

# **52 WEEKS** **to a healthy lifestyle**

*A simple, no-nonsense guide to introducing  
healthy lifestyle changes*

**SHARLENE HEIPEL**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to my many great  
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## INTRODUCTION

Canadians are getting bigger! In the past 25 years the number of overweight or obese Canadians has increased dramatically. Obesity is a serious risk factor for many chronic diseases. Scared yet? Intimidated perhaps? Maybe you're jaded by past dieting experience? Well, there's good news too: maintaining a healthy weight is simple! Don't be another statistic. You can start reducing these risks and improving your health today!

There are number of different approaches to weight-loss. Be cynical when evaluating your options. Use common sense: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Easy diets and pills and gizmos exist for one reason only – to separate you from your money. They are rarely successful in effecting a lasting lifestyle change. When selecting weight-loss methods for inclusion in this book, I focussed on techniques that are easy to understand, practical to apply and (hopefully) habit-forming. They are not necessarily “easy” but the discipline required for each is broken down into manageable “bit-sized” chunks. It is you, not expensive products or fad food, that will be making the changes that will make you feel healthy and vital. As a result, you can take all of the credit.

Another popular approach to becoming healthy is what I would call ‘tough love’. It can be effective under the right circumstances, but is difficult to present to the intelligent, adult reader without coming across as patronizing and demeaning. I'm frankly not interested in tearing you down, making you cry, then building you back up again to a new, improved, confident and healthy self. Trying to out-think and psychologically out-manoeuvre the reader is a lot of work (for me), and always runs the risk of backfiring. There is no subtle

underlying psychological theory or model driving this book – it's very simple (and not-so-subtle): I know that lifestyle changes can be difficult, so I have tried to come up with creative ways to make them easy enough to fit into hectic lives.

Statistics Canada reports that two out of three adults in Canada are overweight or obese. Poor eating habits and lack of physical activity are contributing to this obesity epidemic. Canadian children and youth are also getting bigger. In the last twenty-five years the proportion of obese children has nearly tripled. This increase was seen in both sexes, and across every age group with the exception of pre-school. It has been estimated that over half of our Canadian children and youth are not active enough for healthy growth and development.

We can cite many factors that have been contributing to the increasing rates of overweight and obesity. We opt to drive more, and have more interest in passive leisure activities such as watching television, surfing the internet and of course, playing video games. As technology increases, many jobs are becoming less physically demanding. Our society has changed, and unfortunately many modern conveniences have reduced our activity. Changes in our food environment, such as increasing portion size and the availability of a wide variety of inexpensive, unhealthy foods do not make it any easier to maintain a healthy weight.

## HOW TO USE THE BOOK

Very few of us can change our lifestyles overnight. But what's the rush? The process of change can be slow, but slow is okay as long as you are moving towards a healthier life. Provided you can live each day with a willingness to change, there is no rush to incorporate every healthy habit at once. Just keep progressing at a pace you feel comfortable with.

This guidebook provides fifty-two simple, straightforward, and practical healthy living habits. I have written the book with the expectation that the reader will adopt a new habit each week. This rate may not be right for some people. You can speed it up by trying to add two habits a week, or you might prefer to slow it down by adding a habit only every other week. The ideal pace will neither overwhelm nor 'underwhelm' you. Slow is fine – these habits are simple but that doesn't mean they are easy! I have set the pace at one per week so that you can make these new habits a part of your life forever! If you find that you have already made some of these changes then you can congratulate yourself, and skip ahead to the next week's habit. Make sure to take credit for ANY changes that you have already made. If you have trouble adopting a habit, try to add it again the following week, but don't let it block you. You might have to skip the habit and come back to it later, and that is okay.

Before you get started, I would like you to review the *Stages of Change Theory*.<sup>1</sup> This is used to determine how ready you are to adopt a healthier lifestyle. While you read the next section, look for where you fit in your readiness to change.



## STAGES OF CHANGE

Five stages of change have been conceptualized for a variety of problem behaviours, and can easily be applied to changing your lifestyle to include healthy living habits. The five stages of change are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

- *Pre-contemplation* is the stage at which there is no intention to change behaviour in the foreseeable future. Many individuals in this stage are either unaware or 'under-aware' of their problems.
- *Contemplation* is the stage in which people are aware that a problem exists and are seriously thinking about overcoming it, but have not yet made a commitment to take action.
- *Preparation* is a stage that combines intention and behavioural criteria. Individuals in this stage are intending to take action in the next month.
- *Action* is the stage in which individuals modify their behaviour, experiences, or environment in order to overcome their problems. Action involves the most overt behavioural changes and requires considerable commitment of time and energy.
- *Maintenance* is the stage in which people work to prevent relapse and consolidate the gains attained during action. This stage can extend from six months to an indeterminate period past the initial action.

If you are reading this book then you are already through the first stage. The goal of this book is to help you move through the stages of change to maintenance.

## ≡ Week 1 ≡

# THE WONDERFUL WONDERS OF WATER

*Gradually increase your water intake to eight 8 oz glasses a day. Today you must start by drinking 4 glasses of water. Drink one first thing in the morning, one mid-morning, one with lunch, and finally have one mid-afternoon. Add one extra glass of water daily until you reach the 8-glass recommendation.*

*Fill a pitcher of water with eight 8 oz glasses of water each morning. Make sure that you have finished the entire container by the end of each day.*

*Add lemon to your water to give it flavour. Hot water and lemon can be a great way to boost your water intake. We all know that we should be drinking water every day, but are eight glasses really necessary? ABSOLUTELY! Every single cell in the human body uses water. The human body is made up of almost 75 percent water, so it needs constant water replenishment. In my nutrition practice I encourage clients to drink at least eight glasses of water each day. Many of my clients report that they feel noticeably healthier as a result of increasing their water intake.*

Water plays a very significant role in weight loss. It is a great natural appetite suppressant for many people. When the body isn't getting enough water, it will hold on to every drop it can. Your body also gets fluid from foods so chronic under-hydration may lead to overeating as your body tries to soak up

every bit of water it can. You may find yourself eating extra calories just to replenish fluid. When people are drinking enough water, they are better able to recognize true hunger cues. Water will also help physically fill you up. Having a glass of water before you reach for a snack can sometimes work to stop the urge to eat.

Water is also the best treatment for fluid retention. If you are not giving your body enough water, it will store any water it gets in its tissues. It knows it needs fluid to survive! To prevent this water storage from happening, you must give your body the fluid that it needs.

If you have a constant problem with water retention, excess salt (sodium) may be to blame. The more salt you eat, the more water your body needs to dilute it. Sodium contributes to water retention, so you should drink enough water to flush the sodium through the kidneys – that way it cannot hang around in the body, encouraging fluids to stay. I like to see my clients drinking one to two glasses after every salty meal or snack.

Another thing water can do is help relieve constipation. When the body is deprived of water, it takes what it needs from internal sources, including the colon. This can lead to constipation. Sufficient fluid intake helps maintain a healthy colon, which promotes healthy elimination.

Frequent hydration is key. A great way to stay properly hydrated is to drink a half a cup of water every half hour that you are awake. Take your water in the car, to work, and have a glass while watching television.

## ≡ Week 2 ≡

### **THE WRITE APPROACH:** *Start a healthy living journal*

*This week you will log your daily food intake and your activity. Regardless of the format you choose, the most important thing is to keep it honest and up-to-date!*

*Having trouble journalling? Try a wallet sized tick sheet that is accessible at home or when you are out and about. This way you will be sure to record everything you eat before you forget.*

The recording of daily food intake is extremely important to your healthy lifestyle program:

- Journalling is one of the best behavioural modification techniques available for changing diets.
- The act of recording makes you aware of what you are eating, and gives you an opportunity to think twice about making unhealthy choices.
- Food journals make you accountable to you.
- A daily log helps with self-discipline.
- A food journal provides a written record of your progress, and can provide motivation and positive reinforcement when the going gets tough.
- It improves nutritional knowledge.
- It shows you how your body reacts to certain foods

and activity levels. Many clients have discovered food intolerances after seeing a pattern over time, recorded in their journals.

## ≡ Week 3 ≡

# PROTEIN POWER

*Increase your intake of lean protein to two to four 15 gram servings each day.*

*Hard boil eggs so that they are available and easy to grab when you are feeling hungry.*

*Experiment with protein supplements such as chocolate protein shakes and low fat protein bars.*

*Did you know that yogurt is a good source of protein? Pick-up some fat free options to have on hand for quick protein snacks.*

Protein curbs your appetite so you eat less! It stimulates the production of the appetite regulating hormones called cholecystokinin and glucagon, which help to reduce your hunger pains so that you do not overeat. Protein also slows the emptying of your stomach so you feel full for longer. It provides a steady effect on your blood sugar levels, smoothing out the major peaks and dips. A great way to illustrate that protein is more filling is to think of the last time you ate a steak dinner, then compare it to a night of Chinese food. The steak dinner probably filled you for longer than the Chinese food, which is high in starches and low in protein. Protein is digested more slowly than other foods, so it requires the body to burn more calories in the digestion/assimilation process. Since it takes

more work to digest them, you are naturally increasing your metabolism by eating more proteins.

Protein also preserves your lean muscle mass. Muscle is a metabolically active tissue, which basically means it burns calories to exist. To keep lean muscle tissue, it's important to eat enough good quality lean protein. Losing weight is one thing, but once the pounds drop off you want to look fit and firm, not frail. Aim to eat two to four servings (15 grams each) of lean protein each day.

## ≡ Week 4 ≡

### CARB CONTROL

*This week you will start to eliminate excess carbohydrates (starch) in your diet. Each day, aim to eat no more than four to six servings of starch.*

*Measure a portion without actually measuring. A fist full of carbohydrate containing foods is about one serving. Organize your plate so that the carbs do not occupy much space. Fill your plate with meat and vegetables first, and leave only a small part for the starches. Snack on lean protein, fruit, and dairy, not simple carbohydrates.*

What are carbohydrates? Carbohydrates come from a variety of sources including bread, rice, pasta, cereal, corn, cookies, potatoes and popcorn. Carbohydrates are an important macronutrient. We need these for energy, and to fuel our brains. When carbohydrates are absorbed (often rapidly) the body releases insulin. Insulin is in charge of fitting carbs into our cells. If we are constantly eating starch then we are constantly releasing insulin. This is not a healthy way to feed our bodies. Instead we should aim to eat carbohydrates in small amounts only a few times a day, we can sufficiently fuel our brains without stressing out our bodies. An added bonus of course is that it stops us from getting fat from too many carbs!

In my practice, I have noticed that many clients eat



more carbs daily than they need to. To lose weight while maintaining optimum health, I suggest limiting carbohydrate consumption to no more than four to six servings daily. The carbohydrates we do choose should ideally be high in fibre, as these are absorbed more slowly. Many diets eliminate carbs completely, but this is not the answer. We need carbs to feed our brain and to give us energy, but like many things in life, moderation here is key!

If your current diet is “carb-heavy”, you will undoubtedly miss them as you begin decreasing your intake. The resultant craving for carbohydrate-rich foods is not comfortable but it is temporary. Hang in there, and warn your spouse. Substitute these foods with lean and healthier dairy and/or protein alternatives and wait it out. After a week (maybe sooner) you should find you aren’t craving as much, and you will notice a wonderful increase in energy. Your body, your waistline, your budget, and eventually your significant other (once that first week has passed!) will thank you for decreasing your carb intake.

## ≡ Week 5 ≡

### THE VIRTUES OF VEGETABLES

*This week you will start a very healthy habit, making sure to eat no less than 4 cups of vegetables each and every day. Try to have two cups of raw veggies at lunch and two cups of steamed veggies at dinner. Any snack vegetables are bonus, and encouraged!*

*Despite what your children would have you think, vegetables do not have to be boring! Choose a new veggie that you haven't prepared before. Find an online recipe and experiment with this vegetable. Variety is key to getting all the nutrients that vegetables offer.*

This week, concentrate on eating a rainbow of colours in your vegetables. Green, orange, yellow and red vegetables each contain very important micronutrients. Colourful vegetables contain many nutrients. They are rich in essential vitamins, minerals, fibre, carbohydrates, and phytochemicals; all critical for a healthy body. Not only are they nutritious, but they also are a great way to fill up. Vegetables are nutrient dense, low calorie foods. Easy ways to increase your vegetable intake are to have bags of ready-made salads on hand for lunches, and to add at least a cup of frozen mixed veggies to supper.

If I still haven't convinced you to eat more vegetables, maybe this new study will. Researchers at Arizona State University's Polytechnic campus recently found that people with the most vitamin C in their blood had the lowest percentage of body

fat. Research showed that individuals with adequate vitamin C status oxidize 30% more fat during moderate exercise than individuals with low vitamin C status.<sup>2,3</sup> (Fat oxidation refers to the body's ability to utilize fat as a fuel source during exercise as well as rest.) So vitamin C rich vegetables like red pepper and broccoli can help you to slim down.

## ≡ Week 6 ≡

### EAT ENOUGH FRUIT (BUT NOT TOO MUCH)

*Fruit is a great sweet treat. This week, we will incorporate 3-4 servings of fruit into our daily diet. Have it as dessert and/or as a safe, healthy snack.*

*Applesauce is a convenient and delicious fruit. Try the sugar-free snack packs for a change.*

*Baby food fruit is made with pure sources of fruit. Adding these to yogurts or smoothies is a great way to get your fruit in if you are not a fresh fruit fan.*

Fruit is a wonderful source of many nutrients and fibre. It does however contain fruit sugars. These fruit sugars can produce the same effect as simple carbohydrates in our bodies. Having three to four servings a day is a balanced way to make sure you are getting the benefits of fruit in your diet without overdoing the sugars. It is always better to eat rather than drink your fruit, and fresh and frozen fruits are more nutrient rich than the canned versions.

## ≡ Week 7 ≡

### SAY GOOD-BYE TO JUICE

#### *Stop drinking juice calories!*

Don't drink unnecessary calories. The calories you drink will show up on your scale just as easily as those you eat. Juice is mainly sugar, and often contains only one or two nutrients. The sugar content of juice contributes unneeded calories, but does little to fill you up or curb your appetite. It also lacks the fibres and good filling bulk that a fruit has.

Stick to water or other calorie-free beverages like herbal tea and sparkling waters.

## ≡ Week 8 ≡

### BAD FATS

*This week you will measure your added fats. You can allow yourself to have 1 tablespoon of added fat daily.*

*Switch your house over to fat-free options. Food scientists have created many good tasting alternatives to high fat salad dressings, cream cheeses, yogurts, and sour creams. Mustard, hummus, and dill pickle relish are just a few of the tasty alternatives to fatty spreads like mayonnaise.*

There are two kinds of bad fats. The first are called saturated fats, and consist mainly of animal fats found in meat, seafood, poultry, egg yolks, and dairy products like cheese, milk and cream. Some plant foods contain saturated fats too. These include coconut and coconut oil, palm oil, and palm kernel oil. Saturated fats are bad because they raise our blood cholesterol levels and put us at risk for nutrition-related diseases. The second types are known as hydrogenated, or trans-fats. This fat is typically found in commercially prepared foods like baked goods, margarines, snack foods, and fried foods. Trans-fats are even worse for us than saturated fats because they raise our bad LDL cholesterol levels and lower the good HDL cholesterol.

Saturated and trans-fats are major contributors to many

nutrition-related diseases. It is critical that we make every effort to minimize our daily intake of these ‘bad fats.’ Choose lean meats only, and check labels carefully. Wherever possible, choose ultra-light products as condiments in your home. Only buy and consume low or no-fat dairy products and rid your house of high fat foods like cashews. If you can’t tolerate the taste of fat-free, start slowly and mix fat free with regular dressings. If you have a favourite salad dressing, don’t buy the fat-free version – you’ll be more likely to notice a difference in taste, and may not enjoy it. Instead, do your self a favour and try a completely new variety of fat-free dressing – there are lots to choose from! Adding spices and seasonings can also make things much tastier.

## ≡ Week 9 ≡

### **HOLD THE CHEESE, PLEASE**

*Decrease the amount of cheese in your daily diet.*

Cheese is everywhere! It is used to pump flavour into many foods. Unfortunately, it is a major source of heart-hurting saturated fats, so when you are out to eat, order your burgers, sandwiches and salads without cheese. When you order pizza, make sure you order it with half the cheese. To get that sharp cheese flavour at home - without the unhealthy fat - try adding a little light parmesan to meals.



## ≡ Week 10 ≡

### **MUNCHIES:** *TUNE IN, TURN ON, TRIM DOWN*

*This week you will eat up the last of your unhealthy snacks, and on your next grocery trip, replace the dangerous ones with healthier alternatives.*

The Bulk Barn carries a lot of interesting and healthy snack foods. (as well as some uninteresting, and categorically unhealthy alternatives; read labels!) Your local health food store is another great source of safe snacks. Make your own seasoned munchies. Make sure that they are low fat, and try to spice them up to reduce the temptation of adding salt. Trade the chips, candy, cookies and other junk foods for apples, peaches, pears, carrots, red pepper slices and other fresh fruits and veggies. Fruits and vegetables are better snack choices because they provide your body with nutrients, not just empty calories.

Tough-love time. Pay attention, because it's simple and it works: do NOT have junk food in your house. It isn't good for anyone and there are many other options that are healthy and tasty. If you have chips on hand and are feeling weak, you will eat them. If you are feeling strong, you will eat them. If you are feeling irritated by the neighbour's dog, you will eat

them. In other words, if you have them, you will eat them, period. Even if you are the one in a million who can look in the cupboard and reach past the chips to grab the rice cakes why make things harder on yourself than they have to be? Don't set yourself up: make your environment fail-safe. Experiment with low fat and healthier snack foods. You will find ones that you and your family love.

After an indulgent holiday full of sweets and high-fat treats, your body becomes conditioned. This conditioning will trigger cravings once these delicacies are eliminated, which will make getting back on track that much harder. The key is to replace unhealthy treats with tasty foods that fit into your healthy living program.

There's a saying that the two best times to plant a tree are (1) twenty years ago and, failing that, (2) right now. The same principle applies to your munchie choices: although the best time to make the healthy switch is prior to and throughout the festivities, foregoing the naughty stuff altogether, it's never too late. The question of whether this tree actually makes a sound if it falls over beyond earshot is however well beyond the scope of this volume, and I can't think of a meaningful snacking analogy, anyhow.

Do not get stressed out about slips they can and will happen. Dwelling on a cheat cannot help you today, and serves only to divert energy from more critical efforts, namely resisting the temptations for the unhealthy foods that your body has been conditioned to crave.

To combat cravings, re-familiarize yourself with the suggestions of week one, and make sure that you are drinking at least eight glasses of water each day. A chromium supplement

can also help to control sugar cravings. Reaching for protein – as opposed to carbs – at snack time will better regulate your blood sugar and further reduce cravings and appetite.

You may recall that I am characterizing this as a lifestyle, not a diet. Thoughts like “...bland yucky snacks....”, “...does lifestyle mean forever...?”, “...forever is a long time....”, “...I’m sad. And hungry. This book is stupid. And the car is past due for an oil change....” may be popping into your head. Let’s nip this thinking in the bud, right now (except for the oil change part; regular maintenance is critical to avoiding costly repairs down the road – instead of walking to the fridge right now, walk to the phone and book your car in for tomorrow...) First, forget about forever. Do you enjoy brushing your teeth? It doesn’t bring me any great joy; given the choice I’d probably rather go wakeboarding or maybe watch a good movie. But I don’t get filled with resentment every morning at the thought of having to brush my teeth daily, forever. And even if you are that one person who actually does get depressed contemplating the futility of it all, wondering what the point is when your teeth will inevitably get dirty again and need further brushing, I have suggestions. Sample a new and exotic toothpaste. Try out the latest in cutting-edge tooth cleaning technology. Shake up the routine a bit by brushing out on the back deck while watching the sun rise. The point here is that the same concepts can be applied to snacks; try not to get discouraged thinking of how this lifestyle is forever, but if you must, try to snap out of it by brainstorming new and exciting snacking options. Here, I’ll start for you (these are just a few of the “safe” snacking options available to you; the only limit is your own imagination):

- Cheerio snack mix ( $\frac{2}{3}$  cup)

- Fat free or plain Popcorn (3 cups)
- Baked chips ( $\frac{2}{3}$  cup)
- Unsalted pretzels ( $\frac{2}{3}$  cup)
- Mini rice cakes (15 mini cakes)
- Fat-free yogurt ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)
- Sliced fat-free deli meat (3 slices)
- Veggies and fat-free dip (unlimited)
- Dried fruit (1 tbsp)
- Arrowroot cookies (3 cookies)
- Graham crackers (3 crackers)
- Single serving diet cheesecakes
- Boiled eggs with pepper
- Fat free cheese slice on diet bread
- Skinny Cow Ice cream treats

## ≡ Week 11 ≡

### SUGAR, BABY!

*This is the week that you will stop adding sugar to your foods.  
It's an unhealthy practice. You knew this was coming.*

You know I think you are sweet enough, but if you must add a little extra, try Stevia. It is a natural low carbohydrate sweetener that you can buy at most health food stores, and even some grocery stores.

Still want sugar on some special foods? Can't face your morning porridge without a sprinkle or two? If Stevia just isn't cutting it, a somewhat better alternative to simple white sugar is organic raw sugar or honey. Molasses in baking can add nutrients such as iron. But sorry, brown sugar is just refined sugar processed to be brown, so you are out of luck there. Remember, there's a reason that chewing tobacco packages say "this product is not a safe alternative to cigarette smoking;" sugar is sugar, and you will always be better off if you can avoid adding extra.

Remember to check food labels and ingredient lists. You may be surprised (or perhaps not so surprised) to find that sugar is hiding in some of your favourite foods. Just looking for the word "sugar" on the nutrition label isn't enough – it takes a little detective work! Here are some other names for

sugar: SUCROSE, LACTOSE, GLUCOSE, DEXTROSE, HONEY, SORBITOL, FRUCTOSE, and MALTOSE. Memorize them, and you will also impress your friends at Scrabble. Or show off your wit and intelligence at the drive-through and order your coffee with “two creams, one fructose, please” – the teenager on the other end of the headset will think you are hilarious.

In our bodies, sugar that is not used to create energy is stored. When we eat a candy bar, cookie, cake, pie, or chocolate, the glucose level rises quickly in the blood. This prompts the rapid release of insulin from the pancreas. Haven’t you always wondered what your pancreas was for? This insulin takes the glucose to the cell through insulin receptors, and utilizes it in one of three places: 1) roughly 50% is used for immediate energy; 2) about 10% is stored in the muscle and liver as glycogen and 3) approximately 40% is stored as fats—triglycerides and cholesterol. I don’t think I need to tell you the storage locations for that third category.

So basically, if we dump sugar into our systems, the body responds by releasing insulin. This insulin triggers the cells to absorb glucose from the blood, which can actually cause the body’s blood glucose to drop too low. This condition will prompt the release of stress hormones from our adrenal glands, which are sent to the muscles and the liver to release glucose from the glycogen stores in an effort to restore blood glucose levels. At my house, these hormones have also been known to stimulate release of four-letter words and trigger precipitous drops in patience levels. Sometimes, the low blood glucose causes “hypoglycemia” symptoms such as hunger, nervousness, shakiness, perspiration, light-headedness, sleepiness, confusion, anxiety and/or weakness. These symptoms can be superficially relieved by eating more refined

sugar: both glycogen release and new sugar intake raise the blood glucose, but if it increases it too high or too fast, we see a subsequent release of insulin and the cycle repeats.

The long-term effects of this cycle can include a thickening of the cell walls and a loss of the insulin receptors which causes cells to become resistant to glucose intake. The resulting medical condition is known as insulin resistance or pre-diabetes. There is also evidence that high blood sugar may contribute to an increase in calcium loss, which can contribute to osteoporosis. The flood of insulin and stress hormones is a major part of sugar's adverse effects on the body, but my dentist would be disappointed if I didn't also mention the well-known relationship between sugar and tooth decay. I don't know about you, but conversations with my dentist are typically one-sided, with one of us often wielding a dental drill and, not coincidentally, also having discretion with respect to local freezing. I try not to disappoint the good doctor.

## ≡ Week 12 ≡

### SAYONARA SALT

*This is the week to say good-bye to added salt*

*Fill your saltshaker with potassium, “no salt” seasoning. You can try hot pepper flakes in place of salt if you like bite, or maybe an herb blend like Mrs. Dash.*

I am a salt lover, so this was not easy for me. We get MORE than enough sodium in all of the processed foods we eat though, so the odds of becoming salt-deficient if we stop adding it to foods is slim. You can switch to salt-free seasonings and you can try the potassium salt option called “No Salt”. For me, it boiled down to choosing between one of two approaches: the quick and painful method of cutting out all added salt in one fell swoop, or the slow and painful option of gradual weaning. But there are ways to make it a little easier on yourself – to help smooth the transition, try diluting regular salt with other seasonings, gradually reducing the ratio until the salt is gone.

Sodium is a major contributor to high blood pressure, and can also lead to water retention, which can and will show up on the scale. This type of weight gain can occur suddenly and without obvious cause, which can be really hard on motivation, especially when you have been eating well.

The food industry really does dump salt into our food,



especially restaurants and fast food outlets. A Tim Horton's "Ham and Swiss" sandwich has 1690 mg of sodium, which is more sodium than we should have in a day! Many organizations, including Health Canada, the Heart and Stroke foundation of Canada, the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Canadian Cancer Society advise Canadians to cut back on salt.

Soup can be extremely high in sodium – 700-1000 mg per serving is not uncommon in a typical packaged soup. Try making your own with low sodium soup bases. Be vigilant and read labels; there are a few product lines out there with lower sodium. Find them. Buy them. Eat them.

## ≡ Week 13 ≡

### EAT MORE OFTEN!

*The timing of when you eat can be just as critical as what you eat. Ideally, aim to eat every three hours. Small portions of protein, consumed regularly throughout the day, will fuel your metabolism and stabilize your blood sugars. Your typical daily pattern should look something like the following:*

*Wake up and eat breakfast, toast and a yogurt perhaps.*

*Mid-morning (roughly three hours after breakfast) have a fruit and some fat-free cottage cheese.*

*Lunch should have a protein, two cups of vegetables and a starch.*

*Mid-afternoon you need another fruit and about ten almonds.*

*Supper can be a protein, starch and two cups of vegetables.*

*A very good evening snack would contain a starch (maybe popcorn) and a fruit.*

*Set a timer if you have to. IT IS THAT IMPORTANT!*

*Pack snacks to eat on the go. If you are shopping or have a road trip, be PREPARED to fuel your metabolism.*

The good news is that the average person already eats three meals and two snacks each day, so there's a good chance that you may not need drastic changes to your routine. This

is great! We should be aiming to eat every three hours to fuel our metabolisms, but there are a couple of caveats. Don't worry; they are fairly straightforward: be smart about the foods you choose, and watch the portions. That's all there is to it! Aim to eat a higher protein food with each meal and snack - protein is filling and metabolism fuelling. Low fat dairy, lean meats, eggs and soy products are all good sources of protein for snacks and meals. If you have to, you can add a fruit for a sugar and energy fix, and vegetables to help make you feel full.

There are several reasons why frequent eating is effective:

- It gets your metabolism going and keeps it working at an elevated level continuously throughout the day.
- It ramps up your energy and keeps insulin levels stable.
- If you are not constantly famished, you are much more likely to pick a lean and healthy snack. When you let yourself get very hungry, you are much more likely to grab whatever is in sight. It is when you are starving that you start to crave all of those things that are so high in fat and calories. You will probably eat more too.
- Despite eating LESS food than you are now, you will feel like you are eating MORE. Your mind and body will equate eating more frequently with more food, and will therefore feel more satisfied with fewer calories.

The key to success here is planning! Knowing that you will be eating more often, you need to plan ahead for your meals and snacks. If you leave it to the last minute or 'wing it', your healthy options could be limited depending on the situation you find yourself in, and you may end up doing more damage

than good. When faced with only unhealthy food choices, it is all too easy to get derailed despite the best intentions, because skipping the meal is likely to result in doubling-up the subsequent portion. This can have a domino-effect, because the larger portion may result in you skipping the next meal, and the cycle continues.

Is it easy to incorporate eating five to six times per day into your schedule? Well, odds are you are most of the way there already (in terms of frequency, at least), but count on investing considerable time and effort into planning properly. Is it worth it? Absolutely! If you do it sensibly, it will help you to control your fat and calorie intake, which goes a long way towards reaching your ultimate goal of a long-term, sustainable, healthy lifestyle.

## ≡ Week 14 ≡

# I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE MEAT

*This week, we'll get in touch with your carnivorous side, and learn how to plan your meat eating for better health. Make an effort to eat no more than two to three servings of red meat a WEEK. (And no, a twenty ounce porterhouse, grilled to perfection, does NOT qualify as a 'serving' – remember a serving size is three-ounces)*

*Replace hamburger with ground turkey or chicken. Believe it not, they are actually pretty tasty - you can mix them half and half to make the transition easier if you must. Make sure your luncheon meats are turkey or chicken, and watch the sodium.*

Research has shown that the risk of developing colon cancer increases proportionally with the amount of red meat and saturated fat consumed. The New England Journal of Medicine has reported that women who eat red meat such as beef, lamb or pork every day had two and a half times the risk of developing colon cancer than the women who ate it less than once a month.<sup>4</sup> Researchers are currently conducting a study on men that is expected to find similar results.

The American Cancer Society estimates that this year, 61,000 people will die of colon cancer and as many as 155,000 new cases will be diagnosed. This is serious stuff. Colon cancer

is prevalent in today's society, and fatal. The good news is that you can take steps right now, this week, that will immediately begin reducing your risk. Research suggests that diets low in fibre and high in fat increase the risk of developing this disease. You can probably guess by this point where we are headed as far as your meat eating patterns are concerned.

Red meat is high in saturated fat. This is not exactly late-breaking news, but it has to be said. Saturated fat is linked with increased risks of both heart disease and colon cancer. Eating less red meat is better for us, period. At the very least, you should be minimizing your red meat intake, but please give some serious thought to cutting it out of your diet altogether.

## ≡ Week 15 ≡

### THERE'S PLENTY OF FISH IN THE SEA

*Increase your weekly intake of fish. Find a great fun canned fish recipe online. Incorporate canned or fresh/frozen fish into your weekly menus.*

*Tuna can be a super food. Adding canned tuna to spaghetti sauce, casseroles, salads and/or sandwiches is a great way to get your two servings of fish in during the week.*

*Take up fishing! Really! It can be an inexpensive and relaxing hobby that the whole family can enjoy. Be aware of consumption limits on certain species however; check with your local fishing/hunting authority for guidelines, especially if you are, or expecting to become, pregnant.*

Most people don't eat enough seafood. Fish and shellfish are great sources of lean protein and minerals such as selenium and iodine. Oily fish such as salmon, herring and mackerel are a fantastic source of omega-3 essential fatty acids. Increasing your fish intake to at least two portions of fish each week is a tasty way to make sure you are getting enough of these important nutrients. Stay tuned for more on those essential fats in the coming weeks.

Great low-fat white fish include cod and haddock. Salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, and trout are fattier, but contain high amounts of valuable omega 3 fatty acids. When choosing

oily fish, it's important to consider the pollutants that can build up in these sources and limit intake accordingly. Concerns over exposure to mercury and other toxins with potential to accumulate in the tissue of these fish has prompted Health Canada released a statement advising Canadians to limit their consumption of shark, swordfish and fresh and frozen tuna to one meal per week. Pregnant women, women of childbearing age and young children should eat no more than one meal per month (Note that this advisory does not apply to canned tuna). Eating a variety of fish is the key to ensuring sufficient intake of these important nutrients while minimizing exposure to accumulated pollutants.

Keep your seafood dinner healthy by preparing it with care. Poach, bake, grill or barbecue whenever possible. There are even some easy microwave recipes for fish. And do I really need to recommend that you avoid heavy batters, buttery sauces, and deep or pan-fried fish? Yes I do. Avoid them.



## ≡ Week 16 ≡

### YOUR MULTI-TASK

*Browse your local health food store or your neighbourhood pharmacy for a multi-vitamin that suits your personal needs. What are your personal needs? Keep reading. There are chewable adult vitamins, stress formulas, weight-loss multi-vitamins as well as any number of formulas that address specific health conditions. Find one, buy one and TAKE IT every single day!*

#### **Vitamins:**

There are 13 essential vitamins, each with its own special role to play in the body. One helps the eyes to see in the dark, another helps protect the lungs from air pollution, and still another helps make the sex hormones. When you cut yourself, your body needs a vitamin to help repair and heal the damage. Vitamins work to replace old red blood cells and the lining of the digestive tract. I could keep going, but the fact is that basically every action in the body requires the assistance of vitamins, and I've got a deadline to meet. It is a fascinating subject however; if you are hungry for more information I would encourage you to drop by your local library and browse the health section. Although many health-food stores employ knowledgeable and helpful staff, there is no substitute for being a well-informed shopper. It's your body, your health,

and your dollars.

## **Minerals:**

Many minerals function as coenzymes during important chemical reactions in our bodies. In addition to their role as coenzymes, some minerals have other important functions. For example, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus form our bones. Iron enables the transport of oxygen from the lungs to our cells, and zinc is needed for reproduction, and for growth and development.

Can you REALLY get everything your body needs from the foods that you eat? Well, yes.

But...

With the food available to us today, it is almost impossible to meet the daily-recommended intakes by eating alone. A well balanced diet is often more of a theoretical ideal than a practical reality. Individual lifestyles, food preferences, eating habits, nutrient bio-availability, and loss of nutrients during shipping, cooking and storage all contribute to a deficient diet.

There is also mounting evidence suggesting that intake of several vitamins over and above the minimum daily requirements may actually help to prevent heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and other chronic diseases.

Make sure that your multi-vitamin is a high quality one! Quality varies - the dollar store is not the place to shop for health-food. A good multi vitamin should be high in B-vitamins, and free of artificial coatings, colouring, additives and allergens. If your urine is bright yellow and smells like

vitamins, it indicates that you have taken a good quality, absorbable supplement.

## ≡ Week 17 ≡

### CONSIDER AN EFA SUPPLEMENT

*This week I would like you to do some research on essential fatty acids. Do an internet search and/or ask your pharmacists about the benefits of this supplement. Decide if you want to try it. You can increase your intake by buying foods that contain omega fatty acids like eggs, juices and milk. You can buy an essential fatty acid oil and add it to your salads or you can find a pill that contains this very important good fat.*

#### What are the essential fatty acids?

Having successfully conquered (or at least read) week eight, by this point you are hopefully well aware of the difference between “good” and “bad” fats. You will recall that a low fat diet is healthier than one higher in fat, but that our bodies do need a certain amount of fat to grow and function properly. The essential fatty acids that are most important are commonly referred to as the omega 3 and omega 6 fats. These two groups of fatty acids cannot be made by the body and must therefore be included in our diets.

Unfortunately, the optimal balance of omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids required for good health is not provided by the average diet. Your body needs these “good fats” to make hormones and maintain its metabolic rate, so a deficiency may cause cravings, particularly for fatty foods. Other symptoms

of deficiency include dandruff, dry hair, and dry, scaly skin. Deficiency is also associated with arthritis, eczema, heart disease, diabetes and pre-menstrual syndrome.

So how is it that these fats merit the designation of “good fat”? Well, among other things, fatty acids have been credited with helping to:

- Relieve symptoms of autoimmune diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis, psoriasis, lupus, multiple sclerosis and migraine headaches. Many of the placebo-controlled trials of fish oil in chronic inflammatory diseases reveal significant benefit, including decreased disease activity and a lowered use of anti-inflammatory drugs.<sup>5-15</sup>
- Reduce the risk of stroke.<sup>16-20</sup>
- Reduce the risk of heart disease.<sup>21-24</sup> A large body of scientific research suggests that higher dietary omega 3 fatty acid intakes are associated with reductions in cardiovascular disease risk, prompting the American Heart Association to recommend that all adults eat fish, particularly oily fish, at least twice weekly.
- Prevent the growth of certain cancers, especially those of the digestive tract<sup>25</sup>

## ≡ Week 18 ≡

### BEANS, BEANS, THE MAGICAL...

*Open a can of your favourite beans and add it to your salads and rice this week.*

*Beans can be the main dish. Vegetarian chili, black bean wraps, and even hot beans on toast are great entrees for the entire family. If beans cause you to feel bloated and gassy, there are a number of over-the-counter anti-gas remedies.*

Squeeze out starches with beans. (Used judiciously, beans can also assist in squeezing out unwanted downwind houseguests) Eating at least three cups of legumes a week can have a positive impact on your health. They are inexpensive, fibre-rich sources of potassium, folate, iron, and protein. Replace croutons in salads with beans, or add them to rice or pasta. Beans can be a very tasty side-dish, cold or warm.

## ≡ Week 19 ≡

### CAFÉ, OKAY?

*Limit caffeine-containing drinks like coffee or colas to less than three cups per day. If you are currently above this level, lower your coffee consumption by one cup every two days until you reach the target. Don't rush it: cutting out caffeine too quickly can have some nasty side effects, including nausea, fatigue, and headaches.*

Have you ever tried green tea? Consider switching; it still has a bit of caffeine, but is also packed with antioxidants and other healthy properties. New research has led Health Canada to lower its recommendations on caffeine intake for women of childbearing age, and children. For the rest of the general population of healthy adults, the long-standing advice still applies – no more than 400 - 450 mg of caffeine per day, the equivalent of about three eight-ounce (237 ml) cups of brewed coffee.

Caffeine can pop up in a number of places that you might not expect – stay on your toes! It occurs naturally in a number of products, and is also added to many beverages. In addition to coffee and tea, you should also watch out for the caffeine found in coffee, teas, colas, chocolate, and the new energy drinks. Certain over-the-counter cold and flu and pain relief preparations also contain significant amounts of caffeine.

Caffeine tolerance levels can vary significantly between individuals, so it can be difficult to clearly link intake levels with specific health effects. There have however been a number of human studies that suggest caffeine may have more than a few adverse effects. Health Canada scientists recently reviewed these studies and concluded that:

- The general population of healthy adults is not at risk for potential adverse effects from caffeine if they limit their intake to 400-450 mg per day.
- People who get an adequate daily amount of calcium have greater protection against the possible adverse effects of caffeine on bone health. For most people, choosing foods according to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating can provide the calcium needed for good health.
- Compared to the general adult population, children are at increased risk for possible behavioural effects from caffeine.
- Women of childbearing age are at increased risk of possible reproductive effects.

These conclusions prompted Health Canada to establish new recommendations for maximum daily caffeine intakes for the groups that may be at higher risk. For children age 12 and under, Health Canada recommends a maximum daily caffeine intake of no more than two and a half milligrams per kilogram of body weight. Based on average body weights of children, this translates to a daily caffeine intake of no more than:

- 45 mg for children aged 4 - 6
- 65 mg for children aged 7 - 9



- 85 mg for children aged 10 - 12

Those recommended maximums are equivalent to about one to two twelve-ounce (355 ml) cans of cola a day. But of course, there are a whole host of reasons why one to two cans of cola per day for your tyke is otherwise ill-advised, not the least of which is the staggering sugar content.

For women of childbearing age, the new recommendation is a maximum daily caffeine intake of no more than 300 mg, or a little over two 8 oz (237 ml) cups of coffee.

Knowledge is important for helping to curb your caffeine intake. To get you started, here's a listing of the estimated caffeine content of a few popular foods and beverages:

- 8 oz cup (237 ml) of brewed coffee contains between 80-135 mg
- 8 oz cup (237 ml) of instant coffee has between 65-100 mg
- 8 oz cup (237 ml) of iced tea contains about 47 mg
- Hot cocoa has about 14 mg of caffeine in an 8 oz cup
- 12 oz can (355ml) of regular cola has between 36-46 mg
- 8 oz cup (237 ml) of blended tea has 43 mg
- 8 oz cup (237 ml) of green tea has 30 mg
- 1 oz (28 g) portion of dark chocolate contains about 7 mg
- 1 regular size chocolate bar contains about 19 mg
- 8 oz (237 ml) of a typical "energy" drink (eg. *Red Bull*, *Rockstar*) has about 80 mg

≡ *Week 20* ≡

**IF IT WALKS LIKE A DUCK  
AND TALKS LIKE A DUCK,  
IT'S NOT AN ARTIFICIAL  
SWEETENER**

*This weeks goal is to limit your intake of artificial sweeteners to no more than one to three servings a day.*

The artificial sweetener debate is ongoing, and it is confusing. As long as the jury is still out on this issue, I believe we should avoid ingesting them whenever possible. I take the position that, in moderation, these sweeteners can help to relieve sugar cravings, but until all potential risks are fully characterized and completely understood, they should not be eaten in excess. Of all the sweeteners, I prefer the flavour of sucralose, and it is always my first choice. For a natural alternative, try Stevia – this plant makes a great low calorie sweetener and can be found in most health food stores and grocery stores.

## ≡ Week 21 ≡

### MOVIN' AND SHAKIN'

*Add twenty minutes of activity to your week, and gradually increase it to at least three times a week. This week you must work out just once. Next week you will hit it twice, and by the third week you will be active three days out of seven. Of course you can increase this more, but twenty minutes three times a week is all you need to start experiencing the health benefits of an active lifestyle.*

*Start with an indoor walking video. You don't need any equipment, and it can be done with your family at home.*

*Sign up for a class that interests and excites you. Exercise can be fun! Try an adult dance class or participate in your local arena's free skate.*

*Walk inside or outside your office before you eat lunch. Do a set of sit-ups or use an exercise machine while you watch your favourite TV show.*

*You can count vacuuming, dusting, even dancing as activity. (only if you are an especially aggressive duster)*

*Park and walk: whenever you have an errand, park your car as far away as you can handle, and walk to the store. At the mall, park at the farthest end and walk the length of the mall. Use every opportunity to walk. At the end of the day, it all adds up to better fitness.*

You have probably figured out by now that this is not just a diet

book. There is a lot more to healthy living than simply eating well. Despite what the latest fad diet or miracle supplement would have you believe, healthy living requires activity, period. I'm not saying you need to run out and buy a gym membership, hire a personal trainer, and start your marathon endurance training this minute. A healthy level of activity can be easy, and fun, to fit in to your everyday life – and if it is easy and fun, it is far more likely to be maintained over the long term, which of course is the intent of this book!

What if I told you that you could lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, high blood pressure and obesity The US Surgeon General's Report<sup>26</sup> states that exercise and activity:

- Improves your chances of living longer and feeling healthier
- Helps protect you from developing high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which reduces your risk of heart disease
- Helps protect you from developing certain cancers, including those of the colon and breast
- Helps prevent non-insulin dependent diabetes
- May relieve pain and stiffness in people with arthritis
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Controls weight

Exercise does not have to mean pain and discomfort, and needs not involve major time commitment. I understand how busy people are, but a small investment of twenty minutes of

exercise, three times a week, can pay big dividends in your health. So, sneak some activity in throughout your week. .

Remember that regular exercise can increase your metabolism, burn excess fat, build lean muscle tissue, decrease your appetite and reduce stress and anxiety. Let's get moving!

## ≡ Week 22 ≡

### GET ALL FIBRED UP

*You can increase your daily intake of fibre by eating one serving of high fibre cereal as one of your daily starches. This is a great start towards getting closer to the high fibre recommendations that Health Canada has suggested.*

*Switch to whole grain pastas, breads, and rice. Gradually introduce the fibre by mixing it half and half at first. Whole wheat breads, oat or bran cereals, brown rice and whole grain pastas are all great sources of fibre. Take the time to make sure that the grain products that you are selecting have the words “whole-grain” on the label. Check the nutrition panel and aim to get products that are high in fibre - a serving should contain at least four grams.*

Fibre is a substance that is found in plants (as well as the colons of healthy people). It keeps our bowels healthy and it prevents constipation. A diet high in fibre can lower cholesterol, prevent diabetes and heart disease, help maintain weight, and prevent high blood pressure. Fibre is also an excellent appetite suppressant because the bulk that is added to our systems makes us feel full, sooner.

Fibre can be broken down into two types: The first is known as insoluble fibre - this is the bowel-friendly type (by friendly, I mean regular). This fibre is found in whole-wheat products, corn bran, flax seeds, and in the skins of vegetables

and fruits. The second type is called soluble fibre, and it is the heart-friendly one. It can help lower cholesterol and control blood sugar levels. Soluble fibre is found in fruits like apples, vegetables like carrots, oatmeal, barley, psyllium and legumes.

Women should aim for 25 grams of fibre per day and men should be eating 38 grams daily. Eat a variety of fibre from both soluble and insoluble sources every day. This is a lot of fibre, but the health benefits are worth it. Eat it.

## ≡ Week 23 ≡

### ZZZZ's

*Set a sleep schedule for yourself. The basis for the schedule will be the time that you have to wake up in the morning – lights-out is seven to nine hours before that, minimum. If you don't have a time that you have to wake up in the morning, pick one. Healthy sleep habits have to be a priority, and consistency counts. If you need to unwind before lights out, or already have an established bedtime routine, be sure to allow yourself sufficient time. Lights out is lights out.*

Current research suggests a link between sleep and Leptin levels.<sup>27</sup> Leptin is a hormone produced by fat cells that affects body weight regulation by suppressing appetite through the hypothalamus. A lack of sleep lowers the levels of hunger-regulating hormones in such a way that hunger increases. Chronic lack of sleep deprivation may very well lead to regular overeating, which, needless to say, is a significant risk factor for obesity.

A good night's sleep is critical to maintaining adequate energy levels in today's fast-paced world. It helps keep us alert and sane. Many of us know how rotten we feel after a short night of fitful sleep. To start feeling the benefits of a healthy night's sleep immediately, consider the following guidelines for good sleep hygiene:



- Don't eat right before bed, but don't go to bed hungry. This is best accomplished by a good dinner, and a healthy evening snack, do make sure it is a light and healthy choice.
- Regular exercise is key; however, wrap it up at least three hours before you go to bed.
- Find a relaxing bedtime routine and stick with it – it could be something as simple as a warm bath or reading a book
- Caffeine, cigarettes, and alcoholic beverages don't help you sleep – in fact, they may actually make sleep impossible -- so avoid these substances late in the afternoon and evening.
- Don't take a daytime nap if you have trouble sleeping at night.
- Make your bedroom pleasant for sleeping. Maintain a comfortable temperature and keep it dark and quiet.

## ≡ Week 24 ≡

### **PUMPING IRON:** *BUILD LEAN MUSCLE TISSUE*

*I want you to design a gentle resistance routine to start to lay a healthy lean muscle foundation. Three-pound weights can be found for under ten dollars, or you could even use soup cans to get yourself started. It doesn't have to take a lot of time . . . it may mean just doing a set of push-ups and sit-ups each morning before you shower, but do something, and keep track of your accomplishments so that you can feel motivated to continue to work on this part of your fitness. In fact, the easier your routine is, the more likely you will be to do it. As a suggestion, start with 10-20 push-ups, and 30 sit-ups on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of this coming week. There are no hard and fast rules here, and you can and should be as creative as you can in developing a custom routine that's just right for you.*

Adults typically gain 0.4 to 1.7 pounds a year, but still lose muscle mass.<sup>28</sup> Simply put, as we age we gain weight and lose muscle. Lean muscle tissue plays a key role in metabolism regulation, and it's very much a case of "use it or lose it." Researchers have named this age-related muscle loss Sarcopenia (SAR-co-PEEN-yuh).

Muscle is metabolically active tissue. It uses calories. In fact, muscle burns most of the calories that the body uses,

and does so at a higher rate than fat tissue does. So the less muscle you have, the fewer calories your body stores as fat. To preserve this calorie burning capacity, we have to continually work against age-related muscle loss. Regular resistance training exercises can decrease the loss of muscle, and may even replace some. It doesn't have to take a lot of time in your day a few short bursts of cardio and weight-lifting throughout the week can go a long way towards keeping your calorie burning capacity maximized.

## HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

*Are you an emotional eater? Identify your triggers and come up with a way that works for you to combat this practice. Develop a fail-safe home environment so that you can't grab an unhealthy comfort food during an emotional eating trigger.*

Experts estimate that emotional eating may be responsible for up to cause 75 percent of overeating. By definition, emotional eating is eating in response to feelings rather than hunger. Feelings that most typically trigger this response include stress, anxiety, and even boredom. Unfortunately, the “comfort foods” that most people tend to reach for are not healthy choices (when was the last time you thought to yourself “a carrot stick right now would really make me feel better”?)

Emotional eating is something that I see a lot of in my practice. Many, many people use food to comfort. Depression, boredom, loneliness, chronic anger, anxiety, stress, frustration, marital and family problems, can all result in overeating. These are real feelings that in many cases cannot be helped, but it is within your power to modify your response. The first step is to identify your triggers so that you can consciously observe your response. Only once this is complete can you condition your response to substitute a healthier behaviour in

place of overeating. This can be difficult to do on your own – if you are feeling overwhelmed, seek help. There are a number of trained professionals that could help you to overcome your emotional eating.

Excessive eating can result from being encouraged by others to eat, eating to fit in, arguing, or feelings of inadequacy around other people. Eating in response to boredom, stress, fatigue, tension, depression, anger, anxiety or loneliness is can be seen as a way to “fill the void.” Opportunistic eating is another form of emotional eating. For example, being at a restaurant, seeing an advertisement for a particular food, or passing by a bakery won’t necessarily elicit an emotional response along the lines of the triggers listed above, but nonetheless may trigger eating that would not have otherwise taken place. Eating may also be associated with certain activities, such as watching TV, going to the movies, or attending a sporting event, etc. Some people eat too much because they don’t feel good about themselves – for example, scolding oneself for looks or a lack of willpower. Eating can happen in response to physical cues, too, like hunger due to skipping meals or eating to cure headaches or other pain.

To help you to identify your triggers, keep a food diary that records what and when you eat, as well as what stressors, thoughts, or emotions you can identify at the time. Patterns should emerge fairly quickly.

Now the work begins. The next step is to break your habit. Developing alternatives to eating is critical to overcoming emotional eating. Try some of these activities instead of reaching for a comfort food:

- Watch television (unless this is your trigger)

- Brush your teeth
- Chew sugar free gum
- Read a good book or magazine or listen to music
- Go for a walk or jog
- Take a bubble bath
- Do deep breathing exercises
- Play cards or a board game
- Talk to a friend
- Do housework, laundry or yard work
- Wash the car
- Write a letter
- Surf online
- Or do any other pleasurable or necessary activity until the urge to eat passes

Sometimes simply distracting yourself from eating and developing alternative habits is not enough. To manage the source of the emotional distress - as opposed to the symptom, overeating - try:

- Relaxation exercises
- Meditation
- Individual or group counselling

## ≡ Week 26 ≡

### **BREAK YOUR FAST!**

*Never skip breakfast, and commit to making your morning meal varied and healthy!*

Not hungry in the morning? Eat anyway. Drink a protein shake. They are quick and easy-to-prepare, and will ignite your metabolism. Just make sure to have a balanced morning snack that contains a dairy, starch and fruit.

Skipping breakfast might seem like an easy way for dieters to cut calories. However, the majority of my clients who are successful at losing weight and keeping it off eat breakfast every day. I like to think of our bodies as a wood furnace, and that eating within the first hour of waking ignites the fire that is our metabolism. Breakfast also helps us to manage our hunger better throughout the day - starting the day off with a healthy breakfast means you won't be starving later in the day, and less likely to overeat at the next mealtime. Skipping breakfast can have a domino effect on the rest of your day, as you alternately overeat and skip subsequent meals and snacks.

This can be a hard concept for many dieters to grasp. They really believe that less food is better, and are often proud of their ability to fast into the afternoon. In all my years as a

nutritionist, I have yet to see a breakfast skipper reach their weight loss goals! People who are successful at losing weight eat breakfast, period. Eat breakfast.



## ≡ Week 27 ≡

### SHOP ‘TILL YOU DROP

#### *Healthy-up your grocery trip.*

Make a list and stick to it. In addition to saving you money, a list will help you to keep the impulse foods out of your cart, out of your home, and ultimately out of your mouth.

Never shop hungry. This is important, so I’ll say it again: never shop hungry. Have a protein snack on the way to the store so that you aren’t tempted to over-buy or make unhealthy purchases. Be prepared. Plan your grocery trips in advance. Never shop hungry.

Using an online grocery store is a great way to ensure that you only buy what you really need. The best part about shopping online is that they deliver. (But never shop hungry)

Some suggestions for your list:

#### **Seasoning:**

- “Spike”
- “Mrs. Dash”
- Powdered spices that do not contain salt (i.e.) garlic powder, not garlic salt

- Low sodium taco seasoning mix by “Old El Paso”
- “No Salt” is a potassium salt

### **Deli Meats:**

- Schneider’s Lifestyle Brand Ham, Turkey or Chicken, or no name brand fat-free

### **Cheese:**

- Ultra-light or fat-free slices by Kraft, President’s Choice or Black Diamond
- Low- or No-fat cottage cheese any brand
- Ultra-light cream cheese

### **Yogurt:**

- Nordica Light, Astro fat-free, Silhouette, SOURCE

### **Dressings and Condiments:**

- Any 1% non fat sour cream such as Too Good To be True, or Astro light
- Chelton house fat free salad dressing
- Kraft Ultra Low-Fat dressing
- Kraft Ultra Low-fat Miracle Whip and mayonnaise
- Hellmann’s ultra low-fat mayonnaise
- Knorr Vegetable Soup Mix for dips
- No sugar jams are ok (i.e.) Smuckers Light

### **Snacks:**

Remember that most snack foods count as a starch. You must measure and control your portions of these snack items. Measure your portion based on the serving size information

on the label, put it into a bowl, and walk away from the bag. You do not want to over-eat the starchy snacks, and slow down your weight loss!

- Canned fruit is fine as long as it is in its own juice with no sugar added. This includes no sugar added applesauce
- Baked Lays Potato chips and Baked Tostitos
- Mini rice cakes
- Cheerio snack mix
- Arrowroots
- Light microwave popcorn by President's Choice or Orville Redenbacher's "Smart Pop"

**Breads:**

- Hollywood, Weight Watcher's or Dempster's light diet bread (make sure the label says fifty calories or less per slice)
- Weight Watchers buns

## ≡ Week 28 ≡

### I'M OKAY, YOU'RE OKAY, EATING OUT IS OKAY

*The hints and tips in this section are designed to help you become comfortable with eating “out”. Take these suggestions to heart and really use them to make sure that you get the most from your foods away from home.*

#### Hints and Tips:

- Hold the dressings and the mayonnaise. Be picky. After all, the customer is always right, and it can save between 100 and 150 calories.
- Order poached eggs with a fruit cup, dry toast and butter on the side at breakfast.
- At seafood restaurants, order grilled or baked fillets of white fish, and ask for it without butter. If you want lobster, have it without the butter for dipping. Shrimp cocktail is fine, but go easy on the sauce.
- At Italian Restaurants, order pasta with tomato sauces and have grilled chicken with it. Don't be fooled by the Caesar salad- it is as high in fat as French fries! Have a garden salad with a light dressing on the side instead.
- If Chinese food is your thing, try stir-fry vegetables with

steamed rice. Avoid the deep fried items and the soy sauce!

- Steakhouses are fine if you order a grilled steak, baked potato and salad or steamed vegetables. Of course the grilled chicken and fish are great choices too. By this point I will assume that you will answer correctly when asked “would you like fries with that?” (and no, the correct answer is not “yes, please, but no gravy; I’m trying to get healthy!”)

Believe it or not, you can live a healthy lifestyle and still enjoy some of your meals “fast.” If you find your self short on time and hungry, consider the following options. Pay attention, and you’ll see some patterns emerge that can be applied anywhere, not just the establishments listed here (Hint: rhymes with “fold the bees”)

### **Burger King:**

- Charbroiled chicken sandwich with lettuce and tomato
- Plain hamburger with lettuce, tomato, ketchup and mustard, sparingly
- four piece chicken tenders
- Chicken Caesar with low-fat dressing
- Garden salad with light dressing, yes they have light dressings.
- Where “combo” substitutions are permitted, make sure to specify a sugar-free beverage and salad in place of fries and a soft drink

### **Swiss Chalet**

- quarter chicken dinner with white meat, no skin and a

salad or baked potato is a reasonable option.

- Use the sauce sparingly.
- BEWARE of the chicken salad - it has 868 calories and 60 grams of fat! Just like Caesar, having “salad” in the same is no indication of healthiness!

### **Wendy's**

- Grilled chicken sandwich
- 4 piece kids' chicken nuggets (use very little sauce)
- Junior burger
- Grilled chicken salad with light dressing
- Mandarin chicken salad (no crunchy things, fat free dressing)
- Deluxe garden salad with light dressing – but hold the cheese
- Plain baked potato
- Small chili
- Low fat strawberry yogurt (NO granola)

### **Kelsey's Casey's, or similar**

- Garden salad or grilled chicken breast on salad, but as usual, hold the cheese
- Steak, baked potato, steamed vegetables
- Fajitas, but hold the cheese and the sour cream
- A stir fry is fine, but specify low oil

### **Subway**

- 6" sub with chicken, turkey, roast beef, lettuce, tomato,

green pepper, onion, and mustard, but no cheese, sub sauce or mayo

- Stay AWAY from tuna, egg, and chicken salad subs (they are made with full-fat mayonnaise)

### **Tim Hortons**

- Plain bagels with chicken or turkey, but no cheese or mayonnaise
- Plain bagel toasted with jam
- Small chili
- BEWARE of the salty soups and starchy sandwiches.
- Become a caffeine purist: “double-double” is a quick way to ruin a perfectly good coffee, in this author’s opinion. If you absolutely must cut it with something, ask for milk instead of cream.

### **McDonald’s**

- One Chicken fajita
- One hamburger
- Fruit and yogurt parfait
- Chicken oriental salad with grilled chicken (with fat free dressing)
- Side salad is fine; choose a low-fat dressing.
- The healthiest option by far on the McDonald’s menu is also the least expensive: smiles!

## ≡ Week 29 ≡

### PICK-UP A PASSION FOR PORTIONING

*Weigh and measure your portions for this week only.*

You have been working on things for 28 weeks now. You may have noticed that as the foods you choose become healthier, your portion sizes are creeping up. Take a little time to recalibrate by weighing and measuring your servings this week, and make any adjustments you need to bring your portions back in line.

If you discover that you are actually eating less than the target, don't open the champagne just yet. Too little food can be as problematic for your weight and health as too much; you should make every effort to adjust your portions towards the ideal, regardless of which side of the line you currently find yourself on. When I see clients struggling to meet their weight loss goals, they generally fall in to one of two categories: either they are unable / unwilling to moderate their intake sufficiently, or they think they can accelerate the process by eating less than prescribed. Actually, this really boils down to just one category: clients who don't heed advice. Don't be that client.



## ≡ Week 30 ≡

### KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON

*This week is a reading assignment. Study these tips and write down the ones that feel like they will help you the most. If you feel you need more, a quick Internet search will turn up countless additional creative and great ways to help you stick to your new lifestyle. Keep the faith.*

Tips for staying motivated:

#### **Set goals**

Keep your goals simple and achievable. I've found that the most effective combination is a longer-term (i.e. monthly) goal, with smaller weekly targets to keep things on track. Having short-term goals is important for positive reinforcement, and also allows for real-time course corrections so that small issues can't accumulate to the point where the high-level goal becomes jeopardized. Hitting weekly targets is a great way to feel good about progress and it keeps you wanting more. It's OK to be proud of your accomplishments – you have worked hard, and deserve it!. Overly aggressive or unrealistic goals are much less likely to be achieved, which be really de-motivating. Missing target after target can also make it tempting to eat less than required in a well-intentioned but ultimately futile attempt to get back on track (you haven't forgotten last week's

lesson on portions yet, have you?)

### **Different Strokes for Different Folks**

Consider your personality when choosing activities. You may enjoy solitary walks, hiking with family, or you may love being part of a team. You will be much more likely to continue your new active lifestyle if you are having fun at the same time!

### **Start Sloooooowly**

I always say to do one thing at a time. It is not a race. If you push yourself too hard at first, it’s easy to become overwhelmed and give up. By starting slowly and progressing gradually, you will be much more likely to be able to sustain your new lifestyle in the long term.

### **Variety is Still the Spice of Life**

Vary your activities to keep boredom at bay. Alternate walking or biking with swimming or a low-impact aerobics class. When the weather cooperates, do your flexibility or stretching exercises outside. Play soccer with your kids. Join a health club to broaden your access to different forms of exercise.

### **Keep Your Eye on the Prize**

Are you hoping to lose weight? Boost your energy? Sleep better? Write it down! Seeing the benefits of regular exercise on paper is a great way to get committed and stay motivated. Keep a written copy of your goal handy, and pull it out whenever the going gets tough.

## **Track Your Progress**

You are never too old for happy faces! Keep a calendar, and stick a smiley on every day that you meet your goals. It feels great to see more and more happy faces and fewer blanks each week of the month, and soon each month of the year. Continually remind yourself that you are making progress.

## **Reward Yourself**

If you have had a really good week, be proud! You can and should reward yourself, you deserve it! (Healthy rewards, please!) Maybe a new outfit, or an upgrade to your squash racquet. Or, just take a quiet moment to sit back and savour the good feelings that achieving your goals creates.

## **Be Flexible**

If you're too busy to work out or simply don't feel up to it, then literally, don't sweat it! Take a day or two off if you need to; you're in this for the long term. A healthy lifestyle is about taking good care of yourself, so, take care of yourself and get back on track as soon as you feel better.

## ≡ Week 31 ≡

### LOSE THAT BOWL FULL OF JELLY

*A belly is not jolly, it's a serious health risk. If you're carrying a little extra around the middle, this is the week to ramp up your activity to a level that melts away this dangerous and unsightly belly fat. Many clients ask me what the best way is to lose belly fat. The answer is simple: exercise and healthy eating. Cutting calories alone will probably not do it.*

In a recent study,<sup>29</sup> researchers assigned 45 obese non-exercising women aged 50-70 years old to either a low-calorie diet or the same diet PLUS high or low intensity exercise. Both exercise groups walked on a treadmill just three days a week. The low-intensity group walked for 55 minutes at a slower speed (between one to two miles an hour). The high-intensity group walked for 30 minutes at a faster speed (three to four miles per hour). After 20 weeks, all three groups had lost about the same amount of weight (19-24 pounds), however only the two exercise groups saw any reduction in the size of abdominal fat cells.

Getting rid of that spare tire is about more than just improving your figure; it's also critical for disease prevention and better health. Serious risks associated with belly fat include both diabetes and heart disease. The most effective way to cut the midsection girth is through a calorie-reduced

healthy eating program in combination with regular exercise. A brisk, 30 minute walk, three days a week, is all it takes. If you have a treadmill, set aside a time and use it. Read a book or watch your favourite program to help the time fly by. Otherwise, walking outside in the fresh air (with proper footwear) is a great way to work towards a healthier You!

## ≡ Week 32 ≡

### LET'S DO LUNCH

*Vow to make and take healthy lunches.*

A healthy lunch includes foods from at least three of the food groups. Be creative and think like a kid. Plan Ahead! Time is precious, but so is your health. With a little advance planning, you can have enjoy a convenient healthy lunch every day, without resorting to fast food Take a moment to think through your lunch requirements for the coming week, and make a list. Pick up the ingredients when you do your regular shopping. Assemble your lunches on Sunday to avoid adding time to your already busy weekday morning routine – just grab and go. An assembly line is the key to making lunches efficient! Have a good set of plastic containers for each family member. You will need sandwich-sized, sauce sized, and a size for fruits and for veggies. Prepare what you can in advance and stack them in the fridge.

There are lots of ways to lower calories and fat content of lunches:

- Use fat free dips and dressings. If switching all at once is too much of a shock, start by mixing it half and half and gradually increase the amount of fat free dressings.

- The phased approach described above also works for low-fat meats.
- Relish, hot sauces, and mustard are great ways to add low-calorie, low-fat zing to your lunch.
- Low fat luncheon meat (e.g. turkey, ham, roast beef)
- Cubed chicken breast
- Tuna or salmon salad
- Chicken salad
- Hummus
- Beans
- Cooked tofu
- Low fat sliced cheese (different varieties)
- Grated low fat cheese (different varieties)
- Cooked rice (whole grain)
- Grated carrot
- Tomato slices
- Cucumber slices
- Sliced green, red, yellow or orange peppers
- Alfalfa sprouts
- Sliced celery
- Lettuce or spinach
- Sliced seedless grapes
- Raisins
- Sliced bananas
- Sliced apples

- Sliced pears
- Tomato/pizza sauce
- Low –fat mayonnaise
- Mustard
- Salsa



## ≡ Week 33 ≡

### PREPARE NOW FOR CONVENIENCE LATER

*Unfortunately for many of us, there are times when packed daily schedules seem to leave little room for anything but unhealthy fast-food. For healthy eating to present a viable and sustainable alternative, it has to be convenient or it just can't compete. Last week we saw how a little pre-planning can go a long way for your health – this week, we will start to apply this approach beyond brown-bag lunches. Start simply, by filling your fridge with pre-cut and pre-washed veggies and fruits so that they are a convenient food for you and your family.*

As soon as you come home from the grocery store, take the fresh produce and rinse it in the sink. Chop it, prep it, and put it in the fridge so that it is easy to access for your entire family. I like to mix a few in-season fresh fruits with canned fruit (that is packed in juice, not syrup, please). The juice prevents the apples from turning brown, and I have fruit salad to snack on all week long. While meat is fresh, you can cook it and freeze it. Turn your healthy food into “convenience food” with a few simple steps like these, and you can save both time and your health!

## ≡ Week 34 ≡

### REDEFINE FAST FOOD

*Have you noticed a trend over the past couple of weeks? For these new healthy-habits to last for the long-term, they have to become easy and automatic. Luckily, this is not complicated. Try one of these new quick and easy healthy meals this week.*

If you don't plan ahead, you're likely to end up eating in the same old hot spots where a burger can cost you more than 590 calories and 34 grams of fat, or a deli sandwich can tip the scale at more than 900 calories and 60 grams of fat. The latter is about half the calories and all of the fat the average woman should consume in a day.

Ready for ten super-yummy and super-quick meals that will awaken your taste buds without using up your whole afternoon?

#### 1. Cheese Quesadillas

Sprinkle two ounces of shredded fat-free cheddar cheese on a fat-free, whole-wheat tortilla. Add peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms, and drizzle with salsa. Fold and brown in a non-stick skillet until cheese melts. Serve with carrots and celery sticks.

## **2. Baked Spaghetti**

Spread cooked whole-wheat angel hair pasta onto a sheet pan. Top with one jar of spaghetti sauce and sprinkle with shredded, fat-free mozzarella cheese. Bake for eight to ten minutes at 375 degrees. Serve with a side salad.

## **3. Vegetable Tortilla Pizza**

Brush a large whole-wheat flour tortilla with spaghetti sauce and top with chopped vegetables. Sprinkle with grated fat free mozzarella. Bake until lightly brown and crisp (about five minutes at 450 degrees). Serve with a spinach salad topped with mandarine oranges.

## **4. Grilled Chicken Sandwich**

Grill a marinated chicken breast (you can grab one from your freezer!). Serve on a slice of whole-grain bread with lettuce, tomato, salsa or Dijon mustard. Add a side of fresh fruit.

## **5. Turkey and White Bean Soup**

Add pre-cooked smoked turkey breast to chicken stock, a can of diced tomatoes and a can of white beans. Serve with raw veggies and fresh fruit.

## **6. Quick Taco Salad**

Rinse canned black beans. Season with low-sodium taco seasoning and sprinkle with shredded part-skim cheddar cheese. Heat and serve over mixed greens. Top with crumbled baked Tostitos and salsa. Serve with sugar-free apple sauce.

## **7. Even Quicker Greek Salad**

Top mixed greens (from a bag!) with crumbled low-sodium feta cheese, shredded fat free turkey or ham,

and drizzle with low-fat dressing. Serve with fruit and a whole-wheat breadstick.

### **8. Cheese Baked Potato**

Microwave a potato for four minutes. Cut in two and top both halves with cooked broccoli florets and fat-free cheese sticks (two per potato) or other part-skim milk or soy cheese. Microwave until cheese melts. Top with non-fat sour cream. Serve with salad and low-fat dressing.

### **9. Turkey Tortilla Roll**

Spread a whole-wheat flour tortilla with Dijon mustard. Top with sliced fat free turkey, shredded lettuce, diced tomato and shredded fat free cheddar cheese. Roll up and serve with orange slices.

### **10. Tuna or Salmon Salad Pita**

Mix one small can of water-packed salmon or tuna with one tablespoon fat free mayonnaise, one teaspoon curry powder, chopped red pepper, half of a diced apple. Stuff into whole-wheat pita lined with lettuce leaves. Serve with remaining sliced apple.

## ≡ Week 35 ≡

### PAMPER YOURSELF

*This week, make some time for you. You have been working hard on these new habits, and although good health can be its own reward, it never hurts to take a little credit where credit is due. You deserve a treat. It can be as simple as scheduling a hot Epson salt bath or as involved as a spa day. DO IT!*

Many people neglect to reward themselves for their progress. Pampering your body and spirit is important for feeling energized and healthy. Take the time this week to put yourself first for a bit. It is something everyone should be doing!

## ≡ Week 36 ≡

# POSITIVE THOUGHTS ATTRACT POSITIVE RESULTS

*Give positive self-talk a try this week to help keep your progress on track.*

Try out a visualization exercise tonight before you fall asleep. Picture yourself healthy, full of energy and maintaining your ideal body weight. Feel the flood of positive feelings that come with having achieved your healthy living goals. Picture yourself socializing and having people notice how vital and healthy you are. Feel the success and know it will soon be true.

Say positive things about yourself when you look in the mirror while you brush your teeth and really believe what you are saying. Say it like you mean it! There's no reason to be embarrassed, the only person you are talking to is you! Do you have nice eyes? Say it and feel it. Do you have a really nice hair colour? Praise it out loud every day this week.

- All too often, progress is undermined by negative thinking. It is important to realize just how important positive thinking is when it comes to achieving a healthier and happier life. If you want to lose weight, then you need to

focus on believing that you can and will achieve this goal. Indulging negative feelings will only keep you grounded in your failure. It is not easy to change your thinking, but you can do it. Just as healthy eating will one day become an automatic habit, so too will positive thinking – IF you practice it and keep up with it. The benefits of a good attitude go beyond physical health, and will really and truly change your life for the better!

- What negative things do you say to yourself? Do you continually tell yourself that you are going to fail or that you can't change? Do you think of yourself as fat? Do you talk to other people about how awful you look or feel? Are you hard on yourself when you make a mistake? These negative thoughts and feelings can really bring you down. A persistent "I can't do it" attitude can and will guarantee the very outcome you fear. Give positive self-talk a try. Tell yourself every single day that you can do it, and that you will succeed at it. You will.

## ≡ Week 37 ≡

### SAVOUR THE FLAVOUR

*Eat sloooooooooowly. Take small bites and chew your food thoroughly at each meal.*

Savour your food. Slow down and pay attention to what you are eating. Make your meal an experience. By taking your time, not only will you have a chance to enjoy your food, but you will feel your full cues soon enough to avoid overeating. The act of being in the moment while you eat can be a very meditative and healthy exercise.

Chewing at least fifteen times per mouthful promotes a feeling of fullness. If you feel full sooner, you will eat fewer calories per meal. Thoroughly chewed food releases more nutrients sooner upon arrival in the stomach, which increases blood flow to the digestive system, thus increasing metabolism. It also enables the appetite centres of the brain to register “full” before excess food is consumed.



≡ Week 38 ≡

## AUTOPILOT IS FOR AIRPLANES NOT PEOPLE

*Do you eat out of habit? Do you eat when you aren't hungry?  
Do you eat when you are bored? Are you an automatic eater?  
If this shoe fits, then this is the week that you are going to stop  
wearing it for GOOD!*

Catch yourself eating when you are not hungry. You can't stop yourself from eating out of habit or boredom unless you know how to catch yourself at it. Substitute something else in place of the food. Try a warm tea, chug water, chew some gum. Move your muscles. Most importantly, get out of the kitchen. If that fails to satisfy, try a lean protein snack or a low-calorie vegetable mix with fat free dip instead of going for the easy, unhealthy comfort foods.

## ≡ Week 39 ≡

### CALCIUM IS KEY

*Read up on the benefits of calcium (starting here...). You may decide to increase your intake of calcium rich foods and/or you may decide to take a supplement. Whatever approach you choose, the important thing is that you commit to consuming the recommended amount of calcium, starting this week.*

Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body. It is also one of the most important. Ninety-nine percent of the body's calcium is in the bones, where it is a major component of the bone structure. If your diet does not supply enough calcium, the body will draw it out of the bones through a complex system of retrieval. Over time, a diet deficient in calcium can result in bones becoming thin. Calcium activates enzymes that are involved in fat and protein digestion and the production of energy. Plus, calcium regulates the contraction and relaxation of your muscles, including your heart!

Magnesium supplementation may turn out to be as important as calcium supplementation in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. This mineral plays a role in bone growth and is required for strong, healthy bones and teeth. It also has a role to play in helping the muscles to relax. Magnesium and calcium make a great combination for healthy, strong bones.

- Vitamin D is also very important for bone health. It is found in milk and in some good quality calcium supplements. This vitamin encourages greater calcium absorption into the blood via the intestines.
- If you decide to take a calcium supplement, go for a good quality brand that contains calcium, magnesium and vitamin D.

## ≡ Week 40 ≡

### BECOME FAST FOOD SAVVY

*Review the fast food tips and plan your next stop at a fast food restaurant. What will you order? Decide now, so that you aren't stuck making an unhealthy quick decision. You can refer back to Week 26 for my suggestions for a few popular spots. If I have not included a fast food restaurant that you frequent, you can do an Internet search and find the info on the restaurant's website. If the information is not available, you may want to reconsider eating at a place that doesn't want to share its menu breakdown.*

#### General tips:

- If you have to have a hamburger, make it the smallest one they serve and hold the cheese and mayo.
- Almost all fast food is high in sodium! Remember to drink lots of water with your meal at least two cups - to flush the sodium through your system. Set this example for your children, so that they learn to drink water too.
- PLEASE, no pop. Make it a treat to get chocolate milk when you are at a restaurant. At least it provides some calcium, and most of the fast food places serve chocolate milk made from low-fat milk. Of course, white milk is the best option.

- Most places offer an ice cream cone, so if you are making an evening treat trip, you can order the smallest ice cream and count it as a dairy and half a starch for the cone, or you can hold the cone and have them put the ice cream in a cup.
- NO FRIES! They really just ruin your chances of making a healthy choice. If you simply can't live without some, split an order among your family members, AND split an order of salad!
- Most places have a fat free or low fat dressing option. Never have the full fat dressings, as they can add whopping amounts of fat and calories to an otherwise healthy salad.
-

≡ *Week 41* ≡

## **DON'T LET YOUR HEALTH GET FREEZER BURNED**

*Learn how to incorporate HEALTHY convenience foods into your families' meals.*

There are a wide variety of delicious frozen entrées available that can be a great way to make a fast and healthy dinner without a lot of time and effort. Instead of grabbing unhealthy take-out, you can have these to add to for quick family dinners. A great way to make a frozen entrée into a family dinner is to use it as a base, and add grilled chicken and/or frozen vegetables to the meal.

## PARTIES AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

*Plan AHEAD for parties and social functions. When you know in advance that you have a wedding or a party to attend, make sure you eat carefully all day long to account for the extra protein, starch, fat and salt that will be served.*

If you are having company, prepare your meals in a tasty healthy way and eat with care throughout the day so you can splurge and have fun with your guests.

- **Always bring something:**

The host or hostess will appreciate your thoughtfulness and this will enable you to make healthier and safer choices. Fresh fruit platters, whole grain crackers and reduced fat cheeses, vegetable platters, and low fat dips will be a hit. And, if they are not, that means more for you!

- **Drink a lot of water:**

Both before and during dinner, drinking water will promote a feeling of fullness and help prevent any water retention that may result from the salt in the meal.

- **Choose to abstain from alcohol:**

Alcohol not only provides additional calories with no nutritional value, but it dulls the senses, causing you to indulge in things you don't really need or want. Alcohol also causes water retention, resulting in temporary weight gain. Offer to be the designated driver; it is the perfect excuse to abstain. If need be, drink a wine spritzer and count it as a serving of starch.

- **Don't explain your choices:**

How many of us have been asked by a well-meaning relative, "Is that all you are going to eat?" The last thing you want to do is offend the hostess, but we do not have to justify our choices. **YOU ARE NOT ON A DIET.** You are making healthier lifestyle choices. Load your plate up with vegetables, have a healthy protein portion, and limit the refined starches. Your plate will look full and you will go unnoticed.

- **Overindulging:**

What if you overindulge? Will you have undone all your hard work? Of course not! Drink extra water the following day and increase your activity to help flush the salt and revitalize your spirits.



## ≡ Week 43 ≡

### TIPS FOR TRIPS

*Read these travel tips and remember them for your future travels.*

- If you are going away and want to have some control over your eating, pack a cooler, especially if you are going away for a couple of days or are driving to your destination. Include yogurt, arrowroot cookies, fruit, cut-up veggies, hard-boiled eggs some rice cakes, and of course plenty of water.
- When you do have to eat on the road, protein and vegetables are generally safe, provided you keep an eye out for – and avoid –, the gravies and sauces that some restaurants smother their entrees in.
- BE PICKY! The fact that something is included in the price of your meal in no way obligates you to eat it if you don't want to, particularly if it is an unhealthy addition. Don't forget to refer to your restaurant eating out tips – consider this as written permission to photocopy that page to keep with you for easy reference – as long as you promise to use it!.

- Have fun while you are away! Remember, this is a long-term lifestyle program - one or two nights full of treats won't undo all you've accomplished this far, and won't prevent you from making healthy choices tomorrow and the next day. Life should be fun. Allow yourself a glass of wine or dessert. Just remember to drink lots of water.
- Moderation is the key.

**Meal ideas that are better options while away:**

- For breakfast, have toast with butter on the side, fruit salad, or a poached egg. Orange juice is optional
- For lunch, try salad with grilled chicken breast, stir-fry with a small amount of sauce, chicken fajitas (hold the cheese) and sour cream. There is always Mr. Sub or Wendy's; they can be safe fast food alternatives.
- Dinner can be grilled chicken, fish, or steak, steamed vegetables and/or a salad. Baked potatoes are the best option, but hold the sour cream.

## HOLIDAY SEASON SURVIVAL

*Read these tips this week, and bring them out again for a refresher read over the holidays.*

### Holiday Survival Tips

- Portion control: even if you are eating away from home, you can stay on target with the amount of food that you put on your plate. Make sure that your meat is a lean cut of red meat or the white meat of poultry; your serving size cannot be more than the size of the palm of your hand. Do not fill your plate; make sure that you have half as much as the person beside you. (which means avoid sitting next to obese people...)
- Beware of hidden fats: hold the dressing and the buttered vegetables. Save on your fat during the day because there will be a lot in the main meal.
- The meal may be salty, so drink lots of water all day and all evening to flush it out.
- If you are planning to have a glass of wine, count it as a starch to keep your daily calories in line.
- Plan ahead. If you know you are eating away from home, limit your starches and skip your fat for the day.

## ≡ Week 45 ≡

### BUY AND TRY

*Buy and try a brand new vegetable or fruit this week.*

This is going to be a fun week. Food should be fun. Variety is the key to ensuring that you meet your nutrient needs. Plus, breaking up a routine in eating can help to keep you motivated. So, this week is an exercise in creating variety in your weekly eating to prevent boredom and maybe even introduce a new food into your regular eating schedule.

## ≡ Week 46 ≡

### STRESS BUSTING

*Are you stressed? Do you lead a crazy, busy life? Take the time to evaluate your level of stress, and create a plan of action to help balance your life. This is doable. It may be as simple as taking a bath or taking a B-vitamin.*

A high level of stress hormones is one of the largest contributing factors to the development of chronic disease. Stress can result from many things: a high-pressure job, relationships, time pressures, financial problems, loneliness, sleep deprivation, poor diet, over-exertion, emotional episodes, crowds, and traffic jams. Irritability, high blood pressure, headaches, diarrhea, dizziness, loss of appetite, and sudden weight loss are disorders precipitated by stress. An effective support program for stress management should focus on relaxation techniques, proper diet, and exercise. Supplements containing high B-complex vitamins to support the nervous system are extremely important, a high-potency, balanced stress formula that is beneficial for skin, mouth, hair and eyes.

## ≡ Week 47 ≡

### FAMILY ACTIVITY

*Involve the whole family this week. As a group, search online for a new activity to try together. There are literally hundreds of things you can do together including biking, walking, ball hockey, soccer and swimming. Keep a family activity log to encourage everyone to post his or her progress! And don't forget to have fun!*

Activity and exercise are important for everyone in every age group. Planning fun family activities promotes good family bonding while achieving fitness goals. Participating together makes it seem a lot more like fun and less like drudgery. Together you can encourage each other to do something active every single day.

## WINTER EXERCISE TIPS

*Plan ahead for the winter season. Arm yourself with a list of activities that you would be willing to do when the winter hits. Don't use the climate changes as a reason to fall back into a sedentary lifestyle. You must find ways to stay healthy all year round.*

When temperatures plummet in the winter many of us tend to hibernate, but that is for bears, not us! As humans, it is important for us to stay active throughout all four of our seasons. Cold outside temperatures don't make it open season for excuses not to exercise. There are multiple exercise options one can choose to participate in regardless of what the outdoor thermometer reads. Depending on your location and preferences, you can choose to work out inside or outside.

- Remember to warm up your muscles when the temperatures are cold. You don't want an injury to set back your progress.
- Remember to stay hydrated. In the winter you may not feel as thirsty, so make drinking water an automatic habit.
- If you really hate the cold, you can find a place to walk inside. Many malls open early to allow for walkers.
- You can create an inexpensive home gym. A few weights,

DVDs, a jump rope and an exercise ball will provide you with a great routine. You can even just use your stairs and climb them for twenty minutes.

By staying fit during winter you'll be able to avoid gaining weight, have a head start on swimsuit season, and avoid losing strength and stamina caused by inactivity.



## ≡ Week 49 ≡

### ALCOHOL

*If you drink alcohol, count it as a starch. That means each drink replaces a serving of starch in your daily intake.*

Alcohol contains calories. In fact, it contains more calories per gram than protein and starch. It costs seven kcal per gram (protein and carbohydrates are four kcal per gram and fat is a whopping nine kcal per gram), so it WILL contribute to weight gain. It is processed through the liver, so it should be consumed in moderation. When you know you are going to have a drink, you should plan for it by cutting out a serving of starch. That helps to contain your calories. Remember to drink lots of water to help flush the alcohol out. Drink a glass of water for every drink that you have, and then drink extra water the following day to help restore your body to optimum hydration.

## ≡ Week 50 ≡

### **ROAST VEGETABLES INSTEAD OF POTATOES**

*Replace the potatoes with a vegetable every day this week.*

Potatoes are starchy. They raise blood sugar fast, almost as fast as simple sugar does. Eating any food that causes a sharp upswing in blood sugar will cause insulin to rise, and this process over time may lead to insulin resistance (pre-diabetes). Try switching to a variety of roast vegetable side dishes. You can roast broccoli, cauliflower and squash. Go easy on the oil and heavy on the low sodium seasoning.

## ≡ Week 51 ≡

### DITCH DESSERT

*Finish with fruit, not a high-calorie dessert.*

A typical restaurant dessert can cost you 1000 calories, and they are often high in saturated fat. It isn't worth it. Look for fruit on the menu, and when eating at home, make a fruit dessert a healthier part of your meal.

## BELLY BREATHING

*Plan to practice belly breathing once a day, starting with five minutes. Then, gradually increase the time up to about 15 minutes.*

Here's a good way to learn *belly breathing*:

- Lie comfortably on your back, with a pillow under your head, your knees bent and your back flat. You can stretch your legs out if that's more comfortable. Place one hand on your belly. Once you're comfortable, you can start the exercise.
- Inhale while you slowly count to four. Expand your belly as much as you can – like a balloon. You know you're doing “belly breathing” right when you can feel your belly expand. Then, exhale to the slow count of four, just letting all the air out of the balloon. As you exhale, just feel yourself letting go of tension.
- Keep repeating the belly breathing to the slow count of four. When your mind wanders, just gently bring your attention back to the counting and belly breathing.
- After you have practiced this exercise for about a week, try doing your belly breathing when you are sitting. Then,

try it at different times during the day, even when you are standing. Notice that it is very relaxing.

- The simple act of breathing deeply from the belly can be life changing. This is a very powerful technique. It teaches you to slow your breathing down to relax your body. This is really the first step in learning to meditate. Some of us may never master meditation but all of us can master this simple breathing exercise.
- I suggest that you take the time to do this every day to help oxygenate your body and manage stress. You can alter your breathing during a stressful meeting or when you are stuck in traffic. If you are nervous or anxious for any reason this technique can help manage these symptoms.
- Regular breathing exercises increase the supply of nitric oxide in your blood, this relaxes your arteries, lets more oxygen into your blood and stimulates your brain. Correct breathing also moves the lymphatics, which helps remove waste material from the blood.

This simple practice will have a highly beneficial affect on your breathing, especially if you do it on a regular basis. Remember that you can try this practice at any time of the day or night. Though it's easiest if you are lying down, you can also do it sitting, standing, walking, and so on. It is an excellent practice to try before you get out of bed in the morning or anytime you are anxious or tense, since it will help relax you and center your energy. Over time, it will help slow down your breathing and make it more natural.

## CONCLUSION

If you have managed to retain even one of these healthy living habits, then reading this book was worth it. I hope that your healthy living continues so that you and your family can feel better and stay well. I strongly suggest you revisit this book regularly to make sure that you are keeping these habits in your life. I like to review my clients' progress at least twice a year. January is a great time for resolutions and renewed effort, and September is another time that feels like a new beginning.

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## ALL ABOUT SHARLENE



Sharlene has been helping people improve their health since graduating from the University of Guelph in 1999. She obtained her degree in Applied Human Nutrition and furthered her studies at the Edison Institute of Nutrition. She is a Registered Nutrition Consultant Practitioner and is a professional member in good standing with the International Organization of Nutrition Consultants. Sharlene runs her nutrition practice in her hometown in Baden, Ontario where she lives with her husband and daughter.