



Why is it so Difficult to Lose Weight as we get Older?

Unwanted weight-gain is something that most of us have experienced at some time in our lives and it is a well-known fact that as we age, maintaining a healthy weight can sometimes be a difficult prospect for many of us.

At a recent health workshop one of the participants expressed abhorrence at the obesity epidemic that currently exists amongst our 'careless' adult population. These sentiments were quickly adopted and endorsed by most of the participants at the workshop and the 'indiscipline' and 'laziness' of our adults came under heavy scrutiny and condemnation. Some were even of the opinion that many of our obese women were somehow happy and revelling in being overweight and thus did nothing to effect weight reduction. Someone dared to suggest that this opinion might have been too simplistic and that the women may have been desperately trying to lose weight but failing in their efforts. This suggestion was summarily attacked when one of the experts pointed out that weight management had a simple mathematical component since controlling the intake of food (Calories In) and the quantity of physical exercise done (Calories Out) were all that was needed to solve the equation. Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows that there is more to it than diet and exercise! Only two of the participants at this workshop seemed to be aware of this.

One of the participants gave a sterling, personal testimony on how she easily overcame her childhood obesity through diet and exercise alone. She mentioned that she had



a friend who was a nutritionist and a relative who was a personal trainer so she knew it was no difficult task. The phenomenal personal trainer she knew was consistently able to get all of his clients to lose excess weight and attain and maintain healthy weight. These statistics were surprising to me since I had been a fitness instructor for over thirty years, a PhD nutritionist for about twenty-four years and had worked with over seven thousand obese clients over the years in the USA, Singapore and Barbados and had never observed weight-loss in adults to be a universally simple process. I knew of patients who almost starved themselves to death or exercised excessively in order to attain satisfactory weight-loss and failed miserably in their quest. Many had gone on draconian diets and lost some weight only to regain more than they lost when they had to quit the draconian fad diet.

At the conclusion of the two-day workshop as the rapporteur summarised the findings it was suggested and conceded that maybe weight-loss was not as simplistic an exercise as some had envisioned it to be. This was a most welcomed acknowledgment! I did a cursory visual observation and realised that although there were no 600-pound persons present that at least sixty percent of the workshop participants (including the one who had a friend who was a nutritionist and a relative who was a personal trainer) were obese or overweight. If everyone knew that it was so easy to attain healthy weight why weren't we all displaying perfectly healthy weight? Was it the classical case of: 'Do as I say and not as I do'? Instead of being judgmental and bandying around epithets at those already suffering from the burden of their overweight we should try to understand the extent of their struggle and offer help where it might be required.

Most diets do not deliver as advertised mainly because they eventually bore the participant. Things start out well, but after too many restrictive meals, ennui can set in and we quit. You need to find a weight-loss programme that can keep you interested throughout so that you lose the weight and keep it off. You need to choose a diet and exercise programme that suits your goals, your preferences and your lifestyle. Then you need to harness your will power and stickability to keep yourself grounded and focused even when set-backs threaten to derail your efforts. You should exercise compliance with the programme! A lifestyle change is a serious process and should not be taken lightly. Accept that you are in it for the long haul and determine that quitting is not a viable option.

Why you tend to Gain Weight as you get Older

Your metabolic rate is how efficiently your body converts food into energy and it slows down by about 5 percent, every decade after you turn 40. When this happens your body does not burn calories like it used to and unburnt calories can accumulate as excessive body weight. To counter this, you need to trim calories from your diet. There are many ways to do this with simple changes that won't drastically change your diet or make you feel starved. Switching to lower calorie dressings, creamers and condiments may be an easy way to start. Consciously eating less can be achieved with a little dedication to attention and commitment.

Your capacity for hunger increases as you age. After the age of about 40, the level of oestrogen in women falls causing changes in their blood sugar and thyroid. This brings about an increase in appetite. This occurrence can be countered by avoiding sugary junk food and consuming more high-fibre foods. Along with keeping your bowel movements more regular, fibre helps you feel fuller quicker and for longer periods. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes are great natural sources of fibre.

You lose critical muscle mass with age. After age 30, most men begin to experience a gradual decline in testosterone. Recent research suggests, however, that this phenomenon is likely the result but not the cause of deteriorating general health in men since age has no direct effect on testosterone level in healthy older men. There is a natural loss in overall muscle mass (associated with a reduction in testosterone levels) and this results in less calorie-burning

capacity since muscles burn more calories than fat. Lower testosterone levels cause increase in body fat, especially in the midsection. Strength training can be taken up to counter this drop in muscle mass since each pound of muscle gained or swapped for a pound of fat will increase your metabolism and help you burn more calories throughout the day.

Your need for adequate sleep is paramount as you age. With stress, side effects from prescription medication and more frequent bathroom breaks during the night it may seem more difficult for you to get the eight hours sleep per day that your body needs. Along with causing you to get more wrinkles, increasing your moodiness and predisposing you to depression, lack of sleep can affect your weight. Sleep deprivation may negatively impact your brain and cause you to crave high-calorie foods. Substituting high-calorie, sugary snacks and fast-food and making other poor health decisions may lead to unwanted weight-gain. Although getting adequate sleep will not necessarily cause you to lose weight, the research suggests that inadequate amounts of sleep can inadvertently cause you to gain weight.

It is understood that some people face tangible (or other) barriers to weight-loss. These include:

- **Physiological challenges:** Medical disorders, diseases and medication can negatively affect a person's ability to lose weight,
- **Mechanical challenges:** Pain from chronic conditions and injuries can cause an aversion to exercise,
- **Psychosocial challenges:** Psychotic disorders, grief, sadness, anxiety and even happiness can lead to eating disorders and



- lack of enthusiasm for exercise,
- **Financial challenges:** The higher cost of healthier food choices and structured exercise programmes can be perceived by some to be deterrents to a healthier lifestyle.

These barriers need to be taken into account and addressed when weight-loss programmes are undertaken. Although it may still prove difficult for you to shed the extra pounds you gain with age, following the proven traditional advice will assist in improving your overall health and prevent further weight-gain.

- Reduce your caloric intake
- Use more fibre and avoid high-calorie junk food
- Exercise and involve strength training programmes
- Always get adequate amounts of rest and sleep

Be patient and honest in your efforts to shed excess pounds but do not stress over slow

progress in your endeavours as this will only exacerbate your condition and stymie your efforts. Avoid fad diets. Fad diets are those that promise quick weight-loss through what is usually an unhealthy and unbalanced diet. These diets are targeted at people who want to lose weight quickly while foregoing exercise. Some fad diets claim that they make you lose fat, but instead you are mainly losing water. Always remember not to allow others to intimidate you as you seek to improve your health.

Those fortunate ones who naturally have healthy weight or have successfully managed to attain a healthy weight should graciously try to be helpful with understanding and compathy as they encourage, but not pressure or condemn those who are still in the process of struggling with their obesity. Love, kindness and respect, not bullying, will help your loved ones in their quest to attain healthier weight.

Mark Alleyne

Are Vegetarian Diets Healthy?

It has long been established that a healthy diet includes a variety of foods from the six Caribbean Food Groups. These food groups are Staples, Legumes, Fruits, Vegetables, Fats and Oils, and Foods from Animals. However, the questions are asked, “What about those who do not eat meat, drink milk or use eggs? Could a diet with these omissions be nutritious? Are plant foods alone nutritionally adequate?”

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) addressed this question in their position statement. It stated that “appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes”.

The vegetarian diet is different from that of the non-vegetarian because it does not include foods from animals (e.g. seafood, poultry and meat) and is largely made up of plant-based foods. Different types of vegetarians include:

- **Lacto-ovo-vegetarians** who eat both dairy products and eggs; this is the most common type of vegetarian diet.
- **Lacto-vegetarians** who eat dairy products but avoid eggs,
- **Ovo-vegetarians** who eat eggs but not dairy products,
- **Vegans** who do not eat dairy products, eggs, or any other products which are derived from animals.

Some vegans even forgo honey.

(Please note that the Vegetarian Society, the custodian of British vegetarianism since 1847 defines vegetarian as someone who “does not eat any meat, poultry, game, fish, shell fish or crustacean, or slaughtered by-products”. The Society advises that “vegetarians do not eat fish.”)

What are the reasons for adopting this type of diet? The reasons may vary from person to person but invariably involve one or more of the following: (1) an effort to protect the environment (2) a deep respect for animal life and (3) a desire to prevent or manage diseases believed to be caused or exacerbated by the consumption of animal products. This explains why vegetarians sometimes differ in their food preferences. The food choice is dependent on the type of vegetarian diet the person has adopted in addition to their personal preferences and the foods available to them.

Even though vegetarians exclude certain types of foods from their diet, there are still a wide variety of food options available to them. Vegetarians are encouraged to use a variety of foods in meal planning and to include fortified foods where necessary to help meet specific nutritional needs.

Foods commonly used include:

- Bread, cereals, crackers, provisions and pasta
- Dried peas and beans, nuts and products made from these foods (e.g. soy milk, almond milk, veggie burgers, peanut butter, etc.)
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Margarine, vegetable oils and edible seeds
- Milk, eggs, cheese, butter (for vegetarians excluding vegans)

Traditional dishes can still be enjoyed with simple plant-based substitutions and the inclusion of a number of common, creative, plant-based food options which are even enjoyed by non-vegetarians as well. Vegetarians or persons considering adopting a vegetarian diet are encouraged to educate themselves on how to adequately plan their meals. For further information you may contact the nutritionist at your nearest polyclinic.

Glencill Taylor

Snacking for a Healthy Lifestyle

Is snacking healthy? What should I snack on? Are there any tasty, convenient snacks I can have now that I'm "watching" my weight? Is it okay to snack late at night? These are all valid questions that I am regularly posed with as a nutritionist.

Many individuals often snack on foods that are high in fats and sugar. In this article, I endeavour to bring clarity to the very contentious topic of 'snacking' and provide some ideas to help make snack times healthy, practical and exciting, irrespective of your health and wellness goals.



part of a balanced diet for performance, weight management and overall good health. The elderly and persons convalescing from certain surgeries or illnesses may even be advised by their health care provider to snack as a way to keep energy levels up, provide essential nutrients and minimise gas build-up when larger meals are not an option right away.

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Choosing Your Snacks

Snacking is appropriate for all body types and ages (not just children), and could be an important



Sugary items like candy, sweet biscuits and soft drinks should be minimised or even avoided, especially for diabetics. Patties, chips and other fried foods should also be consumed in moderation as these are generally high in saturated and trans fats and can be loaded with sodium or salt.

Snacking does not serve to replace a meal and therefore should not be a bellyful. The purpose of a snack is to keep you going until your next meal. You should ensure your choices are good sources of fibre, vitamins, minerals and water as necessary. Good examples are fruits, vegetables, smoothies and shakes.

Why not try the following healthy, delicious munchies to take with you on the go!

Sweet snacks

- a small container of low-fat or Greek yoghurt
- a handful of pumpkin seeds, nuts or dried fruit
- ½ cup of low sugar cereal, e.g. bran flakes or homemade muesli
- a glass of “milk shake” made from oats, banana, peanut butter and almond milk

Savoury snacks

- a small bag of baked chips
- a handful of unsalted mixed nuts
- a few whole-wheat crackers and a low-fat dip like salsa, spinach or hummus
- ½ cup of celery or carrot sticks or medium tomato with low-fat cottage cheese

Benefits of Healthy Snacking

A healthy snack provides several benefits including:

- sustained energy levels
- provision of needed nutrients
- management of appetite
- aiding with weight management
- management of some chronic conditions, e.g. diabetes or hypertension

Getting the Timing Right

- Ideally, meals and snacks should be spaced out by 2 or 3 hours. This pattern of eating ensures that you are not ravenously hungry at meal times and thus susceptible to overeating or craving for sugary foods.
- Adults who eat breakfast around 6.30 a.m. should aim to have a snack between 8.30 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. and then another between 3.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. These times would vary depending on when they have their main meals.
- If you are not very physically active after dinner then you should forgo snacking at this time since your body would not require any extra calories then. Consuming snacks after dinner can lead to excessive calorie intake and weight gain.

Smart Snacking Tips

Healthy snacking requires planning. Here are some tips to help you snack sensibly:

- Always have on stock healthy options such as fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, low-fat chips and dips. Buy a variety of these snacks so that you don't get bored with your selection. Avoid having conventional snacks (like chocolate or fried chips) around.
- Keep portions small by placing a single serving on a plate or in a food container instead of eating from the snack box or bag.
- Experiment with herbs or spices to make fruits and vegetables more interesting, especially when preparing smoothies and salads.
- Prepare snacks in advance: make a salad, whip up a shake or place a snack-size serving of goodies into a food bag, so that it's ready to go when you need it.
- Snack to time or when you are hungry only. Do not snack because you are bored, stressed, tired, happy or upset. Too much snacking may lead to weight-gain.
- Avoid snacking when you are reading, working, watching TV or playing on the computer. You are likely to eat more if you are distracted.

Planning ahead by having healthy snack choices on hand can help make your health, weight management or performance plan a success. Remember, healthy snacks ought to be part of a holistic, healthy diet plan which involves adequate portions of your healthy main meals.

Leanda Hurdle

RECIPE

*1 cup flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
2 Tbsp sugar
1 egg beaten
2/3 cup skim milk
1 cup mashed ripe banana
2 Tbsp canola oil
4 tsp baking powder*

Method

1. Preheat oven to 400°F
2. Mix flour, sugar and baking powder in large bowl
3. Make a well in center and add egg, milk, oil and mashed banana. Mix well
4. Fill greased muffin cups 2/3 full
5. Bake 20-25 minutes

Banana Muffins



Menopause

Menopause is a time of transition marking the end of the fertile years. It can be a challenging and different experience for every woman. The decline or absence of oestrogen can mean changes to energy levels, memory, bone health, hormones, urinary and heart health.

Good nutrition and small lifestyle changes can both contribute to a healthy menopause. Exercising and eating right can make a real difference to how you feel - and can even help to maintain health during and after the menopause.

Weight Gain

During menopause there is a reduction in muscle mass and therefore fewer calories may be needed in the diet. Consumption of the same quantity of calories as before the onset of menopause can eventually lead to weight gain. Being careful about energy intake and doing more physical activity can help prevent weight gain.

Bone Health

From the age of about 30, there is a slow loss of calcium from the bones in both men and women. However, the rate of this loss increases in women during menopause because of loss of oestrogen. Adequate calcium intake from foods such as milk, fortified almond milk, edible fish bones, sweet potato, broccoli, butternut squash and black eye peas may help maintain bone calcium levels. Of course, daily sunlight exposure to assist in the body's vitamin D production can help in the maintenance of bone health as vitamin D increases calcium absorption.

Heart Health

It is thought that during menopause a woman's risk of developing heart disease increases and rivals that of a man of the same age. There are some very simple lifestyle changes that can be made to reduce the risk.



It can be a challenging and different experience for every woman.

Healthy Menopause

These include:

1. Eating less fat and saturated fats. Choosing foods like avocado, unsalted nuts and oily fish that contain heart-friendly fat
2. Reducing salt by avoiding processed foods like ready-cooked meals and cooking sauces.
3. Cooking from scratch and using less salt and more ingredients such as herbs and spices for flavour.
4. Aiming for at least two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily fish like sardines, mackerel, salmon, tuna, trout and herring.
5. Eating a minimum of 5 servings of various coloured fruits and vegetables each day. These may be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.
6. Eating some fibre-containing foods every day. Oats, wholegrain cereals and breads, legumes e.g. lentils, chickpeas and beans, are all excellent sources.

To help your body adapt, here are some further tips to help ensure that you are getting enough of the right foods to provide specific nutrients to keep you healthy during menopause and beyond.

Drink

water regularly to ensure good hydration and maintenance of body temperature

Eat plenty of:

- fresh fruits, especially bananas. Many fruits are rich in potassium to help support healthy fluid retention.
- fresh vegetables, especially dark leafy vegetables, which provide

micronutrients

- nuts and seeds which offer omega oils, calcium and fibre
- legumes, as a good source of protein and plant iron (non-heme)
- complex carbohydrates, such as oats, wholegrain bread, brown rice and provisions to help sustain energy release
- essential fatty acids (good fats) from oily fish, such as sardines, mackerel and salmon for good joint and heart health.

Eat foods rich in:

- calcium, for bone health
- vitamin D, to ensure that calcium intake is properly absorbed
- fibre, from fruits, vegetables and whole grains such as oats, brown rice, bulgur wheat, quinoa. Fibre helps digestion and can lower cholesterol and maintain steady blood sugar levels
- potassium, may help to balance sodium to support healthy water retention and hence help maintain a healthy blood pressure
- tryptophan, found in proteins such as eggs, milk (low-fat), sesame and sunflower seeds, which can help support the production of serotonin (the feel-good chemical in your brain) to assist sleep and stabilise mood

Eat small portions frequently (rather than large portions less frequently) to maintain healthier blood sugar levels because when these drop, menopausal symptoms often increase.

Carla Ramsay





Pros and Cons of Eating Seafood during Pregnancy



Seafood, which includes fish and shellfish, can be a great source of protein, iron, zinc and other micronutrients crucial for the good health, growth and development of the foetus. The omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids including docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) found in oily fish, such as sardines, mackerel and salmon are vital in promoting optimal brain and cardiovascular development. The consumption of fish and other seafood isn't usually a concern for most adults. However, special precautions must be applied if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. Some types of seafood, particularly large, predatory fish such as shark and swordfish, may contain elevated levels of methyl-mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PDCS), which are toxic to the developing foetus. If regularly eaten, these toxins can accumulate in your liver and bloodstream. Too much mercury in your bloodstream could damage your baby's developing brain and nervous system.

The World Health Organization and Food and Drug Administration recommend that pregnant women eat at least 8 ounces and up to 12 ounces (340 grams) of a variety of seafood low in mercury per week. This translates to about two to three servings of seafood per week.

Which fish are safer for consumption?

- Salmon, sardines and mackerel are low in mercury and high in omega-3 fatty acids. Eat a variety of these.

- Dolphin fish (mahi mahi) and large predatory fish such as shark, swordfish and barracuda contain higher amounts of mercury and other toxins and their consumption should be restricted.

Caution!

- **Do not consume uncooked fish or shellfish. The uncooked fish include sushi, sashimi and smoked fish.** These may contain harmful bacteria and viruses that can pass across the placenta and negatively affect the developing foetus.
- **Cook seafood thoroughly.** Most seafood should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145° F (63° C). Fish is properly cooked when the flesh separates into flakes and appears opaque throughout. Cook shrimp and lobster until the flesh is pearly and opaque. Cook clams, mussels and oysters until their shells open. Discard any that the shells don't open.

Although pregnant and breastfeeding women can get omega-3 fatty acids from many sources, experts recommend eating seafood for this purpose. Even though mercury can harm the brain of a developing foetus, eating average amounts of seafood during pregnancy hasn't been shown to cause problems. The omega-3 fatty acids in many types of fish can promote a baby's healthy cognitive development. If you avoid the fish which are known to be high in mercury or other contaminants, seafood can be a regular part of your healthy, eating plan during pregnancy.

Brian Payne



Frequently

Asked

Questions

Are sports drinks better for my child than sodas?

No they are not! Although sports drinks don't taste sweet like sodas they still contain a lot of sugar - as much as 11 teaspoons per serving. Furthermore, sports drinks often contain added sodium and can also be just as damaging to the teeth as other sugary drinks and juices. Water should always be the beverage of first choice.

How can I prepare healthy meals on a limited budget?

One of the first things that you can do is to incorporate more legumes (dried peas and beans) into dishes. For example, when making soups, stews or curries, you can replace some or all of the meat with legumes of your choice. Doing this reduces the fat and increases the fibre, which makes the dish healthier. It is also more economical since you will be using less meat. In order to save time during the week you can cook extra peas on Sunday and freeze in portions for later use.

Another way to stretch your food dollar is to substitute canned mackerel, sardines or tuna in fish dishes. These fish are rich in nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids and iron. Plus, if you eat the bones in mackerel and sardines, you will get some extra calcium.

With the money you save by following these suggestions you will be able to buy more vegetables and fruits to incorporate into meals and make your meals even healthier.

How important is breakfast?

Breakfast is very important! As the name suggests, this is the meal that “breaks the fast” of the night. It is the meal that replenishes energy and nutrient reserves and provides additional energy and nutrients to fuel the morning activities.

Studies show that children who skip breakfast have difficulties with concentration at school and do not perform as well as children who eat breakfast. Children and adults who habitually skip breakfast are also more likely to be overweight or obese.

Breakfast does not need to be elaborate or time-consuming to prepare and there are no set rules about what you should eat in the morning. A nutritious breakfast should include a high-fibre starchy food and adequate protein. For example: (1) a high-fibre cereal with low-fat milk, (2) whole-wheat pancakes with fruit and low-fat yogurt topping (pancakes can be made at the weekend to save time during the week) or (3) left-overs from last night’s dinner of peas and brown rice, chicken and vegetables.

Breakfast is very important so make it a daily habit.

Karen Griffith

Fun Corner

Eat More Fibre Foods

Across

- An essential ingredient in cou-cou
- Elephants love this snack
- Delicious in rice, soup and patties
- These fruits can be black, green or red
- This vegetable looks like a mini tree

Down

- Try these flakes for breakfast or snacks
- Use this to make porridge, healthy shakes and muffins
- One a day keeps the doctor away
- Monkeys love this fruit
- A type of pea and also a bird
- A dark green leafy vegetable
- Choose this colour rice

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