

Life is a
Bag of Revels

**17 Weight Loss Secrets
the Industries NEVER
want you to hear**

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'Weight management', for want of a better phrase, has always been a topic of great interest for me - firstly from a personal angle and then later from a professional one. At the age of 19 it was brought to my attention that I had put on not an inconsiderable amount of weight. About a stone and half and I looked chubby. On a return home one weekend, my mother took me aside and revealed to me the three secrets that I believe have enabled me to maintain my weight and stay trim ever since.

As a health and lifestyles writer over the past two decades I have read and written about many topics that have increased my knowledge of weight management, nutrition and the fascinating workings of the human body. During my training in counseling, I became further interested in the role of psychology in the matter.

One thing that I have always found particularly interesting is the enormous difficulty that so many people have in losing weight. Over the past six months I have been interviewing people in the hope of getting to the bottom of why that is - and of writing material that will hopefully tackle some of the issues and help more people feel great about themselves and their weight and the food that they eat.

The response from hundreds of dieters have confirmed a lot of what I already knew but also brought a number of new realisations to light.

While I hope at some point in the near future to publish a far fuller and more actionable report, I hope these 17 points below will go some way towards helping you avoid the pitfalls that so many dieters fall prey to - including those created (whether intentionally or non-intentionally) by the many industries that profit from the huge numbers of people who always want to lose weight.

I also hope it will help you work towards a new idea of how to manage your weight.

1. **Drastically restricting your calorie intake during a traditional 'diet' will not lead to effective and/or long term weight loss**

Your body is a highly complex system built to adapt to the different situations and tough times that life can inflict upon it. When it comes to metabolism, the rate at

which you burn energy is designed to respond flexibly to times of plenty and famine. If you suddenly restrict or decrease the amount of calories you give to your body, it responds by dramatically reducing the amount of calories it burns so that you can survive on what you're getting. Your body may also start storing fat in case the famine gets even worse...

If you go on a calorie-restricting diet, your body will respond by lowering your metabolism. You may lose some weight but not necessarily much. If you then return to eating the same amount of food as you did before you started the diet you will put weight back on rapidly.

2. The number one reason for success among the successful dieters I interviewed

From all the hundreds of replies I received from people, it quickly became apparent that among those who had successfully lost weight and kept it off, most had made the decisions about what actions they were going to take to change their diet or lifestyle themselves.

They had not followed the latest diet book or signed up to be sent menu sheets dictating everything they should eat at every meal. Neither had they bought expensive dieting products. They had educated themselves about nutrition, about food and weight and had chosen to make changes to their lifestyle themselves.

3. The number one reason for failure among the unsuccessful dieters I interviewed

From all the dieters who responded, I cannot think of a single one who said they lost weight and kept it off permanently thanks to a certain diet book they read or a diet they'd followed. Many had enjoyed short-term success but found the diets hard to follow and had put weight back on. In fact, it seemed that the more unsuccessful a dieter felt, the more likely they were to have followed prescriptive diets in the past.

You may be able to follow a diet regime that prescribes half a grapefruit for breakfast on a Monday, egg on rye bread on a Tuesday and so on for a few weeks but it is not a way of life.

Any changes you make in order to reduce your weight needs to be easily incorporated into your way of life.



4. There are many medical conditions and drugs that can lead people to put on excess weight - even when they're eating a very modest diet

If you have put on weight quite suddenly or in a particular area it is worth discussing this with your doctor - letting them know about any other symptoms or changes you have noticed as well. There are several medical causes of weight gain that even your GP may be able to diagnose!

If you are on medication, it is also possible that this medication has led to weight gain. Again, always consult your doctor before ceasing any medication or making any changes. If a medication is the problem then it is often the case that an alternative drug can be found.

Common culprits include mood stabilisers, rheumatism cures, cortisone, anti-seizure medicines, contraceptives, migraine medicines, insulin, beta blockers and anti-heartburn medicines. In many cases there will be an alternative medicine you can take that will have the same affect on controlling your condition without leading to unwanted weight gain.

5. The clue to your weight gain may be in the foods that you DON'T eat or SHOULDN'T

Many people have also found the answer to their unexplained weight gain by reading information on nutrition or through consulting a nutritional expert. A food intolerance, hypoglycemia and Candida are all common conditions that can lead to weight gain. Specific nutrient deficiencies can also be a culprit - chromium, iodine and essential fatty acids being the main ones to watch out for.

Do not expect to get much help with your GP on nutritional causes - although don't necessarily rule it out...

6. The weight loss industry makes huge amounts of money out of your 'wishful thinking'

It cannot be denied, of course, that for many people eating too much has been the main cause of their weight gain over the years - whether it's a case of just eating a hundred or a few hundred calories more than your metabolism can deal with each day or anything up to a serious problem with overeating or an addiction to overeating.

In their seminal book on overcoming bad habits and change, *Changing for Good*, the three doctor authors say that ‘wishful thinking’ is one of the main things that prevents people moving forwards and altering their behaviour. Rather than having to change their own habits, they say, people want to find a ‘magic bullet’ solution instead. With weight loss this could be in the form of weight loss pills, low-calorie diet foods or faddish diets, for example.

Whatever it is in your life that has led to your gaining weight, it is unlikely to change permanently unless you address that cause.

7. How the junk food industry makes a fortune by turning YOU into a junkie

If you find yourself eating a lot of fast foods such as pizzas, burger meals, doughnuts, hot dogs, sausage rolls and packaged cakes then there’s a good chance you may be addicted not only to the ease, the taste and the speed of the experience but also to the chemicals they contain.

Part of the reason all those foods taste so great is because of the chemicals they add to them to enhance the flavours - a taste for which can become highly addictive. It is also known that foods that contain both high levels of fat and sugar can give quite a strong feeling of rush or of a ‘high’ to the brain - similar to that experienced by people consuming alcohol or opiate drugs.

Fast foods are not just bad for your weight; they’re bad for your health as well - often leading to heart problems, diabetes and stress on the liver.

If you feel that you are addicted to food in any way then changing your eating habits will take a concerted effort - similar to that needed by those giving up smoking.

8. How low-calorie food can make you put on even more weight

Whether it’s strawberry cheesecake, macaroni cheese or Chicken Chop Sui, you can now buy almost any kind of food your taste buds desire in the ‘low fat’ form. Unfortunately for your waistline, however, the promise of low-fat can actually mean piling on more pounds. Why? Because more often than not, low-fat foods contain a high level of sweeteners, sugar and carbohydrates that can cause weight gain. They may also lead your body to crave more of the real and nutritionally rich food you crave. Not to mention the fact that it’s all adding to your uneasy relationship with ‘real’ food itself.

9. Exercise is just as important to losing weight as looking at your diet - but not necessarily for the reasons you think

Many people believe that the reason exercise helps you lose weight is by burning up lots of calories. While running for half an hour or doing an aerobics class may burn up one to two hundred calories, this is still not a lot compared to the amount your body will need during the day even if you're sitting still. Most of the calories you burn in a day are used to keep your body alive and that amount, known as the Basal Metabolic Rate or BMR. Only around 20% of the calories you need are used in physical activity.

The main influence on our BMR is our size, our fat/muscle ratio and our body's ability to adapt our metabolism to the amount of food we eat. The bigger you are, the more food you need to eat. The more you take physical exercise, the more muscular you will become and the more food you will need to sustain those muscles. Fat does not take any calories to sustain it while muscle burns quite a lot, even when still.

One of the most effective ways of losing weight, therefore, is to increase your metabolism by strengthening your body through increased activity.

10. The amount of calories you need to eat varies greatly according to your size and weight

A tall, muscular person will have a much higher BMR than a person of the same height and weight who is carrying more fat rather than muscle. The muscular man will therefore need to eat more calories than the less muscular man. The tall flabby man, however, may still need to eat more calories than a small muscular man.

A small woman who exercises very little will only need to eat a small amount of food compared to a larger woman - especially if she has a strong body.

11. You don't have to go to the gym to get the best 'exercise'

'Exercise', I think, is a misleading word, often leading people to feel that if they're not wearing shorts or a tracksuit while they're doing it then it isn't exercise. All that is really called for, in fact, is an increased level of 'activity'.

As we age, we tend to lead a decreasingly active lifestyle. We swap our bike, for a car, for example. We no longer have to push the children round in pushchairs. And we perhaps have a decreasing urge to get up and go out. We can afford to have a cleaner. We can get our groceries delivered via the internet. And it is this decrease in exercise that makes our bodies gradually lose their strength.

There is no doubt, of course, that going to the gym or fitness classes is a great way to get exercise and for many people it is just the motivation they need. Booking into a regular class also means they don't have a choice about whether to go or not. But gyms are expensive and can also be intimidating.

For other people, different ways of getting more activity are more suitable. Some may just prefer to walk for twenty or thirty minutes three times a week. Others may respond well to joining dance classes or bowls. Others may prefer to lift weights and do strengthening exercises in the privacy of their own homes.

12. Keep any dietary changes simple

As we saw above, any drastic reductions you make in your calorie intake may simply lead to a drop in your metabolism which won't help you to lose weight in the long run. While some people do succeed in fast and dramatic weightloss through dramatic changes in their calorie intake, most people will be better suited to a slight decrease (100-200 calories per day) in the expectation of achieving a slow reduction of rate over the long-term.

Try to make cuts where you won't miss it - rather than depriving yourself of foods that you love.

13. Avoid filling your kitchen with lots of diet foods

Foods like diet bars and low-calorie foods can be treacherous. Not only are they seldom actually a healthy option, but they can actually lead to you eating more because you think it's 'sin free'.

Experts have also discovered that when people are surrounded by lots of different foods that they can eat and choose from, they end up eating more. This has been cited as the reason why the Atkin's Diet worked well for people during its hay day when the diet you were told to eat was simple - but then became less effective when marketers cashed in on the craze with low-carbohydrate foods of any variety you felt you might want, or they were able to persuade you you wanted.

It's also the reason why a lot of people swear by the empty cupboard approach to eating a healthier diet. If you don't see it, you won't eat it!

14. It's not just OK to snack between meals, it can help you lose weight!

Many of us have been told through the years that snacking between meals is a sure fire way of putting on weight. Yet this is exactly the opposite of the truth. (Depending to some degree, of course, on what snacks you choose...)

Whenever we eat, our metabolic rate increases for about 90 minutes afterwards. The more often we eat, therefore, the higher our metabolism throughout the day. Somebody who eats five meals of 300 calories each, therefore, will burn more fat than somebody who eats three meals of 500 calories.

Secondly, the longer you wait between meals, the hungrier you are likely to be when the meal comes and you may end up eating a lot very quickly.

Finally, the longer you wait between meals, the more likely your body is to sacrifice muscle tissue to the production of energy than burning fat instead.

As I'm sure you already know, fruit and nuts make very good snacks but are not the only things you can eat. A small wholemeal sandwich with a healthy filling would do very nicely as well.

15. Drink plenty of WATER - NOT low-calorie drinks

There are several quite complex reasons why drinks (and indeed foods) containing artificial sweeteners can make you put on weight. There is both the way in which they alter your relationship with eating and drinking - as well as the direct physical effects it has on your body.

Eating and drinking should be about feeding your body with the many different nutrients it needs to remain healthy - as well as the pleasure of the experience. If we try and cheat the system and have our cake and eat it then this healthy attitude can be thrown out of balance.

From your body's point of view itself, when you drink something like a can of diet lemonade, your body is fooled into believing that what it must now deal with is high in calories and sugar. This not surprisingly causes all kinds of confusion, incorrect processes and can lead to you craving the wrong kinds of foods to compensate.

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Drinking water, on the other hand, helps your body to eliminate toxins and wastes and keeps it in better health. Insufficient fluid intake can lead to many problems including a reduced metabolic rate.

16.A 'healthy' diet is actually very simple and is the best way to maintain a healthy weight

Sugar is highly addictive and makes you put on weight. It even makes you hungry.

Pure sugar is the worst but the sugars/carbohydrates found in white breads and white pasta, for example, have a similar effect on your health and weight.

To simplify things completely, a healthy diet should contain plenty of whole foods that you cook yourself. That means brown breads and pasta and rice - sometimes if not all the time. You need a good amount of protein with most meals rather than just eating starch. Each meal should ideally be made up of roughly 30% vegetables. Also eat fruits, nuts and healthy olive oil.

A small amount of sugar each day is fine for most people. A constant craving for sugar foods is a tell-tale sign that things are not good!

17.Can pills help you lose weight?

There is not, of course, a definitive answer to that question. A certain supplement might help 'you' to lose weight but it may be of no help to another person. That person may find a certain pill works for them - but it wouldn't work for you.

I have heard many stories from people who have found some success with pills such as Honey Garlic and Vinegar tablets, with pills that bind fat and with pills that lower their stress levels and therefore decrease their overeating. If you are suffering from a nutrient deficiency then a supplement of that nutrient could also help.

The main thing to bear in mind is to consider what the cause of your weight gain has been - and to ask yourself whether the supplement is the right answer for you.

Many people hope that a pill will solve the weight problem so that they do not have to change their lifestyle or the ways they act and eat in any way.