigarettes, pesticides, etc are stored in fat cells. The fat acts as a buffer between your body and the toxins; The more toxic the body, the more resistant it is to shedding fat.
6. **LIMITING BELIEFS.** This one is simple. If you believe that you can't lose weight, then you won't.



7. **SLEEP APNEA.** Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes you to unconsciously stop breathing as you sleep, sometimes hundreds of times a night. It reduces your blood oxygen to dangerously low levels, which leaves you chronically exhausted, irritable, and more prone to junk food cravings.

## What does a healthy eating plan look like?



The optimal plan is individualized, considering your body's total energy needs as a baseline on which to construct a plan.

- It must be doable: one's motivation level, as well as one's actual daily schedule and commitments must be considered. Nothing fails like an overly ambitious and unrealistic plan.
- Other major considerations revolve around questions

such as whether there is a balance and variety of food groups and whether plan achieves recommended weight reduction rate of 1 to 2 pounds per week.

## What does a healthy exercise plan look like?

What we are essentially talking about here is conscious engagement in physical activity.

Weight loss aside, medical authorities like USA's Institute of Medicine conclude that at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity 5-7 days a week is essential for good health maintenance. This activity needn't be done all at once. For example, a 30-minute jog or brisk walk in the morning can be supplemented with a half-hour after-work gardening session.

An interesting tidbit for the weight reducer is that after 20 minutes of moderate to intense activity the body begins to get a significantly greater percentage of its fuel from its fat stores. From 0 to 20 minutes you're just not in the fat-melting zone!

Go ahead! Armed with this info allow yourself to wade deeper into great health and wise weight management but be sure to get medical clearance from your physician before embarking on a program.