

Medical update



In Part one we take a look at the issues surrounding food and how we can replace it with stitching to manage our moods...

Most of us will have eaten our fill of Easter eggs by now and we can hear you groan at the prospect of yet another weight loss article. But sit back and enjoy; we're not interested in lecturing you, or in weight loss for looks, although it is an added bonus, but in improving the health of your mind and body. The beauty of a healthy attitude to food is that you'll enjoy the taste of the occasional piece of chocolate even more and you won't feel guilty after you've indulged!

A large number of us behave irrationally when it comes to looking after and maintaining our

hungry. So many of us eat as a way of managing our feelings and this can become addictive because fats and sugar can make us feel temporarily better by causing a surge in serotonin and dopamine. However this 'high' is quickly replaced by a deeper low and a craving for more comfort food – and so the cycle begins.

Comfort eating and bingeing have more to do with emotions or boredom than hunger. As stitchers, however, you have the perfect tool to break this cycle. Next time you feel stressed, upset, angry or bored and you get the urge to binge, reach for the

provide you with good quality nutrition and fuel.

Don't be tempted by fad diets offering a quick fix. We all need carbohydrates for fuel, protein to build muscles and 'good' fats (unsaturated, such as olive oil and fish oil) for hormone production and a healthy nervous system. Also forbidding certain foods only leads to cravings. So stop using food to manage your emotions – turn to your stitching and the urge to binge will pass.

A bit about metabolism

Your metabolic rate is the rate at which your body burns calories. Calories are the fuel you need to stay alive. Around 70% of the calories you use every day are used to keep you warm, to keep your heart beating, circulation pumping, brain functioning, digestion, cell replacement, skin maintenance, nails and hair growing. Sitting still for example will burn about 100 calories per hour. The rest of the calories are burnt as you move around – a gentle walk burns 300 calories per hour, whilst digging the garden burns about 500 per hour. Metabolism slows down with age – your cells replace themselves more slowly and you become less active. It's important to combat this by maintaining activity levels as much as possible.

To lose weight you need to take in fewer calories than you use up. You can do this by eating less or being more active. Any increase in activity will help as long as you don't match it with an increase in calories. The good news is that your metabolic rate can be revved up. Take a look at our tips on the opposite page to find out how.

Next month we take a more detailed look at food as a fuel and how with the help of other Stitchlinks members you can maintain a healthy weight.

"Learning not to reach for the chocolate when you're emotionally hungry could be the key to weight loss!"

bodies. Most of us wouldn't put fuel into our cars that may clog the engine, but would happily fill our bodies with food that clogs our circulation. And the majority rarely, if ever, take our bodies for a check up or give them a run to charge those batteries. So here in Part One we're going to take a look at some of the issues behind the way we eat and how stitching can help.

Food and emotion

Our relationship with food develops from the moment we're born. It's complex and closely linked to our emotions. From birth we learn to associate food with love and comfort, so when we're feeling low the need for love and support can easily be confused with the need for food. Resolving these emotional issues and learning to recognise that you're reaching for the biscuit tin when you are emotionally hungry could be the key to losing weight permanently. So next time you are about to attack the doughnuts ask yourself whether you're truly

stitching not the stodge. It will distract you from the need to eat and help to raise your mood.

Try to identify your triggers by keeping a diary of your moods and food intake. Feelings are also tied to nutrition, so avoid stimulants such as caffeine and alcohol too. Those of us with children will know all too well the temptation to finish their food or to run to the chocolate biscuits after a sleepless night or if you've got a tantruming toddler (or teenager!). Learn to understand how you're using food to boost your mood and try to recall how you feel afterwards.

The next step is to start valuing yourself. You are worth looking after and your body deserves the best of fuels to function and renew itself. Stop thinking about losing weight, instead eat healthily to feel good about yourself, to care for your body and for health. Making healthy lifestyle changes will result in sustainable weight loss and control your blood sugar levels, to bring you better health. Start using food positively to

Did you know?

Over three quarters of people who eat breakfast every day manage to lose weight and keep it off.

Sleeping more and relaxing could help you to lose weight. Find out more about this next month!

50% of all journeys in the UK are less than two miles. Think how fit we'd all be if we walked instead!

The calorie burn of cycling is about 1/3 that of walking, so to burn the same number of calories you'd need to cycle three times further than you walk!

Alaska has the highest percentage of people who walk to work!

You're more likely to be hungry if you're cold!

Y our quick guide to revving up your metabolism...

- **Eat little and often** – Every time you eat your metabolic rate is raised, which is one reason why eating warms you up. It keeps blood sugar levels steady keeping your mood and hormone levels balanced. Any large meal will stimulate the production of insulin which lowers your body's ability to burn fat and causes sugar cravings. Be careful that these frequent SMALL meals don't grow.
 - lifting baked bean cans, bags of sugar or even better make yourself a set of home made weights by filling plastic bottles with water, sand or gravel. If you put on five pounds of extra muscle you'll burn 175 extra calories a day.
- **Eat breakfast** – While you are asleep your metabolism slows down so by eating a nutritious breakfast you kick start your metabolism.
- **Make your evening meal small** – The majority of obese people get at least half of their calories after 6pm at a time when activity levels and metabolic rate is at it's lowest.
- **Build up muscle** – Lifting weights replaces flab with muscle. This is not only good news appearance wise, but muscle burns up more calories. In 24 hours one pound of body fat burns about two calories, whereas one pound of lean muscle burns 35 calories. Muscle is the body's most metabolically active tissue even when you're not moving. People who weight train moderately burn 8% more calories than those who live a sedentary lifestyle. And you don't have to become a gym member – start by
 - **Exercise aerobically** – Exercise raises your metabolic rate and you carry on burning calories during your recovery period which can vary from 30mins to several hours. Weight bearing exercise will help to fight off Osteoporosis. And the good news is that lower paced exercise burns more fat, so a good walk should do the trick.
 - **Drink more water** – If you don't drink enough your body will retain water. Also water is essential for your body's chemical reactions so if you're not drinking enough, you'll burn less calories.
 - **Drink green tea** – some studies have shown it to raise metabolic rate by 35%.
 - **Laugh** – A good laugh gets your heart and circulation pumping faster. Research has shown that laughter can increase your metabolic rate by 20% in that period. It also showed that laughing out loud for 10-15 minutes every day burns 10-40 calories. Take a look at our Jokes section on the Forum!

Jargon

- **Calorie** – A calorie is a unit of energy. If an item of food contains 100 calories, it's a way of describing the amount of energy your body could get from eating or drinking it. We associate calories with food, but they apply to anything containing energy. For example a litre of petrol has about 7,000 Calories. Your body needs calories for energy, but eating too many and not burning enough off through activity can lead to weight gain.
- **Protein** – You need protein to build, maintain and repair essential parts of your body. Your muscles, organs, and immune system are made up mostly of protein. The best sources are beef, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, seeds, and legumes.
- **Carbohydrate** – These provide energy for every cell in your body. There are two major types: simple and complex. Simple provide quick energy, whilst complex carbohydrates give you energy more slowly. We'll cover these in more detail next time.
- **Fat** – The different fats in foods are saturated, polyunsaturated, monounsaturated and trans fatty acids. We need some fat in our diet and it's best to obtain this through unsaturated fats which are obtained from plants and fish sources. More next month on this!