

7 SECRETS OF WEIGHT LOSS REVEALED

- when diet & exercise don't work

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While the authors of this work have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this book is as accurate and up to date as possible at the time of completion, medical knowledge is constantly changing. Therefore, it is recommended that readers always consult a qualified medical specialist for individual advice, which should be sought before any action is taken. The authors and publishers cannot be held responsible for any errors and omissions that may be found in the text, or any actions that may be taken by a reader as a result of any reliance on the information contained in the text, which is taken entirely at the reader's own risk. It is recommended that a full medical check-up is undertaken prior to commencing any weight loss program. If you are under a physician's care for a medical condition, discuss your weight loss concerns before you start any program. Remember that regular medical checkups are essential to a healthy lifestyle. No written text can possibly replace the services of a health-care provider who knows you personally.

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Foreword

If you have dieted and exercised in the past only to be disappointed with the results or should I say 'lack of results', then don't dismay or give up just yet... Diets and exercise are just two pieces of a complex puzzle and they may work for some but not for everyone.

There are also a few added challenges that women encounter when trying to lose weight – that just do not affect men at all! This book is for all of you ladies who have tried to lose weight, want to lose weight or believe after years of frustration that you can't lose weight.

For those of you that have pushed yourselves through difficult diets to no avail or exercised religiously, but still battle getting results... read on, this is especially for you.

Here are **Seven Secrets** that are budget friendly and will increase your chances to successfully lose weight and keep it off for the rest of your life. They are secrets because most of the weight loss industry will not tell you about them. They specifically focus on the needs of women and that's why they make the difference to your weight and your overall health.

Enjoy and Good Luck



Narelle Stegehuis ND, ANPA

"Australian women spend almost \$414 million per annum to manage their weight & increasing rates of obesity suggest that young women's efforts to manage their weight are ineffective – promotion of safe, low cost weight management strategies could help alleviate the substantial health & economic costs of obesity & weight control." (MJA, "The costs of weight control: what do young women pay?" 2003)

Secret 1

The Diet Myth – Not All Diets Will Help You Lose Weight

The Truth about Diets

When trying to lose weight, you may instantly think of going on a diet. This can be either decreasing the amount of food you eat, decreasing your calorie intake, cutting out certain kinds of foods, cutting out junk foods, skipping meals, eating healthier or following one of the many popular or fad diets that are promoted today.

There is so much information floating through women's magazines, on TV and the internet, that we often may even pick up bits and pieces of information and try them out...well, why not, surely it couldn't hurt...right?

Wrong! Excessive dieting and depriving your system of food and energy can shock your system into a "Starvation Mode". This is one of the biggest problems with diets!

If the correct balance of energy and nutrition is not consumed with your meals you may not achieve the desired dieting results and get what you hoped for. Instead you may actually be contributing to a sluggish metabolism and making your system "Diet Resistant"!

Diets and Your Metabolism

Metabolism refers to the chemical processes occurring inside the body allowing life and normal functioning. These processes require energy from food. The amount of energy (calories) your body burns at any given time is regulated by your metabolism. You can't control your metabolism, but you can make it work for you! Your metabolism is controlled by hormones and the nervous system. Its functioning can be influenced by a number of things and among these are genetic disorders and

hormonal problems.

The two main processes of your metabolism are:

- **Anabolism** – energy is stored in fat cells or used to repair your body.
- **Catabolism** - the breakdown of food components (such as carbohydrates, proteins and fats) into their simpler forms, to be used to create energy.

Your Metabolic Rate is the rate your body uses or expends energy; this is particularly relevant when you are trying to lose weight. There are three aspects that influence your metabolic rate that are helpful to understand.

1. **Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)** – Your BMR determines the amount of calories burned at rest by your body and the amount of energy your body needs to maintain itself. It usually contributes 50-80 per cent of your total energy used. Muscle mass is largely responsible for the BMR, so anything that reduces your lean muscle mass will reduce your BMR.
2. **Energy used during physical activity** - Energy used during exercise is the only form of energy expenditure that you have any control over. In a normally active person, this contributes 20 per cent of daily energy use.
3. **Thermic effect of food** – This is the energy you use to eat, digest and metabolise food. It contributes about 5-10 per cent of your energy use. Your BMR rises after you eat because you use energy to metabolise the food. The rise occurs soon after you start eating and peaks two to three hours later.

Your BMR, the major contributor to your metabolic rate, is influenced by a number of factors:

- Muscle Mass – the more muscle you have, the faster your BMR. People with more lean muscle mass burn more energy even when asleep!
- Age - metabolism slows with age, due to muscle loss and hormonal changes.
- Genetics - your metabolic rate may be partly decided by your genes.
- Amount of body fat
- Hormonal and nervous controls
- Dietary deficiencies - for example, a diet low in iodine reduces thyroid function, which slows metabolic functioning.
- Crash dieting, starving or fasting - eating too few kilojoules encourages the body to slow the metabolism to conserve energy; BMR can drop by up to 15 per cent. There is also loss of lean muscle tissue, which further contributes to the drop in BMR.
- Amount of physical activity - hard-working muscles need plenty of energy to burn. Regular exercise increases muscle mass and 'teaches' the body to burn kilojoules at a faster rate, even when at rest.
- Drugs - some drugs can influence your BMR.

The human body is infinitely intelligent and has the potential to adapt to its environment perfectly. For example, when you do not eat or dramatically reduce your food or calorie intake, the body senses that you may not have enough energy to sustain normal activities. So, the thyroid gland slows your metabolism down to accommodate this; it lowers the energy requirements needed by the body. This is what is commonly referred to as a 'slow metabolism'.

This is the perfect response – it is trying to keep you alive! It's like a car running on fewer cylinders and therefore your body shifts gears and then starts to use less fuel. It's actually a fantastic survival mechanism, but is also a disaster if you are trying to lose weight!

For some, decreasing the amount of food they eat or consuming fewer calories can certainly help weight loss. But if done excessively it also can have a slowing effect on your metabolism and how your body utilises food and energy. In other words, your body won't respond to the diet in the way that you want it to; it actually may flip the other way and make you more prone to weight gain. Successful dieting is far more complex than just reducing food input and increasing your energy output through exercise. If you disrupt the normal balance too much – you will disrupt your body's metabolism.

Starving your body, radical diets and skipping meals can actually create a harmful cycle in your body that can make weight loss even more difficult than before.

If your body goes into a "Starvation Mode" and slows your metabolism it means that your system now needs even less food as energy to survive than it did before. The main effect of drastic dieting is the effect it has on the thyroid gland. This is the gland that keeps your metabolism kicking along at a healthy rate and if your thyroid function slows down, so does your metabolism.

Obesity is present in nearly half of all women with PCOS

Kahn MI. Polycystic ovary syndrome. eMedicine.com 2007

The Futility of Calorie Counting

A calorie is a unit measure of energy in food. A simple model for weight loss is based upon calorie counting and efficient energy expenditure but it is not always reliable. The calorie counting concept revolves around how many calories or how much energy you input versus the amount of calories or energy you burn (or output) through daily activities.

Simplistically, if you eat more than your body needs, this leads to weight gain as the body turns the remaining energy into fat stores. Based upon this theory weight loss occurs when you reduce the calories consumed and increase the energy output.

The problem is when you deprive your body of energy, it tries to conserve fuel. This slows down your metabolism and encourages fat storage.

If you suffer from hormonal imbalances already, whether known or unknown, this method of dieting may not work. Your hormones are actually causing your body to be in a 'weight preserving' mode where your body stores fat, rather than a 'weight loss' mode. (I'll discuss this further in our next secret).

Can Generic Diets ever be Right for Everyone?

We are all uniquely individual and as such have different nutritional needs and different energy needs. It therefore goes without saying that one diet cannot suit all of us. For women the variables multiply, especially when we look at the different hormones in your system that can influence weight gain. When you think about it, our food is just a whole lot of chemical molecules, and this chemistry changes depending upon what you eat.

Hormones are the chemical messengers in your body that activate certain biochemical actions in your organs and cells. These messengers act in a very subtle manner and are easily influenced. Individuals respond differently to diets primarily due to their own personal hormonal response. Some will lose weight easily, while others will barely get it to budge. Often this action of hormones in your system can change through different stages of your life and these changes can be triggered by a variety of reasons that we will discuss in Secret number 3.

Unless you know what is happening with your hormones and metabolism – it is almost impossible to predict your results. If your system is in fat-retaining mode rather than fat-burning mode, all the hard work may be in vain.

Could the Weight Loss Industry be Part of the Problem?

The remarkable results you may hear of from fad diets or diet products are actually often not what they seem. In many cases the 'shrinkage' is due to water or fluid loss rather than the all important fat loss. This is unhealthy and unsustainable! The main problem is that it's not 'real' weight loss.

Many diets also increase the likelihood of 'insulin resistance', which occurs when your cells resist the signals from the insulin in your system telling them to use the energy from your food. Without this energy being used the insulin then encourages the body to store the energy as fat. This is definitely NOT the desired outcome.

That is why so many women experience the dreaded rebound weight gain and find it even harder to lose the weight next time around.

Here are some more Diet Industry problems:

- Pre packaged food often contains rice and white flour products that encourage insulin resistance and rebound weight gain.
- Small Portion Sizes slow down the metabolism and encourage the body to go into a fat-storing mode.
- Branded Diet foods in supermarkets are often low in fat but may contain sugars or be high in carbohydrates.
- Diet pills can over-stimulate the adrenal glands, potentially leading to weight problems later.

Case Study: Weight Loss Gone Wrong!

Here is a typical example. After having a baby Kathy weighs 80kg and seems to be continuing to gain weight rather than lose it. She tries to diet and eat less as well as exercise more, but gets little to no real results. She tries again a bit later with a different diet that really worked for her friend who lost 10kg. Unfortunately she struggles through it but only loses a couple of kilos. When she stops the diet, she instantly starts to put on weight again. Her metabolism has slowed down even further and so goes the frustrating cycle. Kathy's hormones had changed after having the baby, dieting on top of this actually just multiplied the problem.

If this sounds familiar to you: STOP. Do not go on another diet until you know what is happening to your HORMONES. If there is an imbalance, it can be corrected easily, so you can lose weight like everyone else. To get your own personal weight loss hormonal assessment, go to www.massattack.com.au

Weight Gain and Morbidity

This negative cycle of dieting and rebound weight gain can lead you down a dangerous path. You see it's not just your weight and dress size that are at stake here, you are placing yourself in a high risk category for metabolic syndrome – a leading cause of Type 2 Diabetes and Heart Disease. And you do not need to be obese to suffer from these life threatening conditions, they can happen to anyone. However, obesity is on the increase. For example, did you know:

- It is now widely recognised that we have an epidemic of obesity, with over 55% of Australians overweight or obese.
- An estimated 1.5 million people under the age 18 are considered over-weight or obese. This means about 20-25% of Australian children are over-weight or obese.
- Yet - at any one time, 33% of Australians are currently on a diet, or trying to lose weight.
- While obesity increased 2-4 times, being over-weight increased 60-70%. This shows signs not just of increasing, but accelerating.
- If weight gain continues the path it is following, by the year 2020, 80% of all Australian adults and a third of all children will be over-weight or obese.

Secret 2

Hormone Imbalance - The Secret Cause of Weight Gain

So why is it a Secret?

Although medical science, doctors, endocrinologists and naturopaths may know about how hormones affect weight gain and weight loss, it is often not discussed or considered by most of the weight loss industry.

The simplistic model of 'energy in versus energy out' usually is the most commonly used weight loss strategy. That is, eating less and exercising more. Depending on the individual's Hormonal Profile and what types of food they eat, this will either work a treat or fail dismally.

Unfortunately it is not common practice to get our hormones checked, but you see even the slightest imbalances can tip the scales and just make weight loss a futile exercise.

Hormones are often not integrated into diet programs because frankly they are very complex. There are numerous different hormones in the body and these present in over a thousand possible combinations that can affect your health and weight. So because it takes time and specific analysis to identify your hormonal combination, it is commonly missed by other health professionals. In fact working alongside other modalities can really help you to get the results you need.

For example:

Marina was counting her calories and exercising with a personal trainer twice weekly, but still not losing weight. Her personal trainer thought there must have been more to it. As it turned out, Marina had an underlying thyroid imbalance and Poly Cystic Ovarian Disorder – both major contributors to a sluggish metabolism and weight gain.

Success was finally achieved by discovering what foods are suitable for her hormonal combinations and treating the underlying contributing factors to her weight gain.

[Read her story](#)

Hormonal changes associated with PMS contribute to weight gain in women.

Carmichael AR. Evidence-based complimentary and alternative medicine. Oxford Univ Press. 2007.

The Endocrine System

The endocrine system is an integrated network of small glands that produce and secrete molecules known as hormones. The main glands in the endocrine system are the Hypothalamus, Pituitary, Pineal, Thyroid, Parathyroid, Thymus, Pancreas, Adrenal, and Ovaries. It is the regulation of these glands that is crucial to your body being able to lose weight.

What are Hormones?

Hormones are chemical messengers that tell your organs and cells what to do. This system is like a communication network as it sends out messengers and then responds to feedback. It is governed by the master gland: the pituitary gland. The hormone molecules are released by one of the endocrine glands and then travel through the blood until they reach a cell with a receptor that it fits, like a lock and key, where only small amounts are required to have an effect. The signal may tell the cell to produce a certain chemical, hormone, protein or to grow or multiply. Nearly every biological process in the body involves hormones: metabolism, growth, puberty, immune function and reproduction.

Hormones and Your Metabolism

Fat storage or fat burning in the body is dictated by hormones, specifically the hormone Insulin. There are also other hormones that affect and influence your metabolism. It is like a big interrelated web where a subtle increase in one hormone may lead to responses from other endocrine glands that produce other hormones causing symptoms such as fatigue, mood changes, low libido and weight gain to name a few. Actually when the word metabolism is often used with regards to your weight – it is actually referring to the hormonal activity and responses within

your body. Your hormones determine your metabolic rate and your likelihood to lose or store fat.

Common Hormone Imbalances that Lead to Weight Gain:

Thyroid

There are 4 main hormones secreted by the thyroid that directly affect your metabolism and body fat. Even a slightest imbalance can throw the equilibrium out. Your thyroid regulates the metabolism of sugars and fats and muscular strength. When the thyroid gland is not working properly or if there is an imbalance, this can impede metabolic performance leading to fat storage. The problem is that even a low to normal thyroid function can lead to weight gain, especially combined with other hormonal irregularities.

It was this imbalance that I found myself with after the birth of my daughter, leading to frustrating symptoms of fatigue and stubborn weight that just wouldn't budge. To read more about **my personal battle and path to success** [Click Here.](#)

Adrenal

The adrenal glands are linked to our oldest survival mechanism in the body, the 'fight or flight' mechanism. These glands secrete hormones such as Adrenaline and Cortisol that enable us to respond rapidly to stressful or unexpected situations. These hormones give you more energy to deal with the situation at hand. When we are stressed for extended periods of time, however, the hormones can actually have a negative effect on the body and the adrenal glands can become fatigued, leading to many symptoms including weakness, tiredness, and weight gain.

Reproductive

The female sex hormones change naturally during the menstrual cycle and are the key to your reproductive health. Changes usually occur as a result of influences from your thyroid, adrenals, ovaries and pancreas. **Oestrogen** dominance is a condition that describes normal to excessive oestrogen in the body relative to progesterone levels. Often this occurs when we fail to ovulate. Oestrogen excess is known to decrease thyroid activity and to encourage the storage of blood sugar as fat – the result is a decrease in your metabolism and the vicious cycle of weight gain continues. There are also many chemicals in our environment today that we unknowingly ingest that mimic the effects of oestrogen. This increases the likelihood of oestrogen dominance. Some of the symptoms of this imbalance include weight gain, menstrual problems, breast tenderness, PMS and mood swings.

Mandy's story:

To Mandy, struggling with her weight was nothing new. She had tried diets throughout her life, but was still overweight. Mandy also had an ovarian disorder that caused her hormones to be out of balance. As soon as the hormonal imbalance was being treated, Mandy started to lose weight. She was a size 24 and now she's a healthy size 12.

[Read her story](#)

Insulin

Insulin resistance appears to sit at the centre of a web of related hormonal imbalances. It often accompanies the most common complaints - fatigue and weight gain. This is because it interferes with your carbohydrate metabolism. Increased intolerance to carbohydrates means you find it easier to gain weight, especially around your waist. Your afternoon fatigue and sugar cravings may all be early insulin resistance symptoms.

Excess body fat is both a cause & effect of this. Making the effort to restore your body's insulin sensitivity is crucial to rehabilitating your metabolism.

Symptoms:

- Mood Changes
- Cravings
- High blood pressure
- High Cholesterol
- Fatigue
- Foggy thinking
- Female reproductive disorders
- Sub-fertility
- Weight gain

Factors such as dietary influences, ovarian imbalance and adrenal hypersensitivity contribute to stimulating the release of your 'fat storing hormone' insulin - a key intermediary in the relationship between your hormonal links contributing to your weight gain. Insulin regulates your blood-sugar levels within an extremely narrow range; it is also responsible for storing fat in your fat cells.

Weight loss is decreased by low thyroid hormone levels.

Kokkoris P, Pi-Sunyer FX. Obesity and endocrine disease. Endocrinol Metab Clin North Am. 2003;32(4):895-914

What is Insulin Resistance?

When your cells become insulin-resistant, they become resistant to insulin's message. To hear the message your body has to turn up the volume. It does this by increasing the amount of insulin your pancreas makes for a given amount of glucose in the blood. In this situation, your blood insulin levels are chronically higher, which inhibits your fat cells from giving up their energy stores to let you lose weight.

Being insulin resistant means your body stops responding to insulin, and instead grabs every calorie it can and deposits it as fat. So no matter how little you eat, you will gradually gain weight.

How Does Insulin Resistance Affect Me?

The health effects of insulin resistance are dramatic. Besides leading directly to diabetes, it's been implicated in heart disease, breast cancer, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) and many more diseases. It also often accompanies, and contributes to, related problems of hormonal imbalance such as adrenal fatigue & thyroid imbalance.

Because insulin is one of your "major" hormones, it's also impossible for your body to balance its "minor" hormones (oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone) until your insulin metabolism is balanced first. If you have other hormonal imbalances, it is going to be nearly impossible to cure these without first healing your insulin resistance.

Of special concern is how insulin resistance disrupts your fat metabolism. When your cells won't absorb the extra glucose, your liver has to convert it into fat. Fat cells are loaded with glucose receptors, so this is a vicious cycle. Ironically, while

you are gaining weight, your cells are actually “starved” for glucose, so you feel exhausted and tend to eat carbohydrate-heavy foods in search of energy.

These extra fat cells are also little oestrogen factories contributing to oestrogen dominance. This causes many ovarian imbalances in women. The decrease of certain hormones, like estradiol, may trigger sensitivity to insulin.

Hopefully the picture that’s emerging is that your body’s hormonal balance is like a symphony. Insulin is one of the loudest and most dramatic instruments. When it’s out of balance, it throws out everything else.

The Vicious Cycle of Hormone Imbalance

As you can see from reading above, the different hormones can all be influenced by each other and one imbalance can trigger other imbalances. Hormone balance can also be affected by diet and external factors such as stress, drugs and hormone-mimicking chemicals in the environment. Traditional dieting techniques can stimulate the vicious cycle even further, it is a subtle balancing act. The only way to safely navigate this is to know what is going on with your system before trying to lose weight. These imbalances can then be put right rather than spiral out of control when you start dieting.

The Dangers of Hormone Imbalance

Infertility is one of the major dangers of hormone imbalance and hormonal weight gain. Often women will know that they are having trouble conceiving but will not relate it to this greater problem of hormonal imbalance happening within their system. Losing weight has been proven to increase fertility rates and balancing out the hormonal factors is a large part of this.

Secret 3

Major Triggers of Hormonal Imbalance and Weight Gain

Pregnancy

The reality of motherhood is that life after a baby means that you really don't have much time – any time - for yourself. Many women still feel like a train wreck months after the “magical” date of six weeks post-partum and wonder when & how am I going to get my life back?

Many chronic illnesses in new mothers go untreated. This is because symptoms are mistaken for common complaints of sleep deprivation, but sometimes there is more to the story. Nearly all new mothers find that the weeks and months following the birth of a baby are difficult – most report some pain after childbirth, sleep deprivation, feeding anxiety, fatigue, mental confusion, and of course, the infamous “baby blues.” While all these symptoms are normal, most disappear within a few months.

But some women suffer more intense, longer-lasting postpartum troubles and these troubles may be directly related to hormones. In up to 10% of women, birth may trigger a condition called *Postpartum Thyroiditis*. It is an autoimmune condition that can occur after delivery where the immune system of the mother produces antibodies that attack the thyroid gland. As a result the thyroid gland becomes inflamed and dysfunctional. It begins by over stimulating the thyroid and usually progresses to reduced thyroid activity and a slower metabolism. Weight gain usually follows.

Adrenal Hypersensitivity is also common after child birth and simply means your adrenals have been, and perhaps still are, working over-time. Therefore you are much more likely to suffer from fatigue, forgetfulness, mood swings and sleep disturbances. This also unfortunately can lead to weight gain.

Menopause

During menopause most women gain weight and experience a change in body shape, for example, the dreaded waistline thickening. One of the underlying reasons for this change is that women in their midlife period experience a slowdown in their metabolic rate to about 10-15% of what it was pre-menopause. Your body also becomes more efficient at taking energy into your cells and storing it in the form of fat. In addition, as oestrogen levels fall, your appetite increases!

The hormonal shifts of menopause predispose you to central obesity. Abdominal fat cells are more metabolically active – and potentially more dangerous – than the fat cells on your hips and thighs. They can contribute to insulin resistance, a metabolic condition in which your body has to secrete more and more insulin to clear the sugar out of the blood, and these fat cells can amplify androgens and oestrogen in the body.

Often by the time menopause is reached, the adrenal glands may be moving towards adrenal fatigue which increases the tendency to gain weight around the tummy area.

Stress

Stress stimulates the adrenal glands into action by secreting hormones to assist us with the rigours of life. But unfortunately, if we are subjected to long periods of stress from work, deadlines, responsibilities or major life events such as deaths, divorce or other traumas, we can suffer from adrenal hypersensitivity or adrenal fatigue.

One of the main problems from ongoing stress and adrenal stimulation is the elevation of cortisol in the body. Usually the levels of adrenal hormones will rise and fall according to the stress response. But when there has been ongoing stress,

Cortisol levels often do not return to normal, they remain high. This can start to break down your cells including muscle and bone, weaken your immune system and impair metabolic and digestive functions.

Lifestyle Issues

Lack of sleep, or sleep deprivation, is a kind of stress we often do not consider. It leads to over stimulated adrenal glands and thyroid imbalance which spirals into other hormonal imbalances.

Poor diet, especially highly refined foods, sugars, white flour products, caffeine and toxins can cause the hormonal balance to adversely shift, contributing to a negative cycle of weight gain, insulin resistance and diabetes.

Energy Drinks are trendy and popular but are laden with sugar and caffeine that over-stimulate and overwhelm the system causing imbalances.

Addictions to recreational drugs, cigarettes and alcohol put a lot of pressure on the body. Being innately intelligent, the body adapts and tries to shift gears to help cope with the toxins and effects of these substances. Often after giving up such addictions people may put on weight. This can be the result of food substituting the addiction or more likely hormonal imbalances that the drugs have caused.

In the case of alcohol it also contains a lot of carbohydrates that contribute to weight gain. Many recreational drugs over-stimulate the adrenal glands thus leading to adrenal burnout and thyroid imbalances and weight gain later. All of these addictions can take their toll on the liver which is responsible for detoxifying the system and assisting the break down of excess oestrogens.

Surgery or Blood Loss

Blood loss from haemorrhaging or surgery can cause anaemia and affect the function of the pituitary gland. This is largely due to a reduction of blood supply to the pituitary gland. The pituitary gland being the 'master' gland stimulates many of the other glands to produce hormones. When it is affected in this way it can impair the production of hormones that stimulate the ovaries and the thyroid. It is particularly this slowing of thyroid hormone production that leads to weight gain.

Major Illness

Viruses such as Glandular Fever, Epstein Barr virus and illnesses such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome can trigger an auto-immune response within the body. This is when the immune system attacks the healthy cells in the body as well as the disease causing pathogens. Sometimes this can directly affect the thyroid gland – the immune system can attack the cells of this gland and decrease its optimal function, thus causing a sluggish metabolism. This can also happen after pregnancy.

Environmental Toxins

An increasing number of researchers suspect that “environmental oestrogens” are contributing to hormonal imbalances. These chemicals mimic and disrupt the normal role of hormones in the body and are often called endocrine disruptors. Hormones can work at astonishingly small concentrations - in parts per billion which is why even small amounts of endocrine disrupters are dangerous.

Endocrine disruptors include oestrogenic petrochemicals that are pervasive in our air, food and water, pesticides and herbicides, plastics (polycarbonate plastics found in baby bottles and water jugs) and trans fatty acids found in manufactured products such as many deep fried fast foods, manufactured biscuits, pies, pastries, cakes, margarines, and any products where the label indicates that the product contains “partially hydrogenated oils”.

Actually, there are over 50 known environmental hormone mimics or hormone disruptors that can cause significant hormone imbalances.

Obesity reduces fertility in both men and women.

myDr.com.au

Secret 4

Conditions that Influence Hormone Imbalance & Weight Gain

Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

PCOS refers to multiple cysts on the ovaries and a host of other problems that go along with them. These include lack of ovulation and menstrual abnormalities, facial hair, male pattern baldness, acne, and obesity. Women suffering from this condition may also have varying degrees of insulin resistance and an increased incidence of type II diabetes, high cholesterol & elevated androgen levels.

By far the biggest lifestyle contributor to PCOS is poor diet. Research supports that a high consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates causes an unhealthy rise in insulin levels. Insulin stimulates androgen receptors on the outside of the ovary, causing the typical masculine PCOS symptoms. Eventually this type of diet leads to obesity, which can cause insulin resistance (the inability of the cells to respond to insulin) aggravating PCOS even more.

Women with PCOS produce excess insulin, because their cells are “resistant” to insulin and this excess insulin signals to the body to store more fat. That is why weight gain is usually a common side effect of PCOS.

Fibroids

Uterine fibroids, or uterine myomas, affect more than 30% of women. They occur when a single cell reproduces again & again from the muscular wall of the uterus and develops into a firm, rubbery type mass completely distinct from surrounding tissue. The signs and symptoms of fibroids are heavy bleeding, prolonged periods, bleeding between periods, pain, urinary problems and constipation to name a few.

Fibroids develop in an oestrogen dominant environment and can contribute to insulin sensitivity and weight gain. If you have weight problems and know you also have fibroids – it is a key sign that hormones are at play.

Ovarian Cysts

A cyst is a fluid-filled sac, and can be located anywhere in your body. On the ovary, different types of cysts can form. The most common type of ovarian cyst is called a functional cyst, which often forms during the normal menstrual cycle.

Each month, your ovaries grow tiny cysts that hold the eggs. When an egg is mature, the sac breaks open to release the egg, so it can travel through the fallopian tube for fertilisation. Then the sac dissolves. In one type of functional cyst, called a follicular cyst, the sac doesn't break open to release the egg but may continue to grow. This type of cyst usually disappears within one to three months.

A corpus luteum cyst, another type of functional cyst, forms if the sac doesn't dissolve. Instead, the sac seals off after the egg is released. Fluid then builds up inside of it. This type of cyst usually goes away on its own after a few weeks. However, it can grow to almost four inches and may bleed or twist the ovary and cause pain. Cysts contribute to weight gain by increasing oestrogen dominance & impeding glucose metabolism.

Endometriosis

The inner lining of your uterus is called the endometrium. The endometrium thickens during your menstrual cycle and then sheds when you have a period. Endometriosis occurs when parts of endometrial tissue are found in places other than the lining of your uterus. The endometrial tissue builds up and then sheds with each menstrual cycle. The 'renegade' deposits of endometrial tissue elsewhere in your body do the same.

The symptoms can be pain experienced during menstrual periods, intercourse, and ovulation. It can also contribute to lower back pain, bladder pain or frequent urination and premenstrual spotting. One of the theories behind endometriosis is an excess of oestrogen - this causes PMS symptoms and can lead to fat storing and weight gain.

PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome)

Many women accept premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and other menstrual irregularities as a normal part of life. In fact, at least 60% of women suffer from PMS & it is more common in women in their 30's. In reality, menstruation should not cause any significant interruption to your everyday living. Symptoms of PMS are a clear sign that your reproductive system is not working as well as it can be.

Essentially, your PMS is a consequence of disturbances in hormone production, elimination and metabolism. Hormones that underlie these disorders include gonadal hormones (eg oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone), insulin, thyroid hormones and even stress hormones (eg cortisol). Disturbances in the balance of these hormones are the result of endogenous and exogenous factors such as environmental toxins, inflammation, stress, poor diet and lack of exercise.

Weight gain occurs primarily because of oestrogen dominance. Oestrogen dominance describes a condition where you can have normal or excessive oestrogen, but have too little progesterone to balance oestrogen's effects in your body. This decreases thyroid function and increases fat storage.

Secret 5

The Warning Signs of Hormonal Weight Gain Are Your Symptoms

Cravings

Diets, energy levels and hormones can affect your desire for certain foods, and a small number of cravings can be the result of a food allergy. Stress can also play a role in stimulating your cravings due to it stimulating the release of cortisol. Cortisol stimulates the release of glucose, potentially contributing to metabolic syndrome and subsequent weight gain. It stimulates your appetite & can leave you craving carbohydrates, something you don't need when you are trying to lose weight!

This rebound effect is often incorrectly labelled as emotional eating. Although some of us do eat for comfort, often the cravings are ravenous & uncontrollable. If this is happening to you, it could be your hormones!

Fatigue

Fatigue is more than 'just feeling tired'. Without energy you can't meet the demands of a busy lifestyle. Tiredness & fatigue are often the result of underlying health problems.

Most importantly, unexplained weight change with fatigue may occur with any of the following conditions:

- Thyroid imbalance
- Adrenal gland problems, such as burn-out, Addison's or Cushing's disease
- Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)
- Endometriosis
- Fibroids
- Menopause
- Prolonged Stress
- Anaemia
- Poor Dietary Intake

Your fatigue could be a sign of an underlying hormone imbalance that, when fixed, will also help you lose weight.

Low Libido

Hormonal imbalances resulting from menopause, pregnancy, adrenal burnout, low thyroid function, fibroids, endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) can leave your libido lagging. Emotional factors such as stress, poor body image, anxiety and depression (often related to hormonal imbalance), also can compound this further. If you are fatigued, gaining weight and have lost your libido it could well be a sign that hormone imbalance is the culprit.

Menstrual problems

The cause of heavy periods is often associated with other underlying health conditions such as thyroid imbalance, fibroids, cysts or endometriosis. All of these conditions contribute to weight gain. Excessive oestrogen exposure throughout your menstrual cycle is thought to be a primary cause of painful periods, as it stimulates the excessive production of prostaglandins that cause pain and inflammation.

Cellulite and Fluid Retention

One of the reasons why women complain so much about cellulite and men do not, is because cellulite is thought to be provoked by an excess of oestrogen or oestrogen dominance.

Elevated oestrogen also leads to fluid retention breast tenderness, and can contribute to that 'puffy' look under the skin. As we have discussed, an excess of oestrogen tends to slow the activity of the thyroid gland reducing the metabolic rate. It also encourages the body to store fat, contributing to the development of unwanted cellulite.

Mood swings

Hormones can play havoc with your moods, and a taxing emotional time in your life can trigger hormonal imbalances. The hormonal/emotional connection can present in a number of different ways:

- emotional instability
- inability to cope
- premenstrual syndrome
- depression
- tearfulness
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- sleep disturbances
- irrational behaviour

Mood swings are a sign that you may be already experiencing some hormonal imbalances. These are often associated with oestrogen and the adrenal hormones.

Living in the 'fast' world of today exposes you to unavoidable levels of stress, causing elevation in the adrenal hormone cortisol. This over stimulates your nervous system causing the symptoms above. The problem with this is that sustained high levels of cortisol destroy healthy muscle (important for burning calories) thus decreasing your metabolism.

Cortisol also stimulates the release of glucose, potentially contributing to metabolic syndrome & subsequent weight gain. It stimulates your appetite & can leave you craving carbohydrates. This rebound effect can often be incorrectly labelled as emotional eating.

Enlarged Tender Breasts

Breast tissue is sensitive to high-fat, high-carbohydrate diets, which can raise oestrogen levels. It is also this elevated oestrogen that stimulates breast tissue and causes the enlargement and tenderness you may feel. If you suffer from these symptoms, they may be due to oestrogen dominance.

This hormonal imbalance can also lower your thyroid function and subsequently your metabolism – so you store more fat!

Not only do you eat more when you are stressed, but you release more cortisol – so it has a compounding effect upon your weight.

Epel E et. Al. Stress may add bite to appetite in women: a laboratory study of stress-induced cortisol and eating behaviour. Psychoneuroendocrinology. 2001;26(1):37-49.

Secret 6

Not All “Healthy” Foods Help You Lose Weight

Hormones in Food

Hormones can find their way into our food chain in various ways. Oestrogens and growth hormones particularly have been found in meat, especially beef, lamb, chicken and dairy products. Depending on the source and where you live, meat and dairy may contain these hormones. Different countries around the world have different industry regulations regarding hormone usage. One of the main reasons hormones are given to livestock is to “fatten” them up to increase their growth or milk production. So if increased levels of these hormones have that effect on animals, what will the effect be on us? We just need to be careful that we don’t get ‘fattened up’ as well!

Pesticides and herbicides that are often used in fruit and vegetable production contain chemicals commonly referred to as xenoestrogens. These mimic the effects of oestrogen in the body and can cause chaos.

Organic produce, including hormone-free meat and dairy, is always a safer alternative where possible.

Soy Products

Food sources derived from soybeans can slow thyroid function, lowering your energy levels, impeding metabolic performance and generally make you fatter!

Over the past decade, soy foods have become Australia's favourite health food. Many articles have been published promoting 'natural' soy products to be the key to disease prevention and to maximise longevity. The possible benefits of eating soy should be weighed against the proven risks.

The problem is we are consuming soy in its processed 'unnatural' form. Most of the soy we consume is soy based foods in the form of sausages, non-organic tofu, soymilk, soy 'energy bars' or other soy products that have infiltrated the marketplace.

Processed soy goes by several names including textured soy protein, soy protein isolate (SPI), and soy isoflavones. These ingredients are added to many health food products and protein supplements. Soy is a primary ingredient of 'low-carb' diet foods and protein bars. It is added to frozen meals, ice cream, breads, and canned foods.

Processed soy can cause problems such as:

- Depressed thyroid function
- Disruption of sex hormone functions
- Blocking of calcium and other mineral absorption
- Links to diabetes

All of the above problems contribute to poor metabolic performance and consequent weight gain.

Foods that Slow Thyroid Function

There are certain groups of foods that contain naturally occurring chemicals that have a slowing effect on thyroid function. They are known as goitrogens and are usually fine as part of a healthy balanced diet for most people. If, however, you already have an impaired or slow thyroid function and are gaining weight, these foods may reduce this even further. Foods containing goitrogens include cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage. Get your hormones checked to see if these are working for or against your weight loss goals.

The Problem with Food Advertising

Advertisers are in the business of selling pre-packaged foods and it's no surprise that they are not necessarily interested in you losing weight. Low Fat, Low Carb, No Added Sugar and Diet brands are commonly used advertising slogans that may mislead you into thinking that these products are actually good for you or will help you lose weight. Buyer Beware, in many cases they will NOT! Often they substitute one 'diet no-no' for another, with additives to make them appear like the 'real deal'. And most of us have no idea what all these little numbers on the back of the packs are, and what is hiding in this supposedly 'healthy' food?

"Low Fat" labelled products

Low Fat labelled products can often be misleading. Often when we want to lose weight, we may think these low fat products are the way to go. The problem is, that often they are full of sugars or carbohydrates. *When we eat too many of these highly refined carbohydrates – our body simply turns them into fat deposits anyway!*

No Added Sugar

Sounds great right? Well, not always. Often these products will still contain a high amount of carbohydrates, which will convert to glucose when we eat them anyway. They also may contain food additives such as artificial sweeteners like aspartame, which is considered by many as highly toxic to the body and has been linked to severe neurological disorders and many other ailments. Fresh and natural is always best. Be careful when they say something has been removed, often it has been replaced with something else that may not be so good for you!

Your Hormones Determine Which Foods Will Work for You

The real key to knowing which foods are best for you is by first ascertaining what is happening with your hormones. If you are overweight or struggling to lose those extra few kilos, you may have imbalance that is causing this. Once you know the source of this imbalance, for example, oestrogen dominance or under active thyroid, then you can be guided towards diet and lifestyle changes alongside supplements to help correct this.

Secret 7

Most Diets and 'Off-the-Shelf' Supplements Can Make an Undetected Imbalance Worse

The Dangers of Self Prescribing

The decision to lose weight and improve your health by taking supplements can be a positive move. But unless you know exactly what is going on with your system before you start, which let's face it is COMPLICATED; you are likely to be 'flying blind' so to speak. If you have a goal and you want to achieve certain results, it is always best to get professional guidance and a full **Personal Health and Hormone Assessment**. When you chop and change, guess or try this and that – often this just shocks your body into becoming more resistant to weight loss and it can make any current imbalances worse.

To get a comprehensive online Hormonal Assessment and recommendations go to our website at www.massattack.com.au

Diets

Self prescribing a diet is very haphazard. Diets that cut out or overemphasize certain food groups are unbalanced and unnatural. They can deprive your body of the nutrition it needs, not just calories. As we have discussed, many diets that cut back on the quantity of food can send your body into a fat storing mode. Often you will lose fluid rather than fat and then you risk having rebound weight gain. Many people will go on a cycle of diets, weight loss and then subsequent weight gain even after returning to a 'normal' diet. The risk you run when self prescribing a weight loss diet is that you may in the long term be slowing your metabolism and making your body even more resistant to weight loss. The best thing to do is to be

assessed for any Hormonal Imbalances and then eat according to a plan to normalise any imbalances. It is the most natural way for you to lose weight and it will be healing your body at the same time.

To get assessed and to get food recommendations for your hormonal profile, [Click Here](#)

Vitamins

Many people will start with a multivitamin from the supermarket or chemist in the hope of providing the proper balance of nutrients they need. The problem is that not all vitamin products are the same and everyone's needs are different.

Research has shown that there are significant differences in quality and absorption of supermarket brands compared to professional naturopathic brands. This means that often these supplements do not deliver what you think they will; often the standardisation, potency and absorbency levels are inferior. "But they are cheaper", you say – well unfortunately value for money isn't always relative to the price. A lot of your vitamins may be literally 'going down the drain' if unabsorbed; and if your digestion is not optimal, sometimes the whole pill will go straight through.

Sewerage plants find lots of capsules in their tanks every year! Vitamin absorbency can also be affected by medications that you are taking for other conditions. And yes, you can take too many vitamins, which can have toxic effects on your body as well. It is always 'better value for money' to have a personal assessment and then have supplements recommended and tailored to your needs.

Herbal Remedies

Natural herbs can have powerful effects on the body; let's face it, they are natural 'medicines'. They can have potent effects on hormones, your metabolism, digestion, organ function, immune system, nervous system and the body as a whole. Often they are available in health food shops, but they also vary in potency and effectiveness from professional brands. Sometimes these 'wonder herbs' are described in women's magazines or on the internet, but self prescribing herbal remedies without proper guidance can actually throw your system out or mask another underlying problem (such as ovarian cysts) if you have not been assessed first. Many popular herbs today are used to balance women's reproductive cycles and PMS. But if you take the wrong herb or quantity for your needs, you can actually cause more harm than good and disrupt the subtle balance within your system.

Don't get me wrong, herbal remedies are FANTASTIC, we recommend them all the time, but they need to be prescribed by a professional naturopath who can assess you first and make sure that they are right for YOU. We can prescribe herbs that will balance your hormones and rehabilitate your metabolism, but it is a complex area that needs experience to navigate. Not all herbal mixes and women's herbal tonics will be right for you. Your hormones and metabolism need to be assessed to get the best results without the risk.

Conclusion

The SECRET to your weight gain and future weight loss is WITHIN YOU.

We are not all the same and there is always a reason why you will be putting on weight or resisting weight loss. Even if you eat the same portions as others and have fresh healthy food, the truth is that most of the time a subtle hormone imbalance is at play within your system that is sabotaging your diet and exercise efforts.

As mentioned, there are numerous different hormones in the body and these present over a thousand possible combinations that can affect your health, metabolism and weight. It is a complex system and most weight loss products and programs do not address these issues and in actual fact can exacerbate imbalances that you may unknowingly have.

If you are overweight or struggling to lose weight, this may be indicative that there is something that is 'not quite right'. This needs to be assessed and corrected to allow your body to lose weight and move back into optimal health.

And of course, lifestyle change is part of it. There are NO miracle cures, but once you know what imbalances are at play and what foods, supplements and herbal remedies can assist with this, then you CAN remove the CAUSE of your weight gain and LOSE WEIGHT once and for all.

This type of tailored plan gives you sustainable weight loss that brings your body back into health without drastic dieting and rebound weight gain. This reduces your likelihood of chronic health concerns such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes in the future.

The bonus also is that not only will you lose weight, but you will also lose any of the hormonal symptoms you may be experiencing, like cravings, PMS, mood swings, painful periods, low libido and fatigue.

It is weight loss from the Inside – Out!

Heal your hormones and YOU will be able to lose weight.



Narelle Stegehuis ND, ANPA



Narelle Stegehuis, CEO of Mass Attack is a practicing naturopath specialising in the natural treatment of women's hormonal imbalances that lead to weight gain, such as Thyroid, PCOS, Fibroids and Endometriosis. Uniquely for patient convenience her programs are offered via the internet. She is both an accomplished writer and recipient of the Australian Naturopathic Excellence Award.

Contacts and Follow up Information

For more information on Hormonal Assessment and Mass Attack go to www.massattack.com.au or Call us on 1300 133 536 (within Australia)