

Body, Mind & Spirit

If Your Fat Isn't Your Fault, Then Whose Fault Is It?

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"Doctor, I'm struggling to keep my weight under control I've tried everything: Diets, exercise, even fasting but I'm stuck. The weight just won't budge..."

If you have struggled for years with a bulging waistline that you just can't get under control using the current diet theory of "calories in/calories out," don't feel alone. Grim-faced researchers tell us that over 92% of all diets ultimately fail. Either the weight doesn't budge or piles back on, relentlessly.

Though an enormous amount of research has been done on our growing problem of obesity showing that weight management may or may not be related to caloric intake, this guilt-based approach isn't changing. Every day, the public is bombarded with a simple message: lower your fat intake and your stomach will shrink. Unfortunately for all of us, weight management isn't that simple. Losing weight and keeping it off is more than just a "mouth issue". It is a matter of learning why and how we gained weight to begin with - issues that may have little or nothing to do with dietary intake.

Female, Forty, Fat - And Frustrated

Two female hormones, estrogen and progesterone, wield an enormous influence over how the body manages its calories and may, in fact, make it difficult for women to lose weight on the most pristine diet. Many women gain their excess weight during periods of hormone imbalance such as puberty, post-childbirth, and menopause because during those periods of life, estrogen is inadequately opposed by progesterone. Estrogen dominance pulls down the function of the thyroid gland and lowers the metabolic rate of the body (the speed at which the body operates) with symptoms ranging from weight gain, blood sugar imbalance, fatigue, to many psychological disturbances.

When female hormones are responsible for weight gain, those excess pounds are usually centered between the waist and the knees - the pear-shaped woman. Normal on top and from the knees down!

Combine excess estrogen with ongoing stress and you see a double assault on the endocrine system that dysregulates blood sugar regulatory mechanisms, increases the breakdown of lean body tissues, slows the metabolic rate, impairs digestion, and stimulates the build-up of fatty tissue

throughout the body.

Food Cravings

Are you struggling with cravings for non-foods like chocolate or sugars? Nutritionists often note that deficiencies in certain minerals may trigger carbohydrate/sugar cravings. For example, magnesium deficiency often leads to sweet cravings that disappear



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as soon as magnesium levels are brought back to normal. Because large amounts of magnesium are found in the "emotional, thought and

memory center of the brain" (the hippocampus), deficiencies may form the emotional environment which encourages carbohydrate cravings. In other words, magnesium deficiency creates feelings of sadness which creates the need for chocolate!

While magnesium appears abundantly throughout the food chain, Americans seem to be taking in far less than RDA (300-350 mg/day). Possibly three-quarters of the American population may consume less than RDA levels, and if assessments on magnesium status were done on dieters, that figure may jump to 100%.

Really, Whose Fault Is It?

While we cannot ignore the fact that most Americans make poor choices when it comes to diet selection, thin people are driven by the same compulsions to overeat or poorly-eat as their overweight friends. In fact, many studies show that thin people eat more calories and are less conscious of food intake than people who struggle with the scales.

What, then, is the real issue? Successful weight management is a holistic issue, involving the endocrine system, the digestive system, the nervous system - in short, the whole body. Poor weight control is a syndrome, a collection of symptoms that must be acknowledged and treated in its complexity. It is not just a "mouth issue." When obe-

sity is viewed and treated as a holistic issue, weight loss is not the only benefit achieved. "Weight losers" will notice an increase in energy, improved digestion and utilization of nutrients, in improved ability to make wise food choices,

glowing skin, balanced hormones - in short, homeostasis.

"Doctor, I have a weight problem. I've tried everything..."

"Let's check your female hormones, your brown fat, your thyroid, your food allergies...Let's do a com-

plete work-up on you and we'll find the answers for you. Whatever the problem is, just remember this one thing: If you have a weight problem, stop feeling guilty about it! Your fat is not your fault!"

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