



I'm overweight but tired of counting calories

By Hermann Keppler

For a small percentage of people, carrying excess fat can be related to a pathological condition such as low thyroid function, or polycystic ovarian syndrome, and this of course needs to be investigated. For most people, it's a question of the amount of energy being consumed through food and drink, not being equalled by the energy output, ie, exercise. Dieters start to count calories so that they redress the balance. According to the naturopathic way of thinking, however, all calories are not equal. If you have knowledge of nutrition, and understand its impact on the body for better or worse, achieving and maintaining an ideal weight is more straightforward. Change the type of calorie you eat, rather than just the amount. Open your cupboards and dispose of processed and refined foods.

Refined carbohydrates, such as soft drinks, bread, cakes and white pasta, offer little nutritional value, and encourage the body to produce excess insulin. Elevated levels of insulin in the bloodstream promote storage of fat. Acupuncture is known to support the digestive system and there are some excellent herbs which can help balance out your blood sugar levels and help you avoid comfort eating which can occur when blood sugar levels peak and dip due to poor dietary habits. See a qualified practitioner for further advice.

You can also gain better mood-control by ensuring that your blood sugar level remains stable throughout the day. Do this by eating balanced meals and snacks that consist predominantly of

plant-based foods. Combine the following:

- some protein which increases satiety (your sense of contentment with amount of food eaten) and replenishes muscle tissues. Sources include nuts, fish, lentils, chick peas, chicken, plain yoghurt, eggs.
- complex carbohydrates for slower release energy, from vegetables, fruits, and whole grains such as brown rice, oats, and quinoa.
- healthy fats for optimal hormonal function, from olive oil, coconut oil, nuts, oily fish or flax seeds.

Buy the best quality, preferably organic, food that you can, and avoid packaged food. Ingredients and additives can play havoc with your hormones and make losing weight an uphill struggle. According to naturopathy, natural is always best.

Sometimes the body's ability to transform and transport foods and fluids becomes impaired by years of poor diet and little exercise, causing fat to be stored. If this could be an issue for you, get help from a naturopathic health practitioner who is trained to give you personalised diet and lifestyle advice. They can help you through a detox programme to encourage a fresh start.

Chew food carefully and make time for eating. Don't eat whilst doing something else! Be sensible about portion sizes, use smaller plates if need be and aim to have half of your plate filled with green vegetables or salad. If you eat more nutritious food, you will satisfy your body sooner and will therefore need fewer calories. Take a daily walk and as

you feel better, find a class or hobby that increases your physical activity levels.

Ginger acts as a metabolic stimulant, improving circulation and digestion, so grate some into hot water with a squeeze of lemon for a warming drink. Adding warming spices such as cayenne, garlic and paprika can also jump start your metabolism and get you motivated to lose that excess weight. The 5:2 Fasting regime is also worth investigating, but keep in mind that the calories you consume should come from whole, plant based and organic foods to provide adequate nourishment with reduced calories.

Calorie restrictive diets with insufficient nutrients are unsustainable long term, as the body will insist on being nourished. A healthy naturopathic diet provides the body with nutrients as well as sufficient calories. A nourished body will function more efficiently and metabolise more effectively. Your cravings for calorie-dense, nutrient-poor fare will diminish as you re-educate your body and palate to enjoy a health affirming naturopathic diet.

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