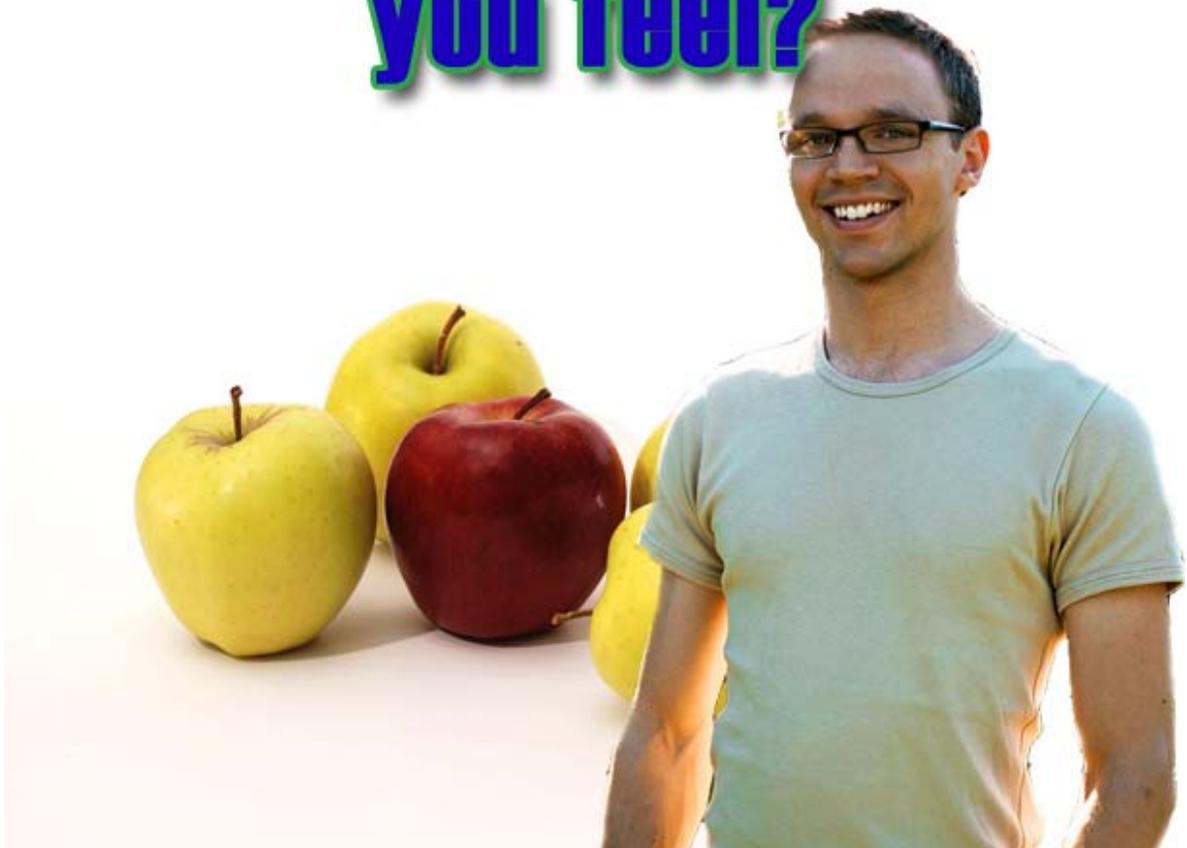


Eat Right To Feel Great

# Eat Right To Feel Great how healthy do you feel?



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## Introduction

Most of us consider ourselves 'healthy' individuals. We may, however, just be blissfully unaware of the grim reality!

According to the World Health Organization, health is a 'state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.

Our health is not only maintained because of the advancement and application of the health and medical sciences. We also need to make intelligent lifestyle choices that will ultimately affect our health. It is our responsibility to look after different aspects of our health. Of course, advances in medical science and research can help us help ourselves in our efforts to maintain health.

Food or nutrition is the primary source of energy and hence health for our body. Nutrition is the science that studies what and how we eat and the effects it has on our health, such as what food or food components may cause disease or adversely affect health. It also studies food and dietary supplements that can help us to improve our performance, promote our health and help in the cure or prevention of disease. For example, eating food that is rich in fiber can reduce the risk of colon cancer. Also, supplementing daily food intake with vitamin C strengthens your teeth and gums and improves the immune system of your body.

There is a variety of diseased states that can be caused by and cured by changes in diet or supplements. Imbalances in our diet, deficiencies of a particular kind or the excess of a particular form can equally affect our health negatively as they can lead to conditions such as scurvy, obesity and osteoporosis.

In today's polluted environment, the ingestion of elements that play no role in maintaining or protecting your health such as lead and mercury is also a major health hazard.

Exercise is crucial to maintaining physical fitness. It helps maintain a healthy weight, promotes the building and maintenance of healthy bones, joints and muscles, engenders physiological well being, reduces surgical risks and strengthens the immune system. Proper nutrition is no less important to good health than exercise and when you are exercising regularly, it is even more important to have good nutrition. This helps the body recover after strenuous exercise. On the other hand, proper rest is also important.

We have established that proper diet and nutrition are crucial to maintaining your health. Maintaining a healthy diet involves making

choices of what to eat and in what quantity, with the overall aim of maintaining your best and most healthy condition. This involves the intake of necessary nutrients by eating the right amount of food from all the food groups and drinking the right amount of water. Often, we need to consume these essential nutrients as additional supplements to ensure that the body is at its best.

You might be surprised to learn that a lack of proper 'nutrition' can also be responsible for weight gain. Our modern diet is unfortunately rich in carbohydrates, fats and sugars but lacking in crucial nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. These nutrients are responsible for ensuring that your body performs at its best. They are the crucial 'supplements' that your body needs to survive the stressed out, badly nourished life that most of us lead.

# You And Your Diet

## What is the ideal diet?

A healthy diet should achieve all of the following objectives:

- It should have sufficient calories to maintain one's metabolic needs and to power you through whatever activities you undertake. However, the number of calories should not be so high that it causes your body to begin storing excess amounts of fat. Stored fat should never be more than 30% of your body mass.
- A good diet should have sufficient quantities of fat including monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and saturated fat. This should be balanced by omega 6 and omega 3 lipids.
- It should also avoid saturated fats as much as possible, as well as trans-fats or trans-fatty acids as they are sometimes known.
- A good diet should also include a significant amount of amino acids (which are complete proteins). This provides replenishment to your cells and transports proteins throughout your body. All the essential amino acids are present in both animal and plant protein.
- There must be complete avoidance of directly poisonous substances such as heavy metals and carcinogenic substances.

One should also avoid high doses of certain foods that may be alright in small doses but not in large doses, such as:

- Food or substances with directly toxic properties such as ethyl alcohol.
- Foods that could exhaust the normal functions of the body such as eating refined carbohydrates that need extra dietary fiber to be digested.
- Foods that could interfere with other body processes, such as refined table salt.

The checklist seems simple enough because a simple list is exactly what it is. It is just a basic guide – a list of the dos and don'ts for your diet. Your lifestyle is becoming increasingly complex as is the food we eat. The optimal diet has to be more than just the basics. It must include the basic food groups, as well making allowances for your specific health issues and aims.

## **The essential food groups**

'Food groups' refers to a classification method for categorizing the various foods that we consume on a daily basis based on the nutritional properties of these types of foods. Eating a certain amount of food from each of the categories is recommended as it is one of the most natural ways in which you can begin to achieve a healthy lifestyle through diet.

### ***Fats***

The words 'oil', 'fat' and 'lipids' all refer to fats. 'Oil' refers to fats that are liquid at room temperature, while 'fats' refer to fats that are solid at normal room temperature. 'Lipids' refer to both 'fats' and 'oils'. Despite the poor image that fats generally have, they are nevertheless an important part of the human diet. Fats and lipids are broken down in our body by the enzyme lipase in the pancreas. Edible animal fats include lard, fish oil, butter and ghee. These are obtained from the fats in milk, meat or from the fats stored under the skin of animals.

Edible plant fats include peanut, Soya bean, sun flower, sesame, coconut, olive and vegetable oils. Margarine and vegetable shortening which are derived from these oils are nowadays generally used for baking.

### ***Meat***

In the broadest definition, meat is animal tissue that is used as food, although technically it could more accurately be described as skeletal muscle and associated fat. It could also refer to non-muscle organs such as the lungs, liver, skin, brains, bone marrow and kidneys.

### ***Milk***

In almost all mammals, the young get their milk needs met through breastfeeding. Humans keep consuming milk beyond infancy. They also use the milk of other animals (cows in particular) as a food product. For many thousands of years, cow's milk has been processed into dairy products such as cream, butter, yogurt, ice cream and cheese. With the development of industrial science we now have casein, whey protein, lactose, condensed milk and powdered milk products.

### ***Vegetables***

'Vegetables' is a generic term which generally refers to that part of a wide range of plants which is edible. All parts of herbaceous plants eaten by humans, whole or in part, are considered vegetables.

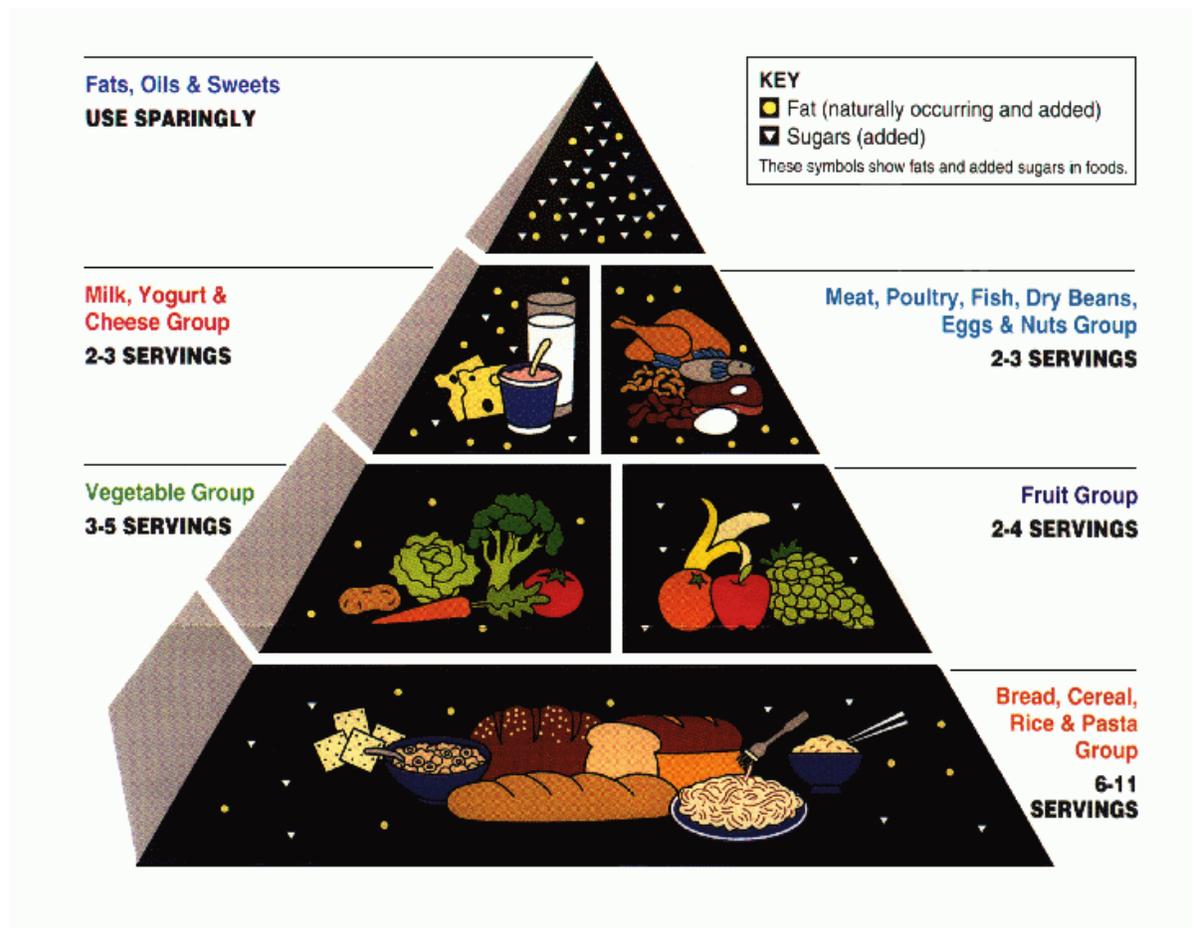
### ***Bread and Grains***

Bread is the staple food of millions across the world. It may be prepared by baking, steaming or frying. The main ingredients are flour and water, whilst salt, yeast and some form of fat are also commonly used. There

are many kinds of breads that contain things such as milk, sugar, egg, spice, fruit, vegetables, nuts or even seeds. Grain is however the principle ingredient of most kinds of bread.

### The food guide pyramid

The food guide pyramid (more commonly simply called the food pyramid) was introduced as a nutrition guide by the United States Dietary Association. The food guide pyramid suggests optimal nutrition guidelines for every food category per day, using a pyramid with horizontal dividing lines, to represent the suggested percentages of the daily diet for each food group.



### *The bread, cereal, rice & pasta group*

This group includes grain products and other foods derived from cereal crops. Cereals, breads, pastas, crackers, and rice fall under this food category. Grains supply us with food energy by way of starch. They are also a source of protein. Whole grains contain important dietary fiber, essential fatty acids, and other important nutrients. Milled grains are however generally more palatable but they also have many nutrients removed in the milling process and are therefore not as highly

recommended as whole grains. Whole grains can be found in oatmeal, brown rice, grits, corn tortillas and whole wheat bread.

Between six and eleven servings of grain products are recommended per day to maintain a healthy diet.

### ***The vegetable group***

A vegetable is that part of a plant which is consumed by humans. It is generally savory (not sweet) and differentiated from grains, fruits, nuts, spices and herbs. For example, the stem, root and flower parts of a plant may also be eaten as vegetable. Vegetables contain many vitamins and minerals. However, different vegetables contain different kinds of vitamins and minerals, so it is crucial to eat a wide variety of vegetables. For example, green vegetables typically contain a large amount of vitamin C, dark orange and dark green vegetables are high in vitamin A content, whereas bushy vegetables like broccoli and related plants contain iron and calcium. Vegetables are very low in fat and calories but the method of cooking can add fat and calories. Vegetables may be consumed fresh, frozen, canned, or made into juices.

Between three and five servings of vegetables are recommended in our daily dietary intake.

### ***The fruit group***

With reference to food, rather than the botanical term, fruits are the sweet-tasting seed-bearing parts of plants, or sometimes they are the sweet parts of plants which do not bear seeds. The fruit group includes oranges, apples, bananas, berries, grapes and plums, and the majority of fruits are low in calories and fat as well as being a primary source of natural sugars, fiber and vitamins. The processing of fruits for canning or making into juices unfortunately often adds purified sugars and removes essential nutrient. It is therefore more beneficial to consume fresh fruit or canned fruit packed in juice rather than syrup. The fruit food group is usually combined with the vegetable food group. The fruits may be fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or made into juice.

It is recommended that we consume between eight and ten servings of fruit in a day.

### ***The milk, yogurt and cheese group***

Dairy products are derived from the milk of mammals, most commonly from the milk of cattle but not always. This group includes milk, cheese and yogurt. Dairy products are the best source for the mineral calcium. They also provide you with protein, phosphorus, vitamin A, and in the case of fortified milk, vitamin D, as well. However, many dairy products are very high in fat as well, and this is why skimmed products are available as a healthier alternative.

The ideal daily intake of the milk, yogurt and cheese group for adults is two to three servings.

### ***The meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs & nuts group***

Since many of the parts of many types of animals are edible, there is a vast variety of meats available for our consumption. Meat has long been recognized as a primary source of dietary protein, as well as providing a good percentage of your daily iron, zinc, and vitamin B requirements. The different kinds of meats include beef, chicken, pork, salmon, tuna, and shrimp, etc.

Many of the same nutrients that are found in meat can also be found in foods such as eggs, dry beans, and nuts. This is the reason that such foods are in the same category as meats and in fact, they are often treated as viable meat alternatives. They include tofu and products that resemble meat or fish but are actually made from soy, eggs and cheese.

Although meats are a potent source of energy and nutrients, they are often quite high in fat and cholesterol as well as sodium. However, something as simple as trimming off fatty tissue can go a long way towards reducing the negative effects of meat.

It is recommended that we consume two to three servings of meat or meat alternatives in a day.

### ***The fats, oils and sweets group***

The fats, oils, and sweets group is right at the top of the food pyramid because it is the smallest section. This means that while they do have nutritional value, they should be consumed minimally.

## **Nutrients**

Apart from the food groups mentioned, our body also needs essential nutrients. These should be contained in the food that we eat. In fact, the reason why foods are split into food groups represented in the pyramid is to try to ensure that you give your body these essential nutrients.

Nutrients that are needed in relatively large quantities are called macronutrients. Those nutrients that are needed in relatively small quantities are called micronutrients. There are seven main kinds of nutrients that your body needs - those are carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, fiber and water. It is important to consume these seven nutrients on a daily basis to build and maintain health. According to the United Nations' World Health Organization, the real challenge in developing countries is not that of starvation but far more commonly malnutrition, which is a deficiency of nutrients in the body

caused by poor diet. This means that the body is unable to maintain healthy growth and efficient vital functions.

An adequate supply of the right kinds of nutrients is a crucial part of this discussion of weight loss. They are primarily responsible for the functions that your body performs in order to maintain a healthy weight, control weight and regulate weight loss.

When these nutrients are missing from your diet, these bodily functions cannot be performed as they should be by your metabolism and this often results in unwanted weight gain. By taking nutritional supplements, you can therefore ensure that your body has the required amounts of the nutrients that are so vital if your body is to perform to the optimum level and maintain a healthy weight balance. This aids the process of weight loss and then some vitamins and minerals help even further by encouraging further weight loss.

### ***Carbohydrates***

Carbohydrates may be classified as monosaccharides, disaccharides, or polysaccharides depending on the number of sugar units they contain. Monosaccharides contains one sugar unit, disaccharides contain two, and polysaccharides three or more. The difference between these kinds of carbohydrates is important to nutritionists since complex carbohydrates take longer to metabolize. This is because their sugar units are processed one-by-one off the ends of the chains of which they are made up. Simple carbohydrates are metabolized much more quickly and raise blood sugar levels more rapidly resulting in rapid increases in blood insulin levels.

Monosaccharides and disaccharides are simple sugars that are found in refined sugars, like white sugar. But they are also found in healthier options such as milk or fruit, which also contain vitamins, fiber, and important nutrients like calcium. Polysaccharides, also known as complex sugars, include the carbohydrates that are also known as starches. Starches include grain products including bread, crackers, pasta, and rice.

Some complex sugars are better health choices than others. Refined grains like white flour and white rice which have been processed are not beneficial because much of the nutrients and fibers that have been removed during the refining process. Unrefined grains still contain these [vitamins](#) and [minerals](#). Unrefined grains are also very rich in fiber, which helps the digestive system work well, and helps us feel full so we are less likely to over-eat.

When we eat carbohydrates, the body breaks them down into simple sugars. These sugars are then absorbed into the bloodstream, and as

the sugar level rises in your body the pancreas creates and releases a [hormone](#) called insulin. Insulin is what is needed to move sugar from the blood into the cells of the body where the sugar can be used as a source of energy. In the case of simple sugars, this process takes place very quickly and you are more likely to feel hungry again soon. In the case of complex sugars the process takes much longer and so these kinds of carbohydrates give energy for a longer period of time.

### ***Proteins***

Protein is made up of amino acids. These are the body's structural (muscles, skin, hair etc.) materials. Our organs and immune system are made up mostly of protein. The body needs amino acids to produce new body protein and to replace damaged proteins that are lost in the urine. Many foods contain protein but the best sources of protein are beef, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, seeds, and legumes such as peas and beans. Our body uses the protein we consume to make lots of specialized protein molecules that have specific jobs. For example, our body uses protein to make hemoglobin – the red cells in the blood. Other proteins are used to build cardiac muscle, for example.

The digestive juices in the stomach and intestine break down the proteins in the food matter that we consume into the basic constituent units, which are the amino acids. These amino acids are then used to make the human proteins that our body needs to maintain our muscles, bones, and blood and body organs. There are many different kinds of proteins but there are twenty two essential for your health. Thirteen of these are produced by the body, whilst the rest are obtained from the food we consume. Protein from animal sources like meat and milk are considered to be complete proteins because they contain all the nine essential amino acids that our body cannot make for itself. However, for people who do not take meat or milk products, it is still possible to have all the essential amino acids as they can consume a wide variety of vegetables that are rich in protein.

### ***Fats***

Fats are made up of fatty acids. Most fatty acids are non-essential, which means that the body can produce them as and when they are needed. However, at least two fatty acids are essential and must be consumed in the diet. These are omega-3 and omega-6. Unsaturated fats are found in plant foods and fish and these are good for the heart. The best of the unsaturated fats are found in olive oil, peanut oil, canola oil, albacore tuna, and salmon.

### ***Vitamins***

A vitamin is a nutrient that is required in tiny amounts and is essential for smooth metabolic reactions to take place in your body. Most of

these vitamins cannot be produced by the body, and therefore they must be obtained from your diet. The benefit gained from eating certain types of food was discovered long before vitamins were discovered. For example, the ancient Egyptians discovered that to cure night blindness, the patient should be fed liver. Today we know that night blindness is caused by a lack of Vitamin A and the liver has high quantities of Vitamin A.

Vitamins are essential for the normal growth and development of human beings.

Vitamin deficiencies may be primary or secondary. A primary deficiency is when you do not get enough vitamins through your diet whilst a secondary deficiency is when an underlying disorder prevents or limits the absorption of the vitamin into your body. This could be due to you making damaging lifestyle choices such as smoking, excessive alcohol or certain medications that could interfere with the vitamin working as usual.

The best way to maintain a healthy flow of vitamins in your body is to eat a wide variety of foods. This ensures that you will never suffer from primary vitamin deficiency. On the other hand, a restrictive diet that is generally associated with weight loss can cause prolonged vitamin deficits and these can lead to painful and even perhaps deadly diseases. Therefore, it is crucial that you increase your intake of vitamins when trying to lose weight.

It is also important to realize that human bodies are unable to store most vitamins and that you must therefore consume vitamins on a regular basis to avoid deficiency. Dietary supplements containing vitamins are used to ensure that the required amounts of nutrients are obtained on a daily basis, if the right amounts of the nutrients cannot be obtained through a varied diet.

### ***Minerals***

Minerals or dietary minerals are chemical elements that our body needs, apart from the elements carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen. There are two main kinds of dietary minerals that are known as macro minerals and trace minerals.

In humans, macro minerals are also known the dietary bulk minerals. They include the following:

- Calcium - needed for the maintenance of muscle and digestive system health, building bone, neutralizing acidity, clearing toxins and helping the blood stream;
- Chlorine;

- Magnesium - needed for building bones and increasing body flexibility;
- Potassium - needed for energy processing;
- Sodium; and
- Sulphur - needed for essential amino acids and many kinds of proteins and those parts of the body that need protein – the skin, hair, nails, liver and the pancreas.

Trace minerals include cobalt, iron, copper, chromium and iodine. Iodine is required in larger quantities than the other trace minerals.

### ***Fiber***

Dietary fibers are the indigestible portion of plants eaten as food that move the food through your digestive system. They absorb water thus making digestion and ultimately defecation easier. Dietary fiber is made up of non-starch polysaccharides such as cellulose. Dietary fiber is found in fruit, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. On a day to day basis, fiber provides the bulk of your intestinal contents.

### ***Water***

More than 70% of the mass in the human body that is not fat is made up of water. To function well, our body needs anywhere between one and seven liters of water a day to avoid dehydration. The amount needed by each person depends on the level of physical activity, temperature, humidity and other external factors. With increased exertion and exposure to heat, the amount of water lost will increase and you will need to increase the amount of daily fluid intake. Usually around 20% of the water intake comes from food, while the rest will come from drinking water and other kinds of beverages including caffeinated ones. Water is lost from the body through feces, sweating and the exhalation of water vapor in your breath.

### ***Antioxidants***

An antioxidant is a molecule that can slow down or prevent the oxidation of other molecules. Oxidation reactions can produce free radicals, which start chain reactions that damage other cells. Some antioxidants are produced by the body and those that the body cannot produce can only be obtained through the diet from direct sources (Vitamins C, A and K) or produced by the body from other compounds (Beta-carotene converted to Vitamin A by the body, Vitamin D from cholesterol by sunlight).

### ***Phytochemicals***

Phytochemicals are a relatively new subject of interest to those who study human health. These are antioxidant nutrients found in edible

plants, especially colorful fruits and vegetables. They are also found in high quantities in organisms such as seafood, algae and fungi such as edible mushrooms. One of the main classes of phytochemicals are polyphenol antioxidants, which have been proven to provide health benefits to the cardiovascular system and the immune system.

### **Supplementing Your Diet**

When you carefully consider your everyday dietary intake, you will sometimes appreciate that your diet and the diet of those around you is lacking in many of the essential vitamins and minerals mentioned above. In fact, many of us don't even drink enough water, according to what we are told we should be drinking.

When you are not getting the optimum level of vitamins, minerals and other essential nutrients that your body needs, it follows that your body cannot perform at anywhere near to its maximum potential. This means that it is unable to perform it in the way that it should, and that includes the correct process of energy consumption.

Your body has certain functions that handle the question of weight control and other weight related functions. These include tasks such as the appropriate control of your appetite and hunger, your metabolic rate, the metabolic processing of sugars and fats through your bodily system, calorie consumption and so on. These functions are dependant on a certain minimum level of essential nutrients that are needed by your body. All these nutrients therefore play a vital role in maintaining your health and keeping your bodily weight within acceptable parameters.

Whilst it would not be possible to single out a certain vitamin as being more important or effective than any other as a supplement that can be consumed to assist your efforts to lose weight, nevertheless some vitamins do seem to play an active role in encouraging weight loss. We will look at those later.

We have already established that a balanced diet is crucial to maintaining your health. It is also essential for optimized metabolic performance and stabilizing blood sugar levels.

In fact these are the two main bodily functions that are responsible for controlling your weight, as well as determining how fast you drop it. For example, your body undergoes a series of chemical reactions that actually convert food into either energy or fat. These chemical reactions are controlled by enzymes, which are in turn influenced by a variety of vitamins, minerals and micronutrients.

A deficiency in vitamins or minerals will therefore affect your ability to convert the glucose into energy efficiently, and when this happens, and it cannot be converted into glucose, it becomes stored as fat.

Apart from vitamins and minerals, certain herbs can also help you in your weight loss efforts. Some herbs are known for toughening up the nervous system and making it more resilient to the stresses and strains of everyday life.

There is something psychological at work here as well. We all know that when bad moods descend upon us, we turn to comfort eating. This is the moment when we need those sweet, gooey, fatty foods to make us feel better, albeit on a very temporary basis.

Herbs, however, can do significantly more than just make you feel better. Some herbal dietary supplements are known to possess qualities that help suppress your appetite whilst boosting your metabolism at the same time.

## Being Overweight

Most of us have struggled with losing weight at some point in our life. It is not easy. There is such a wide variety of sinfully delicious foods from all around the world merely just a phone call away! It's just so easy to stop by at the local diner or drive through. Then it slowly settles in that we are in fact piling on the pounds. This is when we start practicing intense dieting routines without a thought about the nutritional needs of our body. When we restrict our diet we may be losing out on some of the most important nutrients that our body needs.

Sometimes you feel that you could eat salad and steamed chicken for as long as it is needed, whilst on other days you would give an arm or leg to feed that sugar craving of yours, and not with fruit! All that is going to work is a giant chocolate bar. Being overweight is an affliction that affects many and has serious effects on their lifestyle both physically and emotionally. Let's take a look at what the phenomenon of being overweight is all about.

Being overweight or obese simply means that there is too much body fat on your frame. Your body is made up of fat, water, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, so if you have too much fat, especially around the waist area, then you are at a very high risk of health problems such as high blood pressure, high levels of blood cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease and even a stroke.

Obesity not only directly affects coronary heart disease but also contributes to other factors that further hasten the onset of heart disease. Obesity causes excessively raised levels of blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Being obese also reduces the 'good cholesterol' which is linked with a lower heart disease and stroke risk, so reducing this kind of cholesterol conversely tends to raise the risk of heart disease. Obesity also raises blood pressure levels and brings an increased risk of developing diabetes. Diabetes in turn worsens the factors that cause heart disease. Obesity is caused by consuming more calories than we use up by way of physical activity or in our normal daily life. Particularly if you consume too many calories or too many saturated fats, trans-fats and 'bad' cholesterol, your blood cholesterol levels will often rise way above what they should be.

### **How is body fat measured?**

Body fat can be measured in a variety of ways but the measurement of body mass index (BMI) is the most commonly recommended way to estimate body fat.

As a general rule, a high-risk waistline is 35 inches or more for women, and 40 inches or more for men. The body mass index formula assesses

the body weight of a person in relation to their height. It is a useful, indirect measure of body composition, because in most people it correlates highly with body fat. Weight in kilograms is divided by height in meters squared ( $\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ ). Body mass index values less than 18.5 are considered underweight. Having a body mass index value that is greater than 25 and less than 30 means that one is overweight. When you have a body mass index value of more than 30, you are considered obese. However, having a body mass index value of more than 40 means that you fall into the 'extreme obesity' category!

### **Causes of Weight Gain**

Considering our modern sedentary lifestyle, there is a wide variety of reasons that we may gain excess weight. It could be any one of the reasons mentioned below or a combination of several.

#### ***Dieting***

Dieting can and does make you fat. As you reduce your food intake to lose weight, your body puts itself on 'famine alert'. It gets the idea that food is scarce and slows down your metabolism to make the best of the small amount of food it is receiving. When we say we want to lose weight, what we really want to lose is fat. If we lose weight too quickly, almost 25 percent of that weight loss may be coming from water, muscle and lean tissue. The reason behind this is that the body is designed to hold on to fat, so the body concentrates on breaking down muscle and losing water in an effort to hold on to its fat.

If this is your game plan to lose weight, it will be unsuccessful. Once you lose weight rapidly and then go back to your regular diet, your body automatically begins to store a higher percentage of your intake as fat. This is because your body wants to stock up on fat reserves in case such a famine occurs again.

Dieting often involves cutting down the consumption of a particular kind of food or just overall consumption. This may close some of the avenues of essential nutrients that our body needs. This is why dietary supplements become even more important, because when your body lacks in nutrients, it may be fooled into thinking it's famine time and starts storing fat as a precaution. Therefore, supplements of the right kind can actually make losing weight much easier and faster. Not only do supplements keep your body healthy, they also help you lose weight faster, naturally.

#### ***Too much food and not enough exercise***

If you eat more than you burn, you will put on weight. However, if the number of calories you consume is less than the calories being used by the activity and exercise, you will lose the excess weight. Based on

relatively recent research, we now know that the type of calories we consume is a crucial factor as well. In other words, we need to consider the type of calories we are consuming and whether they come from fat, carbohydrate or protein.

### ***The type of food we eat***

Research has shown that people who are overweight and those who are not can often eat about the same number of calories. The difference lies in the types of food they are eating. A popular theory is that too many fats will make you fat. This is true in principle as saturated fats are not very healthy. However, you should remember that some fats are crucial to your body, hence the name 'essential' fatty acids.

Following the same theory, some people go on low fat or no fat diets without considering that food that is low in fat or has no fat tends to be higher in sugar and salt in order to make it more palatable. This is what will make fat, as sugar and other fast releasing foods invariably encourage weight gain.

This is how it works. The speed at which such foods release blood sugar determines whether or not you will gain weight, because every time you eat, your body has a choice to either burn that food as energy or store it as fat. Higher insulin levels cause your body to change your food into fat and also prevents it from breaking down stored fat.

### ***Nutritional deficiencies***

Food can either be converted into fat or energy. When your body stores what you eat, you will probably put on weight, unless your body can use it for energy. Whether food is burned or stored is determined by a number of chemical reactions taking place in your body. These chemical reactions are activated by enzymes, which are dependent on vitamins and minerals. Therefore, it follows that if your body is suffering a deficiency of certain minerals and vitamins in even the smallest amounts, then you almost inevitably stand a far greater chance of gaining weight.

This is one of the major reasons that adding dietary supplements to your diet begins to make more sense. All the vitamins and minerals that the modern diet is particularly lacking in need to be made up by ingesting regular dietary supplements that can quickly and efficiently replace the nutrients that are missing. They act as fuel for helping the body burn fat and are also responsible for keeping people energized.

When the average person feels more energized, then exercising as a means of assisting weight loss also becomes that much easier. We may think we are eating well but this often means that we are eating what

we don't need and not eating what we do need. Supplements eliminate that risk by giving your body that edge it needs.

### ***Prescription Drugs***

Sometimes, weight gain is linked to certain medications such as the contraceptive pill and steroids. Some antidepressants can also result in increased appetite and this can, of course, lead to weight gain too. While some prescription drugs are absolutely necessary, you can still fight the weight gain side effects by considering alternative dietary supplements that can help suppress a person's appetite naturally.

### ***Food Allergies***

Sometimes having a food allergy could be an impediment to losing weight. The kinds of food allergies we are talking about do not involve one immediately breaking out into a rash after eating peanuts, etc.

Our immune system protects us from minor food allergies. A clue to this is when you start craving a kind of food that you eat quite frequently. If a food allergy does in fact exist, the food can become mildly addictive, and you actually feel compelled to eat it. Your body will react by storing away that food rather than using it for energy, in order to protect you. If you are eating too many of the foods that you are actually allergic to, you will certainly put on weight rapidly. You can now get yourself tested to establish if you have a certain allergy to a variety of foods.

### ***Yeast Overgrowth***

We all possess the yeast 'candida' in the gut. It is controlled by bacteria. When your immune system is not functioning at its best, the proportion of healthy bacteria is reduced, which causes the candida to grow out of control. The excess growth of candida can be due to the overuse of the contraceptive pill, steroids, and excessive use of antibiotics. The signs of yeast overgrowth include sugar cravings, cravings for wine, bread or cheese, chronic thrush, fatigue, feeling spacing out, getting drunk on a small amount of alcohol and feeling bloated.

## Losing Weight

I do not need to tell you about the health risks that come with being overweight or obese. There are plenty of benefits in losing that excess weight as well. A little bit of effort can go a long way when it comes to weight loss, as research has shown that losing 10% of your body weight or even less can have big payoffs for your health. Such a small loss may not seem like much if you're just trying to look svelte in your jeans but when it comes to your health, it is a big victory. Lowering your body weight can even reverse or prevent diabetes; it lowers blood pressure, lowers the level of cholesterol and can also improve sleep apnea. More than anything else however, losing weight helps you feel better about yourself.

Being overweight not only makes you look unsightly and makes you feel less attractive, but its health risk is very real. Therefore, there are many reasons why it is important to maintain a healthy weight by eating a well balanced diet and getting regular exercise.

Being over weight has been linked with many conditions affecting your physical health as well as your mental condition. For example, research has shown that people who are overweight and don't get regular exercise are at a greater risk of developing depression than those who exercise on a regular basis and eat a well balanced and varied diet. Experts also agree that the more overweight a person is, the more likely they are to suffer severe health problems. However, once they take steps to start losing weight and change their lifestyle, then the likelihood of illness or disease starts to drop quickly and often quite dramatically.

When many of us want to lose weight, the first thing we usually do is start a diet. A diet for far too many of us means "stop eating". This is a HUGE misconception and mistake. Your body is a wonderful mechanism that is geared towards one important goal. That goal is survival, so any time your body realizes that there is a lack of nutrition coming in, it immediately jumps to the conclusion that you are being starved! To combat this condition the body starts breaking down your muscle tissue to use as energy and saves its fat stores as the last resort that it will eventually use to save itself from what it thinks is a looming death. This is bad for the body in two ways:

- Because your body starts to eat muscle tissue to 'burn' to create energy, precious lean tissue mass that would otherwise be metabolically active is being lost, which means that you need additional energy to support your muscles in order to keep your metabolism running at a higher pace. Higher metabolism means

more calories burned even in a resting state. Fat, on the other hand, doesn't need any energy to support itself.

- Secondly, your body will start storing an increased amount of fat because it is preparing itself for a worst case scenario.

### **The choices for losing weight**

There is no quick fix to your weight problem. There are many different ways that are recommended on TV, the internet, word of mouth, etc, and these range from fad diets to drugs to surgery. Because of this, people often go from one diet to another but with no real result. The only way to lose weight on a long term basis is to change your eating habits and not just until you fit into those slinky new jeans. You must make sure that these new healthy ways of eating become a way of life.

There is little point in adopting a strict diet that prevents you from enjoying life to the full. You need to develop a way of eating where you can eat out with friends and socialize without foregoing a meal. Fat loss as opposed to simply weight loss needs time, so you need to be patient. But you can rest assured that, done correctly, this kind of weight loss should be permanent. Let's look at a few of the things you could employ to lose weight, starting with dieting, even though its effects are questionable.

### **Types of weight loss diet plans**

#### ***Low calorie diet plans***

Most diets that are designed to help you lose weight provide 1,000 to 1,500 calories per day. However, the number of calories that is right for you depends on your weight and the level of activity you engage in. When a diet plan allows this level of calorie intake in a day it is called a low-calorie diet and the weight loss is achieved by calorie counting and therefore limiting the number of calories you consume.

Ideally the calorie level of your diet should allow for no more than a one pound per week weight loss. Results are more visible after the first week or two because of the initial water loss. It is important to remember that the recommended calorie level for each individual will vary depending on your age and weight, so you may need to eat more or fewer calories dependent on your own life style and circumstances.

To remain healthy and not feel lethargic whilst on a restricted calorie diet, it may be a good idea to take supplements that will help to keep you energized and full of vitality throughout the whole day.

#### ***Fixed-menu diet plans***

A fixed-menu diet provides you with a list of all the foods that you can eat in an effort to lose weight. The advantage of this type of diet is that

it is easy to follow because the foods you can or cannot eat have already been selected for you. This helps end the confusion of 'can I eat this or not?' However, the drawback of this type of diet is that food choices are very limited and this may therefore make the diet boring and hard to follow if, for example, you are away from home and do not have all the ingredients you may need. In addition to this drawback, fixed-menu diets do not really teach you the food selection skills necessary for keeping weight off, and such skills are crucial when you have worked so hard at losing weight. Ideally therefore, if you start with a fixed-menu diet there should come a time when you switch to a plan that helps you learn to make meal choices independently.

Such a limited diet also poses the risk of limiting your unnecessary nutritional intake. In this scenario, nutritional intake refers to the essential vitamins, minerals and micronutrients that everyone needs in order to enjoy continued good health. A lack of essential nutrients can therefore mean that your weight loss efforts will be slowed down, rather than accelerated. When you cut out certain foods, it is inevitable that you will reduce the amount of some nutrients in your diet as well. Food supplements could be the quickest and simplest solution to helping you maintain your diet and overall good health at the same time.

### ***Exchange-type diet plans***

An exchange-type diet is a meal plan that works with a set number of servings from each of the basic food groups and within the limits of each essential food group. Foods that are about equal in calories can be replaced with each other at your own discretion. For example, from the starch category you could include one slice of bread or half a cup of oatmeal as each is about equal to the other in terms of nutritional value and calories.

In this diet scenario, if the meal plan recommends two starch choices at breakfast, for example, you could choose to eat two slices of bread or one slice of bread and half a cup of oatmeal. The choice is yours. In the case of exchange-type diet plans, you can have more day-to-day variety and they are easier to follow even when you are away from home. However, the most important advantages of the exchange-type diet plans is that they teach the food selection skills you must acquire in order to keep the weight off once you have shifted it!

### ***Prepackaged-meal diet plans***

Pre-packaged meal diet plans require that you buy prepackaged meals. Such meals may help you to learn the appropriate portion sizes that you should be eating but the major disadvantage of this kind of diet is that it can be expensive. Also, using this kind of diet it is questionable whether you could actually learn about proper nutrition and make

intelligent meal choices for losing weight. There is also the question of availability - the meal you want may or may not be available if you are out of town, for example. It may become difficult to lose the weight and then keep it off, which is always the biggest challenge.

### ***Formula diet plans***

Formula diets are weight-loss plans that work by replacing one or more meals with a liquid formula. Most formula diets are balanced diets in nature as they contain a mix of protein, carbohydrate, and usually a small amount of fat as well. Formula diets are usually sold as a liquid or as a powder that has to be mixed with a liquid to make a shake-like drink. Even though formula diets are easy to use and do help short-term weight loss, many people easily regain the lost weight as soon as they stop using the formula. Note that formula diets do not teach you how to make healthy food choices. We have already established that being able to make healthy food choices is a necessary skill for keeping your weight off.

### ***Flexible diet plans***

Some diet plans suggest that you should be monitoring your fat intake or the intake of calories, or a combination of both fat and calories. In the case of flexible diets, the choice of the type of food lies with the individual and, because of this, such a flexible diet plan tends to work well for most people. This is because it allows for choice and freedom. However, this diet plan is also flawed because it limits food intake of a particular food group only. For example, any diet plan that focuses only on cutting down the consumption of fat will allow people to take in unlimited amounts of excess calories from sugars and this pretty much guarantees that weight loss will never really happen.

### ***Low fat diet plans***

Fat is recommended to be the lowest consumption food group because it leads to weight gain and because of its limited nutritional value. In a low fat diet plan, the number of calories obtained from your diet must be limited. Using a low fat diet, only 30 percent of the calories consumed must come from fat, whilst on a very low fat diet plan, only 20 percent of calories must come from fat. In a typical low fat diet, meat, poultry and fish are not recommended. The only dairy products allowed are fat free yogurt, milk, cheese and egg whites. Banned foods in the diet include all fats, seeds, nuts, refined carbohydrates such as white rice, sugar and white flour. You are allowed to consume an unlimited amount of other food without measure, especially foodstuffs like fruits, vegetables and grains. However, modern research is increasingly skeptical about the claim that fat is the main culprit behind obesity and weight problems.

### ***Restricted flour and sugar diet plans***

This is also termed the no flour, no sugar diet plan and is a weight-loss program that reduces calories in your diet by eliminating flour-based and added-sugar foods. Foods that contain added sugar and refined flour are nutrient-poor, unlike foods which contain whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes which are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber. The No Flour, No Sugar Diet cuts down on the so-called 'empty' calories of refined carbohydrate-based foods. These also tend to be foods that are high in fats. The No Flour, No Sugar type diet also encourages a lifestyle that involves a selection of foods without significant sugar and refined flour content, based on the interpretation of food labels. No counting of calories is suggested or necessary.

### **Dietary changes**

Changing the kind of food you eat can be extremely helpful in losing weight. You should, in particular, try to reduce or eliminate foods made of white flour or white sugar, and avoid refined foods where the fiber has been stripped away. These are foods that are 'fast-releasing' (the levels of sugar in the blood rise faster), and can have damaging effects on blood sugar and then your weight. Cut down or cut out all sugar and artificial sweeteners. You will have to be smart about it because sugar can be added to almost anything, including foods such as baked beans, tomato ketchup, and even bread. A very simple tip to help weight loss is to chew your food really well and to take your time when eating. It takes your brain at least 20 minutes to register that you are full, so if you eat more slowly, you will actually want to eat less.

### **When You Eat**

Skipping meals is not the way to lose weight, as doing so can slow down your metabolism. Once again your body thinks there is a 'famine' and, hence, it stores food. Eat small meals, sprinkled throughout the day to keep your blood sugar levels (and your metabolism) steady.

### **Supplements**

If you, like countless other people trying to shed a few pounds, have been yo-yo dieting for a number of years by either restricting your food intake or trying different fad diets, diet drinks or pills and have found that none have worked in the long term, then it is entirely possible that that you are deficient in a number of vitamins and minerals.

Supplements will certainly help if you know that you've been depriving yourself for a long time and starting to add those supplements to your overall diet will encourage your weight loss efforts.

There are a variety of tests that can help you find out which nutrients you are lacking in.

## **Dietary Supplements**

In any type of diet, some form of food intake will have to be cut down. Whether it is a low carb diet or a high protein diet you are more than likely to have an insufficient intake of at least one of the essential food groups or a particular foodstuff. A dietary supplement (also known as food supplement) is a preparation that is designed to supply nutrients - such as vitamins, minerals, fatty acids or amino acids - that are missing or not consumed in sufficient quantity in a person's diet. A dietary supplement must fulfill the following conditions:

- It is a product intended to supplement the diet and contains vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, amino acids, or any combination of the above ingredients.
- It is to be taken in tablet, capsule, powder, soft gel, gel cap, or liquid form.
- A dietary supplement is not presented for use as a conventional food or as a sole foodstuff in a meal or the diet as a whole.
- It should be explicitly labeled as a dietary supplement.

With the advancement of medical science and an increased interest in holistic health and wellness, the world of dietary supplements is getting increasingly complicated. When we talk about dietary or food supplements we are not just talking about vitamins and minerals anymore.

Modern dietary supplements include a broad range of vitamins, minerals, herbs and other substances meant to top up your diet. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration categorizes dietary supplements as foods rather than as drugs because dietary supplements have proved to be safe over many years of human usage, whereas drugs are not assumed to be safe until extensive testing has been done to prove their safety.

Nevertheless, supplements can play an important role in our health. Some doctors advise patients to take a multivitamin-mineral supplement to make sure that they are getting enough of all the nutrients they need. However, this does not give us the license to eat unhealthy meals and then simply top them off with dietary supplements.

### **Multivitamin and Mineral**

A good quality multivitamin and mineral in any form should be the foundation of your dietary supplement program to make sure that you are getting a 'little bit of everything'. This simply ensures that your

body is getting everything it needs to be in perfect running condition. You should then add in the nutrients listed below in slightly higher amounts which are well known to be beneficial when included in any weight loss program.

### **B vitamins**

All the B vitamins can be very useful to your weight loss efforts. They are also known as stress vitamins. The vitamins B3 and B6 are especially important because they are responsible for the supply of 'fuel' to your body cells which are then able to burn energy. Vitamin B6 in conjunction with zinc is also important for the production of pancreatic enzymes which are responsible for digesting food. If your digestive system is working well, you will be more likely to use your food as energy, instead of storing it away as fat.

Vitamins B2, B3 and B6 are necessary for the normal function of your thyroid hormones as well. We have already mentioned that dysfunctions in the thyroid are one potential cause of being overweight, and therefore any deficiencies in these hormones can affect thyroid function and affect metabolism. Vitamin B3 is also a part of the glucose tolerance factor and is released every time your blood sugar rises. As the blood sugar level rises, so does your weight - so if Vitamin B3 is steadily supplied to the body, it can help control weight. Vitamin B5 plays an important part in the body's energy production and also the metabolism of fat. The B vitamins as a group are very important in helping you lose weight and the easiest way of getting them is to take a good B-complex supplement with your diet.

### **Chromium**

The mineral chromium is probably the most researched nutrient when it comes to assessing the value of supplements in weight loss. Your body needs chromium to metabolize sugar, and without chromium insulin is markedly less effective in controlling blood sugar levels. This means that without chromium it is that much harder to burn the calories from food as fuel and more than normal amounts may therefore be stored as fat. Chromium also controls the level of cholesterol and fat in the blood. A study showed that those who took chromium over a ten-week period lost an average of 1.9kg of fat while those taking a placebo lost only 0.4 kg of fat.

### **Zinc**

The mineral zinc plays an important role in controlling your appetite, in part because it is integrally involved in the growth and development of your taste buds. Zinc deficiency in the body causes a loss of taste and this causes you to eat stronger tasting food because more and more food begins to taste bland. This generally means food that is sweeter

and saltier, and, therefore, it tends to be fattening. You may also add extra sugar or salt to everyday foods and drinks such as tea, coffee, vegetables etc to compensate for the loss in taste.

Zinc also functions together with the Vitamins A and E to manufacture the thyroid hormones. An Italian study showed that when the patients were given zinc supplements, they experienced an improved thyroid function which reduced the incidence of hypothyroidism. Dysfunction of the thyroid leads to weight gain.

### **Co-enzyme Q10**

The Co-enzyme Q10 is found in every cell of our body. It is crucial for the production of energy within each cell in the human body. Co-enzyme Q10 is important to the health of cells, organs and tissues and it also acts as part of another class of substances – that is, the enzymes. Enzymes in turn facilitate and act as catalysts for many of the chemical reactions in your body including the break down and digestion of food. Additionally, it is a great antioxidant and helps to destroy harmful free radicals. It also helps combat heart disease, high blood pressure issues, gum disease and immune system deficiencies. Co-enzyme Q10 has also proved to help with weight loss by boosting metabolic rates, often by quite significant margins. Studies show that people on a low fat diet are able to double the rate of weight loss by taking co-enzyme Q10 in comparison to those on the low fat diet alone.

### **Garcinia Cambogia**

Hydroxycitric acid is a natural appetite suppressant that is found in a tropical fruit called garcinia cambogia. It is found in the rind of this tropical fruit which is commonly used in Thai and Indian cooking and is often used as a food preservative as well. It encourages the body to use its carbohydrates as energy rather than storing them as fat. The acid found in this fruit cuts down your appetite, and therefore reduces your intake of food whilst preventing the formation and accumulation of fat and cholesterol in your body. It is truly a star performer as far as weight loss is concerned, and a recent study showed that twenty two people lost about 11lbs each over a period of eight weeks, partly as a result of taking garcinia cambogia extract with chromium. There were no calorie restrictions and they ate the same food as their families. All those who were part of the study reported an increase in energy as well as a decrease in sugar cravings.

Garcinia cambogia is non-toxic and it works indirectly. It satisfies the body's energy needs whilst simultaneously causing the liver to signal to your brain that you are full. While it suppresses the appetite, garcinia cambogia also discourages fat from being stored and encourages calories to be burned faster. This results in more energy and less bulk.

It also breaks down stored fat and lowers excessive cholesterol. Garcinia cambogia extracts work best with chromium and you should note that, as we get older, we naturally begin to suffer an ever increasing lack of chromium.

### **Fiber**

Fiber – also called cellulose – has a wide range of health benefits even if you are not trying to lose weight. Fiber is a type of carbohydrate and is so ‘complex’ that it cannot be digested by humans. However, it can benefit and help your weight loss efforts due to the feeling of fullness it creates, without excess calories. It also reduces the absorption of fat in the gut (although this is minimal) and also lowers cholesterol. It speeds up digestion too, which is often believed to protect against certain types of cancers.

Fiber on its own contains zero calories. Therefore, it is recommended that you take a fiber supplement to support your weight loss. Fiber may also play an important role in excess weight issues caused by hypothyroidism. Adult men generally need around 38 grams of fiber daily, while women need about 25 grams. One type of fiber supplement is psyllium and those taking this supplement are less likely to consume fat and generally feel full a lot more quickly. Among the many kinds of fiber, there are even some that can help in insulin metabolism and this is proven to be especially useful for people who have a few extra pounds around the middle of their body. Abdominal weight gain often leads to increasing insulin levels and this starts the whole metabolic syndrome going into overdrive, so this can be at least partially prevented by consuming the recommended amounts of fiber on a daily basis.

### **Herbal Supplements**

Some herbs are also known to have beneficial effects on certain bodily functions such as digestion, metabolism, or to help curb the appetite to impact weight loss. These are natural and have few known side effects. Today many kinds of herbs are available in supplement form. Some of the commonly known herbs which aid weight loss include:

- Cayenne – yes, this is the same tongue burning chili. Cayenne contains capsaicin, which has proved to stimulate digestion and increase metabolism, as well fat burning.
- Green tea contains both caffeine and antioxidants that stimulate the body’s metabolic rate.
- Seaweed or kelp stimulates metabolism. It is also a natural thyroid stimulant – which in turn is great help in losing weight.

- Ginseng is known to stimulate your rate of metabolism and boost energy at the same time

There are a wide variety of herbs and herbal compounds that can boost your efforts to lose weight. Let's consider a few herbs that can help supplement your weight loss efforts:

### ***Hoodia Gordonii***

The herb hoodia gordonii has recently gained much attention as a weight loss aid. It is commonly called hoodia. The hoodia plant is grown in the desert regions of Africa and has been used by the peoples of the Kalahari for centuries. Hoodia's modus operandi is to suppress your appetite, and research by Brown University in the USA has shown that hoodia interrupts or stops the hunger mechanism in the brain.

### ***Green Tea***

We have mentioned green tea as a supplement that helps weight loss, but let's look at it a little bit more closely. Studies show that the caffeine and polyphenols in green tea speed up the rate at which calories are burned, and hence raise the metabolism. Raising metabolism causes the body to burn more calories which of course leads to weight loss. Research has also indicated that green tea consumption creates a higher rate of fat oxidation, which can also help weight loss.

### ***Fucoxanthin***

Fucoxanthin is a naturally occurring antioxidant that is found in edible seafood such as wakame (the one used in miso soup). Studies have shown that it is particularly useful for targeting abdominal fat.

### ***Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA)***

Conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, is a kind of fatty acid that is found naturally in tiny amounts in milk. It is also available in the form of a nutritional supplement and is popular for weight loss because it decreases body fat and increases muscle.

## Conclusion

As our lifestyles become more complex and busy and with medical science growing by leaps and bounds; the consumer is constantly being bombarded with solutions to every imaginable problem. Making healthier life choices may actually have become more complex than we might ever have believed possible.

If you go to any pharmacy, health food store or if you surf the internet, you will find hundreds of ways to lose weight - fad diets, surgery, diet pills, supplements, acupuncture, alternative medicine, and more. Some methods may be more promising than others and they may even be capable of delivering on their promises of guaranteed weight loss in days. But beware; you must educate yourself on what steps you are taking to lose those extra pounds and remember that anything drastic is usually not a good idea.

Before you decide to start taking supplements to aid your weight loss, you need to understand a few of the basics of dietary supplements.

Dietary supplements are basically products that people add to their diets to augment the food that they eat because they are missing essential nutrients. These dietary supplements often include vitamins, minerals, herbs, and amino acids.

They are available in the form of pills, liquids or even powder (in the case of many kinds of fibers). But the most important thing to remember is that a dietary supplement is not an alternative to a healthy lifestyle because it is only by having such a healthy lifestyle that you will be able to lose weight and keep it off. Dietary supplements will simply make it that much easier for you to keep going. They help you get the essential nutrients that your body needs to function at its best. It is only when your body is at its optimum level that you can push it to lose weight without losing physical resistance and the mental drive that is so important if you want to be successful in shedding the weight and keeping it off.

Many dietary supplements are labeled as being natural. This does not always mean that there are no side effects and you must consult your doctor before taking any kind of dietary supplement if you fall within any of the following categories:

- Pregnant or lactating;
- Suffering from diabetes;
- Suffering from high blood pressure;
- Suffering from any other health problem requiring medication.

Losing weight is probably one of the most difficult things in the world, or so you thought before reading this book.

There are many healthy dietary supplements at hand to help you. Let them give you a hand!