



weight loss weapons.

Want to lose weight, have more energy and feel recharged? Try these expert tips from naturopath **Louise O'Connor.**

So, you've tried no-fat diets, low-calorie diets, cutting carbs and every other crazy fad, but nothing has kept the kilos off. The truth is, diets don't work and there is no quick fix to losing weight. The secret is eliminate the roadblocks that sabotage your attempts to lose weight, once and for all. Here's how:

1 Lose the bad apple. A calorie overload causes abdominal weight gain. The worst offenders are soft drinks, alcohol, high-fat foods, and sugary snacks. Apple-shaped weight gain is strongly linked to poor blood sugar control, and puts you at risk of developing insulin resistance syndrome and type 2 diabetes. The key to losing excess tummy fat is to reduce overall weight, via diet and exercise.

Top tips

- Measure your waist: a healthy waist measurement for women is less than 80cm; if it is greater than 87cm, you have a high risk of type 2 diabetes.
- According to a study in *Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism*, taking magnesium improves insulin sensitivity and reduces type 2 diabetes risk. Look for a high-potency supplement to top up your levels of this vital mineral.

2 Boost your metabolic rate. This is the rate at which your body burns food for energy, and it is impossible to lose weight if your metabolism is in

low gear. A drop in your metabolic rate may also be why you hit a wall when dieting: when you lose weight quickly with a calorie-controlled diet, your metabolism slows, too. Ageing causes a dramatic decline in metabolic rate and research in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* confirms this is a key factor in age-related weight gain. Skipping meals only makes your body slow metabolism more.

Top tips

- Muscle is your body's metabolic engine – enlist a personal trainer or yoga teacher and increase lean muscle with strength training to maximise your metabolic burn.
- Green tea produces a mild thermogenic effect that stimulates fat burning. Sip it daily, or take a supplement.

3 Get off the hormone rollercoaster. If you're gaining weight for no reason, or finding it impossible to lose weight even with a

healthy diet and exercise, chances are that a hormone imbalance is the culprit. Your hormones are powerful messengers which regulate many different bodily functions, including weight gain and body shape. Women transiting menopause often find their hormonal fluctuations cause fatigue and weight gain.

Top tips

- Ask your naturopath for a non-invasive saliva hormone test; this is an accurate way to assess your hormonal balance.
- Diindolylmethane (DIM) is a naturally occurring phytonutrient found in cruciferous vegetables, like cauliflower and broccoli. Scientists have shown that taking a supplement of bioavailable DIM can naturally promote better hormone balance.

4 Eat mindfully. Overeating is often triggered by stress, boredom, loneliness, or other emotions. Using the Zen principle of mindfulness – where you

BE A CONSCIOUS SHOPPER

A whole health approach makes weight loss easier. Decide now to commit to eating wholesome food for life. Aim to shop regularly for fresh, local produce and cook healthy meals at home. A food diary is a simple way to keep you on track until you reach your target weight. Promise yourself to eat well, not less.

Everyday packaged foods can contain harmful amounts of sugar, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, hydrogenated oils, artificial colours and preservatives which disrupt metabolism, making it harder to lose weight. Read label ingredients: it's easy to spot unhealthy items in the fine print.



take the time to become conscious of what, how and where you are eating – can help. Choose foods that are both desirable and nourish the body, practise portion control, and learn to ‘check in’ with your body to become aware of the physical signals that tell you when you are actually hungry and full.

Top tips

- Eating should be a pleasurable, sensual experience. Select colourful, aromatic, gorgeous foods that delight the senses – bright berries, crunchy vegetables, spicy curries. Focus just on your food and don't multi-task (drive, work or watch TV) while you're eating.
- Withania (Withania somnifera) is prized by Ayurvedic doctors as a rejuvenating tonic, and is particularly helpful for nervous exhaustion caused by long-term stress.



5 Sleep soundly.

Long-term sleep problems disrupt your hormone balance, making it difficult to lose weight. A study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* has shown that dieters produced higher levels of ghrelin, the so-called ‘hunger hormone’ which triggers appetite – especially for high-calorie foods - and reduces energy expenditure, when their sleep was restricted.

Top tips

- Improve your sleep quality by eliminating major sources of caffeine – tea, coffee, energy drinks and soft drinks. Aim for seven to eight hours sleep a night.
- Gamma amino butyric acid (GABA) is your brain's major anti-anxiety brain

chemical. All-natural Pharma-GABA® is a supplement that may aid sleep.

6 Get your thyroid checked.

Thyroid problems are rapidly becoming the leading cause of weight gain, and many people suffer without even knowing it. Low body temperature, fatigue and hair loss are common clues to an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism). Thyroid hormones act as a throttle, boosting your body's metabolic speed. If your thyroid is underactive, metabolism slows, meaning fewer calories burned.

Top tips

- Use a digital thermometer to measure your resting body temperature on waking for five mornings straight. An average temperature of less than 36.5°C reveals an underactive thyroid.
- Bladderwrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*) is a herbal tonic traditionally prescribed to counter weight gain caused by hypothyroidism; it is a rich source of iodine, a nutrient proven to support a healthy thyroid.

7 Stress less. Stress goes hand-in-hand with food

cravings, binge eating, and yo-yo dieting. Chronic stress also causes your body to secrete excessive amounts of the hormone cortisol, and when left unchecked, cortisol triggers weight gain, especially around the belly. It's impossible to lose weight if you are under tremendous stress, as your stress hormones are fighting you.

Top tips

- The busier you are, the more critical it is to create time to relax. Yoga, meditation and deep breathing are all powerful

WHAT ABOUT CARBS?

Carbohydrate foods like bread, pasta and potatoes taste good and satisfy energy cravings, but they also promote weight gain. Carbs are broken down into glucose, a simple sugar that is quickly deposited into the bloodstream. Your body then secretes the hormone insulin to control the blood sugar spike. Many people develop type 2 diabetes when their body no longer responds to insulin. Ongoing studies stress the importance of managing your blood glucose levels. Currently a lab value above 6.1 mmol/L is accepted as an indicator of impaired insulin activity. However, some experts argue a fasting blood glucose level below 4.7 mmol/L (85 mg/dl) is better.

tools to restore emotional wellbeing.

- The B-group vitamins are not called ‘the stress vitamins’ for nothing: when the body is faced with any type of physical or emotional stress, the Bs are the first to be depleted. They are mostly water-soluble and are not stored in the body, meaning they must be replenished daily. B-group vitamins also keep homocysteine – a harmful amino acid linked to cardiovascular disease, depression and anxiety – in check.

8 Get happy. Lack of life

satisfaction can lead to comfort eating and changes in appetite. Many people find that they overeat or eat unhealthy foods when they are suffering emotional pain. The neurotransmitter serotonin regulates those parts of the brain that control mood and appetite: when levels are optimal, you feel calm, but a deficiency triggers cravings for sugary foods and bingeing.

Top tips

- Connect with people and activities that make you feel good. When you find your passion in life, your emotions soar naturally.
- Take a supplement of 5-HTP (5-Hydroxytryptophan), extracted from the seed of *Griffonia simplicifolia*, if you have cravings. Do not combine 5-HTP with antidepressant drugs.

SKIP THE SWEETENERS

Artificial sweeteners like aspartame (951) and sucralose can sabotage weight loss. Ironically, they are commonly added to diet products, as well as soft drinks, chewing gum, lollies, desserts, yoghurt, table sweeteners, snack foods, meal replacement drinks, and even medications and nutritional supplements. A study in *Preventive Medicine* has presented compelling evidence that these sweeteners actually **stimulate** sugar cravings. Safer alternatives include natural honey, stevia, xylitol and agave nectar.

Our consumption of sugar-laden soft drinks, fruit drinks, iced tea, energy drinks and vitamin water has also risen dramatically over the last 30 years, and many experts link this fact to spiralling obesity rates. Numerous studies, including a very large review in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, link high calorie carbonated drinks with weight gain in adults and children. Most contain an extremely high concentration of refined sugar – for example, a can of cola can contain around 10 teaspoons of sugar!



LOUISE O'CONNOR is a leading naturopath who writes and educates on natural thyroid health. Discover ThyroSynergy: Natural Thyroid Health Formula at: www.thyrosynergy.com.