

The top 3 reasons you may not be losing weight

One of the areas that our nutrition counselling practice specializes in is weight loss. Losing weight and keeping it off can be easy for some of our clients but incredibly hard for other clients. What makes the difference? If you are overweight and have been frustrated that the scale does not seem to budge there may be several reasons why. Here are the top five reasons you may not be losing weight and some food for thought on what you can do about it:



Why weight loss may be hindered

1. You are not a robot

We are all different. There are many genetic, family history and lifestyle factors that influence body weight and the rate at which weight loss (or weight gain) occurs. Some people are lean burning machines while others are better at storing and hanging onto weight. Weight loss is often faster if you have a very large amount of weight to lose and often is slower the closer you get to your body's natural set point.

Plateaus are common especially if your body has lost a significant amount of weight. If you have been making good progress sometimes all you need is patience (not extra tweaking of your food and exercise program). Focus more on making a shift with healthy habits you can sustain over time and less on obsessively monitoring the scale. If you are overweight and the trend is moving down even at the slow pace of a few pounds per month you are on the right track. Biggest sustainers trump biggest losers.





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2. Food and exercise habits are only PART of the equation

One of my frustrations when it comes to the diet and fitness industry is the widely promoted myth that if you eat less and exercise you can lose weight. Of course your nutrition and exercise habits are important considerations that can help, but at some point you can't eat any less or exercise any more. Food and exercise are only part of the weight loss equation.

Here is a list of ten important factors that influence body weight. Take some time to explore which of the above factors may be influencing your weight. Set goals around factors you can change and find peace and acceptance with those that you can't change.

10 Factors that influence your weight

1. *Personal genetics* – just like we each have a different shoe size, we each have a different body size.
2. *Family history* – may play a role in overall body shape.
3. *Age & gender* – metabolism declines with age in adulthood; puberty increase body fat for girls; menopause shifts more weight in midsection.
4. *Medical concerns & medications* – thyroid issues or other medical conditions and medications can increase or decrease weight.
5. *Nutrition* – calories consumed over time.
6. *Fluids* – Body is ~50-60% water & changes dramatically with hydrating foods/fluids; carbs store more water (1g carb stores 3g water); caffeine is a diuretic.
7. *Exercise* – calories burned; more muscle increases weight & metabolism.
8. *Body composition* – bone structure and muscle mass increase weight; women require more body fat.
9. *Stress* – chronic stress, inadequate sleep and starvation all cause your body to hang onto weight.
10. *Eating disorder behavior* – bingeing, restricting, purging, laxative, diuretic use all influence body weight shifts in random ways.

3. You may be over (or under) eating calories

Failing to consume enough calories is a form of stress for the body, which can adjust the hormones in your body to favor retaining weight. If you have read a diet magazine that suggests an adult needs only 1200 calories per day this is likely far too low to be sustainable, enjoyable and helpful to manage a healthy metabolism (after all a 2 year old needs 1000 calories a day and they are much smaller than an adult!).

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Find out more here: **How many calories do I need per day?**
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Consuming too few calories compared to what your body requires is a form of stress for the body and will inevitably not help you manage a healthy weight and enjoy flexible eating habits over time. Your metabolism is like a furnace, if food is in short supply it slows the furnace or metabolism down.

On the other hand eating too many calories for what your body requires is one of the leading causes of obesity in North America. I often find many of our clients struggling to lose excess weight underestimate how much they are eating and overestimate how many calories are burned during physical activity. If you are trying to lose weight, hitting the gym and burning off 300 calories during your workout would not warrant an extra large supper and justify two helpings of dessert.

Where can I find out more information?

For a **customized weight loss program** and free resources contact Andrea at her nutrition counselling practice at www.healthstandnutrition.com.

Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit www.healthstandnutrition.com. Twitter @chocoholicRD.

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