

The truth about weight control

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As a fitness professional I am constantly asked "what are the secrets to weight loss?" and this mystification over weight loss and weight gain never ceases to amaze me. Popular media, books on the latest super-skinny celebrity diet and fitness magazines are reinforcing the portrayal of weight control as being some complex, almost magical web of confusion....well it really isn't!

It's time to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in answering the weight loss conundrum. To control your weight for a lifetime:

- Read and **IMPLEMENT** all the points below - remember that *changing* habits and behaviours is the real challenge not simply having the knowledge as we have more books and awareness over what to eat nowadays coinciding with escalating obesity rates!
- Do **NOT** eat more calories than you burn on a daily basis. A deficit has to be in place (and consistently) for the body to utilise and therefore reduce existing fat stores!
- Think about **WHAT** you eat – If the food going to make you look or feel the way you want to outside of that precise moment?! Or afterwards make you feel miserable and take you further away from your goal? Does this sound familiar – 'when I was younger I could eat what I wanted and not gain weight'. Guess what? Nowadays (especially as we get older) we don't move enough to get away with it so if you want it then move more and if you cant move more than DON'T eat it!
- The saying "you are what you eat" is true. Before eating a food ask yourself 'do I want to BE that?'.
- Avoid being in denial over the negative effects of alcohol on fat loss. It is horrendous – consumed generally in the evening when the body needs less calories and the calories from alcohol can't be stored by then body so while they are burnt off (1 unit = 1 hour) your bodies normal fat burning process shuts off!! This is why 'beer belly' exists. On a big (binge) night out a person could shut down they fat burning processes for 12-16 hours!!
- Eat smaller portion sizes and make this happen through physical changes like using a smaller plate, making less or serving up less. Trying to leave some on the plate is a tortuous affair if you were brought up with the concept of not wasting food and finishing your plate!

- If certain foods haunt you and you cannot eat them sensibly, consider giving them up. I have known few people that can eat their downfall food in a controlled manner on a regular basis. It may be easier to make a clean break and bid it farewell.
- Eat S L O W L Y. This will give your body the opportunity to sense food coming in and register fullness. When we are full, bad foods lose much of their appeal.
- Desert is a habit, not a physiological need for survival. Habits can be broken but require you to practice resistance consistently to get out of the behaviour pattern.
- Know the difference between appetite and hunger. 'Hunger' is the true physiological need for fuel for the body's processes; 'appetite' is a desire to eat and has nothing to do with need. After a large meal saying 'I need something sweet' is a conditioned response based on desire rather than need. Note to self – in that moment you do not need anything.
- Do not buy junk food, if it is there it is too easy to eat and fat can only be stored as fat! If you have a craving for junk food and it's not there then no harm done!

The above list is in no way an all-inclusive list but hopefully demonstrates the straightforward principles that determine weight loss and long-term weight control. In today's society it takes diligence and restraint. High calorie, palatable food is everywhere. The big problem is that few people move much during their day and this lowers calorific requirements for weight maintenance. If fat loss is your goal then you MUST create a calorie deficit and this leaves little room for error, extravagance or a half-hearted approach. Ultimately it comes down to the dreaded 'L' word = **LIFESTYLE**. If you want to eat whatever you want you have two choices:

1) Move a lot

2) Gain weight and stop complaining and looking for places to lay the blame

That's the harsh truth to weight control!