

Weight Loss Naturally

Thinking of a crash diet to shed a few pounds from winter's inactivity? Unfortunately, less than 2 per cent of people who go on a diet, regardless of the type, keep the weight off after a year. In the long run, the more you diet the more weight you gain. This occurs because dieting lowers metabolic rate – the rate at which you burn off calories – by putting the body in a conservation mode.

The past decade has seen low-fat diets come in and out of fashion. The latest fad appears to be no- or low-carbohydrate diets like the “Enter the Zone Diet,” the “Sugar Busters Diet” and the “Protein Power Diet.” While all these diets work for some people with a tendency to convert carbohydrates into fat storage, they fail miserably for others.

High protein diets work because they encourage water loss and they're low in calories (1,200 to 1,600 calories per day). All can cause varying degrees of ketosis, a high acid condition in the blood. Ketosis can cause dizziness, diarrhea, weakness, headaches, gout, dehydration, low blood pressure, accelerated atherosclerosis and a loss of lean body mass (muscle, bone and other organs). There are far safer ways to lose fat and, in the long run, excess weight. Here's what works for just about everyone:

Eat More Fat Burning Foods

Snacking on citrus fruits between meals will help you get rid of unwanted fat. That's because they're a terrific source of vitamin C, which increases fat burning by converting an amino acid called tyrosine into adrenaline. Adrenaline not only increases fat breakdown but raises energy, too. Throughout your day, try snacking on two grapefruits, one orange and one lemon squeezed into water.

Another effective fat reducer is lecithin, found mainly in soybeans. Soybeans are proven cholesterol-lowering agents that bolster your body's ability to dissolve fatty deposits. Use cultured, organic soy products like miso, tofu and tempeh at least three times each week as a source of lecithin and high quality protein. Another option is to use lecithin granules, available at health food stores (1 tbsp/15 mL

twice daily).

Eat more apples, applesauce, berries and fresh fruit. They're high in pectin, which limits the amount of fat your cells can absorb. Pectin can also lower your cholesterol and levels of body fat. At least two apples or servings of berries each day are recommended.

Favour Foods that Fight Water Retention

Asparagus contains the chemical asparagine, an alkaloid that stimulates the kidneys and improves fluid elimination. Asparagine also breaks down fat and helps to remove waste from the body. Aim for at least one daily serving of asparagus.

Beets are another diuretic food that assist the lymphatics, liver and kidneys to flush out body fats and water. Brussels sprouts are also friendly to dieters. They're especially stimulating to the pancreas, which releases hormones and enzymes that improve waste elimination. Cabbage contains sulphur and iodine – natural diuretics that help melt away fat.

Other vegetables that help rid the body of excess water, waste or fat include carrots, celery, cucumbers, horseradish, onions, tomatoes, lettuce and garlic. Each day, munch on a salad featuring these vegetables. For extra health benefits, and still more diuretic and fat-dissolving action, dress your salad with a few tablespoons of unpasteurized apple cider vinegar. Why not combine the vinegar with flaxseed oil, which also has special metabolism-boosting properties.

For weight loss and good health, it's also important to drink 2 litres of water a day, sipping on it frequently. Water is essential for enzymes to work well and for a speedier metabolism. Alcohol, pop and anything containing concentrated sugar will slow metabolism but whet your appetite.

Use More Fibre

High fibre foods control weight effectively by reducing the caloric density of the diet. This slows the rate of calorie ingestion and leaves

you feeling fuller longer.

Foods earning top marks for fibre include the brans of grains, psyllium seed powder, ground flaxseeds, root vegetables like carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips and kohlrabi, green beans, green peas and unsalted seeds and nuts. Try adding two to three tablespoons (25-45 mL) of ground flaxseeds or psyllium powder to your morning whole-grain cereal. (To avoid gas and bloating, build up gradually to this amount.) This simple act will reward you with a highly beneficial fat-lowering effect.

Choose Effective Weight Loss Supplements

There are no magic bullets for weight loss. The following natural products, however, can make it easier for some people to change their eating and exercise habits. (Although there isn't space for discussion, aerobic exercise, strength training and behaviour modification are important considerations in any weight loss program.)

Chitosan is derived from chitin, which is extracted from the hard parts of shellfish. When taken before a meal (three or four 500 mg capsules), chitosan binds fat in the small intestine blocking its absorption. In lab animals, it's been shown to reduce cholesterol levels and atherosclerotic plaque. Excessive use of chitosan could potentially cause the malabsorption of fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K).

5-HTP (5-Hydroxy L-Tryptophan) raises the circulating levels of serotonin and melatonin. These neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) are needed for sleep, mood regulation and appetite control. Unlike L-tryptophan, 5-HTP does not require a prescription. Effective adult dosages are 50 to 300 mgs three times daily between meals. The only known side effect is nausea, which disappears with a lower dose or after two weeks of using the same dose.

L-Tyrosine promotes the healthy functioning of the adrenal, pituitary and thyroid glands (thyroid hormone is made in the body from tyrosine). Tyrosine converts into norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter that suppresses appetite. It also stimulates the release of growth hormone, which causes muscle growth

while reducing body fat.

Ma huang (ephedra) contains ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and other compounds that burn fat and boost metabolic rate. Too much can cause anxiety, nervousness, palpitations, high blood pressure, prostate problems and insomnia. Start with the lowest possible dose recommended on the bottle and build up gradually to tolerance.

Kelp is a source of iodine as well as dozens of other minerals. It has a mild fat burning effect, possibly because of its ability to stimulate the thyroid gland. Small amounts are harmless, but excess iodine can cause acne in some individuals.

Conclusion

No two people will get exactly the same results using any of these diet and supplement recommendations. Try a few of them or try them all. Chances are high, you'll be pleased with the results.