- Weight loss

LOSE WEIGHT AFTER 40

SPOILER ALERT:

You won't find any celebrity fad diets here. Instead, there are some real, doable things you can do to drop those excess kilos and keep them off.

BY DIETITIAN JENNIFER LAURENCE



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Fast fact

About 60 per cent of Australians are currently trying to lose weight, with midlife people making up the majority.

SOURCE: AUSTRALIA TALKS NATIONAL SURVEY



From hormonal changes to a hefty plate of social, family and work responsibilities, life throws a lot your way in your 40s and beyond. But you don't need to overhaul your entire lifestyle or clear your schedule to make changes to your weight.

In fact, the opposite approach – small, gradual tweaks – may be the better bet for achieving lasting, sustainable weight loss during midlife. When you adopt one tiny (but mighty!) healthy habit at a time, you'll be able to make real change while juggling the rest of your life.

Here are six habits that are not only easy on your body and your wallet, but they will also make the biggest difference. Ready to practise a new way of living and see in a more lean you? Let's get started!

Habit 1: Add protein and fibre

When it comes to losing weight (and keeping it off) in midlife, these two nutrients are essential.

When you consume protein, it gets broken down into amino acids that the body uses to repair, preserve and build muscle tissue. That's especially important as you work to bring down your weight, since low-kilojoule diet plans can cause you to lose both fat and muscle tissue. By retaining that muscle while you slim down, you'll maintain your strength while looking leaner and more toned.

Fibre, meanwhile, is crucial for helping you get to the weight you want. Hunger can really get in the way of weight loss: It can be tough to keep your portions and kilojoules in check when you're struggling to make it from one meal to the next. Fibre is your secret weapon for making your meals more filling so they'll stay with you longer. Foods that are rich in fibre tend to take longer to digest, so you're less likely to get that grumbling feeling an hour or two after eating.



FIND PROTEIN IN:
- Lean meats/seafood
- Eggs and dairy
- Beans and legumes
- Minimally processed soy foods
- Nuts and seeds

FIND FIBRE IN:
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Wholegrains
- Beans and legumes
- Nuts and seeds
- Oats



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Habit 2:
Get serious about your gut health

The microbiome is intricately involved in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. The microbes in your gut play a key role in breaking down food so it can be used for energy. But what you eat – and the types of bugs that break it down – help determine whether the kilojoules from food get used for fuel right away or stored as fat.

IMPROVE YOUR GUT HEALTH WITH:

- Probiotic-rich foods, such as yoghurt
- Prebiotic-rich foods, such as avocados, asparagus and leafy greens
- Resistant starch-rich foods, such as beans and oats
- Polyphenol-rich foods, such as apples and grapes



Habit 3:
Eat with intention

Guilty of eating while watching TV or an event? Or reaching for a snack when you're bored or stressed? You're not alone. When it comes to weight loss, how and why you eat can be as important as what you eat.

'Mindful eating' is the concept of making food choices with intention and being fully present during meals and snacks. It can offer a host of benefits. For instance, you may reduce your chances of stress eating, feel more satisfied with less and improve your digestion. ►



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Habit 4:
Don't fear healthy fats

For many years, one of the top recommendations for weight loss was to eat less fat. Now we know that dietary fats have an important place in our diets, even for those who are struggling with unwanted weight gain. The key is to pay attention to the quality and quantity of your fats.

In terms of quality, we're talking about choosing primarily unsaturated options such as monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats. These so-called 'good' fats, found mainly in plant foods, serve up health benefits while making food more satisfying. Saturated fats, found in foods like red meat and full-fat dairy, are tied to an increased risk of heart disease and may even be more likely to be stored as fat in the body, research suggests.

That's not to say you need to cut saturated fats completely out of your diet. They should make up less than 10 per cent of your total kilojoule intake, experts recommend. Consumption of trans fats (found in many fried or processed foods and some commercial baked goods) is directly linked to heart disease, so you should avoid those as much as possible. But reaching for unsaturated fats over saturated ones most of the time will do your body good while supporting your weight-loss efforts at the same time.

FIND HEALTHY FATS IN:
- Nuts and seeds
- Oils, like olive, avocado or flaxseed
- Fatty fish



Habit 5:
Munch on phytoestrogen-rich foods

These plant compounds resemble the hormone oestrogen. That means they can help support weight-loss efforts, particularly for women over 40 who are experiencing oestrogen declines because of perimenopause and menopause.

FIND PHYTOESTROGENS IN:
- Minimally processed soy foods
- Seeds
- Wholegrains
- Fruits and vegetables
- Beans





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Habit 6:

Do strength and resistance training

When you work muscles through regular resistance exercises, you'll preserve your lean muscle mass and even build more. That's huge for losing weight, as muscle tissue requires more energy to maintain than fat tissue even when you're at rest. The more muscle you have, the more kilojoules you'll burn around the clock, even when you're sitting down or sleeping. Research has found that 10 weeks of strength training can increase a person's resting metabolism by as much as seven per cent.

Many women notice an increase in belly fat after 40 because a decline in levels of oestrogen encourages abdominal fat storage. But strength training can help. It not only boosts your overall kilojoule burn, but also plays an important role in supporting healthy blood sugar levels, which are tied to reduced levels of belly fat. P



Did you know?

Phytoestrogens can reduce the frequency and intensity of hot flushes in menopausal women.

SOURCE: CLIMACTERIC

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