



## Weight Control & Maintenance - Part I



**For many, in these times of lock down, daily routines have been severely disrupted and may well lead to a toxic mix of over consumption of food/drink and less physical activity.**

There are many factors that influence weight gain and loss, some may be overt such as over-eating and some may be less noticeable such as having a thyroid gland that works slower than others (hypothyroidism).

There is a lot to be said about the inherent problems of dieting, the so-called 'diet mentality' that is effectively a bar for many people from obtaining lasting weight lost and more importantly, long-term weight control. There are many diets that purport to help one lose weight and each specific diet should be judged on its merits. Each diet makes an undeniable impact on the individual: requiring one's faith, attention and a share of their resources (financial or otherwise).

A diet that is all the rage at the moment may be very convincing in theory but may not actually be that practicable for the individual. For example, the diet that advises you to completely cut out a group of foods may not offer foods or food combinations that are appealing to the individual in terms of taste and cost; therefore, this diet is not actually practical/ do-able for the individual.

## DIETARY, LIFESTYLE & NUTRITION FACTORS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of general advice, here are some basic dietary, nutritional and lifestyle factors that may be considered in order to help to achieve weight control:

- **Reduce Intake of Refined and Sugar- Containing Foods**

Refined carbohydrates are immediately converted to sugar; excess sugar is converted to fat.

- **Reduce Consumption of Sweet Fruits**

Due to high sugar content, these foods contribute to blood sugar imbalance and therefore craving for foods, particularly carbohydrates. These foods include mangoes and bananas, etc.

- **Reduce saturated fats intake**

Saturated fats are by no means the worst fats out there (see Trans & Hydrogenated below) and should be consumed as part of a healthy and balanced diet; however, they are high in calories and if eaten in excess they are laid down as body fat.

- **Reduce Trans-fats and Hydrogenated Fats Consumption**

High in calories these fats are very similar to saturated fats in that they are quickly deposited as fats. They also block EFA metabolism – see essential fatty acids (EFAs) below.

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### DIETARY, LIFESTYLE & NUTRITION FACTORS/ RECOMMENDATIONS -continued

- **Reduce Stimulants Consumption**

Stimulants such as caffeine from coffee, tea and some soft drinks are known to deplete vital minerals stores, for example chromium is excreted at a greater rate due to stimulants and this mineral is very important in dealing with blood sugar balance.

- **Reduce or Avoid Alcohol Consumption**

Alcohol is chemically similar to sugar and also in calories. Alcohol disrupts blood sugar balance and affects appetite adversely. Although it can suppress appetite the calories ingested from alcohol are calorie dense and less nutritious calories than healthy food. An absolute maximum weekly intake for women is 14 units and 21 units for men. Sensible drinking means pacing yourself as much as possible, for example drinking a glass of water between rounds.

- **Increase Vegetable Intake**

The fibre in vegetables induces a feeling of satiety and as result one is fuller quicker and therefore less likely to over-eat and accumulate calories (excess calories are laid down as fat in the body).

Increase Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) Consumption

EFAs increase metabolism: increased metabolism helps one to burn calories quicker and this of course helps to speed weight loss.

- **Increase Vegetarian Protein Consumption**

Vegetarian protein is a source of fibre and protein which both help to help to balance blood sugar and increase feelings of satiety reduce.

- **Food Sensitivities**

May cause a stress reaction in the body, see Stressful Lifestyle below.

- **Stressful Lifestyles**

Stressful lifestyles factors are often precipitators for the need to 'comfort' eat. So it is important to consider stress in one's life and seek means to help control it, such as counselling, exercise, taking up a hobby, etc.

Stress can cause blood sugar imbalance in the body, which leads to excess sugar being stored as fat.

- **Environmental Chemicals**

Many synthetic chemicals influence the thyroid system via multiple mechanisms. Organochlorine compounds have been shown to alter thyroid hormone levels in humans. Impaired thyroid function can contribute to weight gain due to reduced metabolism.

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### DIETARY, LIFESTYLE & NUTRITION FACTORS/ RECOMMENDATIONS -continued

- **Increase Exercise**

The benefits of regular exercise are that the metabolism of the body is increased helping to burn calories. Not only is exercise important to inhibit fat deposition in the body but it also helps to reduce fat stores in the body. Gentle to moderate exercise may be sufficient: walking briskly regularly for half an hour three times a week is aerobic exercise that increases cardiovascular health. Slow increments in exercise will help build good fitness.

**Consult your GP/ physician or a personal trainer for further advice.**

## NUTRITION

- **Low B Vitamin Status**

The B complex vitamins help to balance moods and reduce the need for 'comfort' eating that is often a feature of poor weight control. B vitamins are also very important for energy balance usage in the body, helping in avoidance of the storage of calories as body fat.

- **Chromium Insufficiency/ Deficiency**

Lack of consumption of foods that are high in chromium (such as whole grains) may lead to reduced levels in the body; chromium helps the body to deal with blood sugars balance and helps to reduce cravings for sugars and refined carbohydrates.

- **Iron Insufficiency/ Deficiency**

Lack of iron impairs thyroid hormone synthesis and poor thyroid gland function is correlated with a reduced rate of metabolism. Consider asking your GP/ physician for analysis of your iron status.

- **Selenium Deficiency**

The highest concentration of selenium in the body is found in the thyroid. This mineral is needed to keep thyroid hormones active and therefore increase metabolism.

- **Zinc Deficiency**

Zinc also plays a role in the conversion of thyroid hormone and low zinc levels are associated with reduced thyroid function.

**Wherever possible, if nutrition insufficiency or deficiencies are suspected, it is advisable to seek further advice from a qualified health professional.**

**See also the Weight Control & Maintenance - Part II Guide for a list of foods/ beverages to increase or avoid.**

Please note the information here is not intended as a substitute for medical advice. Any person suffering from conditions requiring medical attention, or who has symptoms that concern them, should consult a qualified health practitioner.

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