



# Winning Weight Wars

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The number of Australians with obesity has doubled in the last decade. It is now projected that the number of overweight and obese is probably over 70% now, with a minimum of 140 Australians dying prematurely every day from diseases related to obesity.

Obesity is occurring for two major reasons:

1. There is a decline in physical activity. We are all living much more sedentary lives with our work, and changing modes of transportation and urbanisation are contributing factors. Only one hundred years ago, our ancestors, both the children and the adults, were using somewhere between 3-5 times more energy than we are now.
2. There is an increase in the intake of energy dense foods, highly processed sugars, and foods that are high animal fats and proteins.

We can define obesity and overweight on two ways:

1. Body Mass Index - which is your weight in kilograms divided by your height in meters squared. If you're between 18.5 and 25, you are in the healthy range; 25 – 30 is overweight; and over 30 is obese. There are limitations to this as it does not distinguish between fat and muscle mass. It is therefore not useful in a number of ethnic groups, some athletes and those with physical disabilities for example.
2. Waist circumference is often a much better measurement to use. Waist circumference measures your visceral fat, which is the dangerous type of fat that builds up around the internal organs in the abdomen and puts you at much greater health risk, than if you have fat on the thighs or hips. In women, you need to be less than 80 cm and in men less than 94 cm to reduce your risk of a number of chronic diseases.



The harmful visceral fat that builds up around organs in the abdomen and the chest is far more dangerous than the fat in the arms or the legs. This visceral fat secretes a lot of toxic

inflammatory chemicals and hormones. These cause a variety of problems such as

- decreasing your bodies sensitivity to insulin,
- Stimulating uncontrolled growth of some cells which can lead to cancer,
- Interfering with the body fluid balance,
- Promoting atherosclerosis, and
- Disrupting the electric activity in the heart and causing an arrhythmia.

Overall, it promotes inflammation throughout the whole body that can lead to a host of chronic diseases.

Obesity related chronic diseases include:

- Coronary Artery Disease
- Stroke
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Osteoarthritis
- Liver Disease
- Gallbladder Disease
- Kidney Disease
- Sleep Apnoea
- Depression

The good news is that we can lose this visceral fat and significantly reduce our risk of all these diseases, with appropriate lifestyle changes.



First and foremost – we need to manage our mindset. With the right mindset, you'll get the right results. The best place to start is to address it from the highest level – your spirituality. We need to place the correct value on the gift of life and the body we have been given to live in. Here are a couple of Bible verses that you can read and ponder as you start the journey to healthy weight management.

1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20 - *Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* Not only do you belong to God by creation, but you were paid for by the life of Jesus. You have double the value. 1 Corinthians 10: 31 - *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of*

God. Every choice you make for your health, ask yourself, is this the best thing for my health? Is this what God would want me to put in or do to my body?

Think of weight loss as the journey for the rest of your life – you're going to change your lifestyle for good, and not just implement a diet for a few weeks or several months. Make the changes for your overall health rather than just a focus on weight loss alone. When you are making choices each day, work out if this is something you need, or are you just feeding your cravings. Remember, that anything real, anything worthwhile in life takes effort and time. There is no safe or effective quick fix to life's challenges and that includes your health and your weight. Set yourself realistic and achievable goals and don't worry about others or even societal expectations. If you set the bar too high, you will give up very quickly. Always focus on the successful changes that you are going to achieve each day, and not on any past failures that you've had in your journey.



Getting the right long-term diet is not about counting calories but rather, it is finding one that burns the most calories or energy. There is only one diet that fits this objective: the whole food plant-based diet – rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains in their natural form or as close as possible. Eating these foods completely changes the way your body uses up calories or the energy you are consuming, and there is an increase in the proportion of dietary calories expended either as body heat or through voluntary physical activity. Therefore:

- There is less storage of energy as body fat,
- There is an overall increase in fat degradation and loss of body fat with this lifestyle choice,
- More of a highly specialized brown adipose tissue is formed, that greatly enhances the metabolism - stops you from putting energy into fat stores and instead uses it to produce body heat
- You don't even need to count calories when you're on this diet, and
- It has all the amazing life-giving properties of fibre, anti-oxidants, vitamins and minerals – reducing risk of and in some cases reversing diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers and the like.

An observational study in rural China showed that these people were eating more calories per unit of body weight than the Westerners but their BMI's were a lot less, even when taking into account the amount of exercise they were doing. This was because they had a high complex carbohydrate, low protein diet almost entirely from whole or unprocessed plant-based foods.

There are certain plant-based foods that can enhance the weight loss. The leafy greens such as kale, rocket and collard greens are high in a fat blocking agents called thylakoids. Thylakoids slow down the absorption of fat and allow for really strong signals to be sent to the brain to tell you that you are full, which in turn suppresses your appetite. Apples, pears and berries are also standout categories as foods associated with the most weight loss. Legumes, lentils, beans are really helpful in suppressing the appetite

and reducing daily intake of calories. Flaxseed can significantly reduce body weight, BMI and waist circumference. It has to be in the form of whole or ground flaxseed, not as an extract or the oil to get the benefits.

Fasting is one way you can help with weight loss but not the kind that is prolonged as prolonged fasts need strict medical supervision. Fasting is also not an option for those with very active lives, children, pregnant or breast-feeding women, insulin-dependent diabetics, and some others with chronic disease. This is all about a simple overnight fast - confining the daily meals to a restricted window of time. There is research showing that just by sticking to a 6-hour window period ending by 3 pm each day was helpful for



- significant weight loss,
- but there was also a reduction in oxidative stress
- and insulin resistance,
- and the average drop in blood pressure was equivalent to using the most potent blood pressure medications.

If you don't have a really active lifestyle, two hearty meals a day, in that 6-hour window is an option. If you find it really difficult to achieve the long overnight fast with your work commitments, then keep your last meal really light and stop eating by 6 or 7 pm.

The sizes of the meals throughout the day do make a difference when it comes to weight management. Have the main meal in the morning and only a small meal in the evening. Of all the meals, put the effort into breakfast. It will kick start the metabolism and provide energy for the day's activities – when it is most needed. You will be more alert and productive and it will reduce the drive to snack and seek the wrong foods throughout the day. Further, you won't go to bed with a full stomach that can interfere with your sleep.

There are some other helpful dietary lifestyle changes. Eat slowly. This gives time for the brain to tell you when you've had enough and that you are full. Chew your food thoroughly. Not only does this help with the digestion process, it also slows down the eating. Don't snack between meals, just drink water. Research has shown that the more frequently a person eats, the more they tend to weigh. Limiting the number of meals improves physical endurance, and it increases the number of calories that are burnt off when they are eaten in fewer meals – it is better for the metabolism.

Drinking water is vital in your healthy lifestyle and weight loss plan. If you ignore your thirst mechanism, your body will resort to hunger signals in an attempt to get your attention and give it some fluids, so thirst is often misperceived as hunger. Drinking plenty of water, about 2 L per day, will prevent those abnormal hunger signals. Water has no calories itself but, it has been shown to increase the number of calories that your body burns at rest. There have been a few studies that show even just drinking 1-1.5 L per day there was significant reduction in weight, body mass index (BMI), waist circumference and body fat in as little as 3 weeks in overweight individuals. Try not to drink with your meals, only between meals, as it can impede digestion.





Take all alcohol out of your diet. It provides no nutritional benefit, no vitamins and no minerals. Gram for gram, it has almost double the calories of sugar, and it hinders your body from burning fat. It also causes greater hunger sensations, reduces the feeling of being full, and leads to poorer food choices.



Exercise is an absolutely essential part of the healthy lifestyle. Aerobic exercise – the kind that makes you huff and puff – is fantastic at burning calories and reducing the bad types of fat in the body. Brisk walking,

aerobics and cycling are great examples. Try to get 3-5 hours of this type of exercise each week. Resistance exercise, such as lifting small weight and using resistance bands, is a type of exercise that builds muscle mass. This is also important. The more muscle mass you have the higher your metabolism, and this will help to burn more calories around the clock, even at rest. This exercise also helps to prevent the drop in metabolism that can occur when you are losing. Try to include at least 2-3 session of resistance exercise each week. The timing of the exercise also plays a role in weight loss. More fat is burned on an empty stomach so it's best to exercise before a meal, or at least 6 hours after a meal.

Sleep plays an important role in managing the weight. One analysis of 20 different studies including 300,000 people found a 41% increased obesity risk among adults who slept fewer than 7 hours per night. If you are not getting a good night sleep, you will have lower daytime levels of leptin – a hormone that makes you feel full; and higher levels of the ghrelin – a hormone that makes you feel hungry. Therefore, there is an increase in food seeking behaviours with a much higher intake of carbohydrates. Research has shown that reducing the hours of sleep among men and women down to four hours, led to these individuals seeking out and consuming about 1200kj more each day on top of their usual intake – and this was not generally healthy foods. There is consequently a two-fold increased risk of becoming obese. Poor sleep has been also shown to adversely affect self-control and decision-making abilities, as well as increase the brain's reward centers reaction to food. You are more likely to make poor food choices and increase the intake of foods high in energy, fats, and processed sugar. If you are going to bed a reasonable hour (between 9 and 10pm) you are going to avoid one of the worse habits for causing weight gain – late night snacking. Eating late at night is associated with greater weight gain, a higher BMI, and decreased fat burning — making weight loss a whole lot more difficult.



Even sunlight can be helpful in the weight loss journey. There are subcutaneous fat cells, or white fat cells that can be found right beneath the skin. It is a major fat depot in humans and plays a role in the metabolism. It is a bad kind of fat, because it stores calories that should be burned for energy and is a contributor to obesity, diabetes and heart disease. A study in a diabetes institute in Canada has found that when the sun's blue light wavelengths — the light that can be seen with the eye — penetrates the skin and reaches the fat cells just beneath, lipid droplets reduce in size and are released out of the cell. In other words, the cells don't store

as much fat. Therefore, make sure you have your daily dose of morning sunlight before 11 am.

There are a few helpful herbs that can assist with the weight loss. Garlic, either raw (a few cloves daily) if you aren't going in public, or powdered (½ teaspoon daily), can help drop the weight and reduce the waistline. Ginger root is another way you can boost the metabolism by about 10%. Dried ginger is more effective than fresh and you only need about ½ teaspoon each day. Include a couple of cups of Hibiscus tea every day with at least 3g of the dried calyces. It induces weight loss in terms of both the waist line and the body fat. The research does show that it can boost the metabolism and lock up the fat digesting enzyme in the gut.

Having contrast showers stimulates the production of a special brown fat that burns a lot more energy and leads to a boost in the metabolism. This will lead to a more efficient weight loss. So how can you implement this at home? 5 minutes hot, 1 minute cold, 3 minutes hot, 1 minute cold, 3 minutes hot, 1 minute cold; making the water as hot as you can tolerate it but not burning, and on the coldest setting for the cold portion. Try to do this at least 2-3 times per week. This is not advisable if you are particularly frail or have any heart rhythm or high blood pressure issues.

### Healthy Weight Prescription

- Remember that your body is a Temple
- Lifestyle change, eat for health
- Set realistic goals
- Eat the whole-food plant-based diet
- Plan the size and timing of your meals
- Eat slowly and avoid snacking
- Drink 2L of water each day
- Exercise before breakfast
- Sleep well
- Get a dose of morning sun each day
- Take Hibiscus and Ginger Tea
- Contrast shower 2-3 times each week