



Women's Mid-Life Health Centre of Saskatchewan

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Frequently Asked Questions



Weight Gain-Weight Loss

Question: I am 52 years old and in menopause. I am trying desperately to lose weight. I have tried everything I can think of and only lose 1 or 2 pounds. I work out 3 days a week and eat healthy. Is it normal for my age and time of life? I want to lose 20 pounds. What can I do?

Answer by Donnelly Morris, RD

Unfortunately, weight gain during menopause is very common. As we age, the body tends to promote the replacement of muscle with fat and slows down our metabolism. Muscle helps us burn a lot of calories, so losing muscle mass over time can make it harder to burn off calories and easier to gain weight. Also, we tend to be less active and eat more. Whether that has to do with the aging process or hormone/mood fluctuations is unknown.

The key to successful weight loss is all about input versus output. If you are gaining weight, you are eating more calories than you are burning and if you just seem to stay the same weight with only a 1 or 2 pound fluctuation, chances are you have reached a balance with what you are eating and what you are burning off. At this point in time, there are only 2 options.

Weight Loss Option #1: Reduce your food/calorie input by taking stock of what you are eating.

Even people who eat a "healthy diet" can be over weight because their portion sizes are too large. Most people tend to over eat with grain products such as breads, pastas and rice, and protein such as chicken, steak and pork.

Watch Your Protein Intake: One serving of meat is about 2.5 oz (or 75g) that is only 1/2 of a regular, cooked chicken breast. A 6 oz. steak at a restaurant is almost 3 servings of protein, whereas the average female over 50 years of age only needs 2 servings per day. Typical protein foods, like most meats, can also be a source of fat, particularly saturated fat. Fat has more calories per gram than both carbohydrate and protein combined. Looking for lean cuts of meat and trimming the fat from meat before cooking can save you quite a few calories. Alternate protein sources like beans, peas and lentils are good choices because they are low in fat and high in fibre.

Watch Your Carbohydrate Intake: Carbohydrates include grain products as well as fruits and vegetables.

Grain products, which are SIMPLE carbohydrates, are also a source of over indulgence for many of us. A lot of weight-loss programs call for the complete removal of "carbohydrates" from your daily diet, but the problem with this is that your brain needs carbohydrates to function. There has to be a fine balance with carbohydrate intake. It is important to know that grain products are not the only source of carbohydrates.

Fruits and vegetables are also considered carbohydrates, however they are COMPLEX carbohydrates. They are often lower in calories than most grain products and are good substitutes when considering eating that extra spoonful of rice. Satisfying your hunger pangs with fruits and vegetables will usually make you feel full with fewer calories.

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