

Weight Loss Made Easy



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A holistic guide that is packed with simple solutions and easy to follow strategies on weight management...

Acknowledgements

I must thank all the wonderful clients and patients who give me this opportunity to share my knowledge and understanding in this book. Special thanks to the dedicated researchers and clinicians whose works have contributed to this book in my references. May this book be a gift for those who want to achieve a healthy weight through a healthy life style.

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What Are the Causes of Excess Weight?

Insulin resistance

If you are overweight, there is a good chance you may experience some level of insulin resistance. Insulin resistance is a decreased ability of the cells in your body to respond to insulin, which means the insulin released from your pancreas to your bloodstream becomes drowsy and is not lowering your blood glucose (sugars) as effectively as it should be. This is why many people with insulin resistance experience carbohydrate (starches or sugar) cravings, fatigue and weight gain. Your body cells need insulin to convert glucose into energy, but with insulin resistance, even though there is plenty of glucose available in the blood, the glucose is fooling around and not entering the muscle cells to be burned for energy. As a result, most of the carbohydrates you consume get stored as body fat while the cells in your body are starving for energy. Over time, the pancreas can no longer keep up with the body's demand for insulin, your blood sugar rises above the healthy level, and you develop pre-diabetes and/or type 2 diabetes. In sum, insulin resistance leads to increased levels of insulin and glucose in the bloodstream, which is a major cause of excess weight and obesity.

Stress

You may also experience elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol is responsible for providing you with energy, but if cortisol levels are too high, it can also cause a stress response in the body. Stress triggers your brain to look for quick energy. As a result, your appetite is increased and you are craving foods that are high in sugar, carbohydrates and fat to immediately satisfy your nervous system's hunger. It has been documented that stress tends to increase cravings for sweets, fatty and salty foods, which makes you gain even more weight! This creates a vicious cycle: Excess cortisol in your system slows down your metabolism and shapes your body with muscle loss and more belly fat (pear body type) because cortisol breaks down your muscles for energy and increases the synthesis of abdominal fat. Stress can be emotional and physical; for example, dieting is an emotional stress, which can lead to physical stress such as general weakness. Many of us may not realize that we are under different levels of stress, and therefore sometimes stress is prolonged and untreated, which can lead to chronic inflammation in the body.

Hormones

Leptin and ghrelin are two hormones that have a major influence on regulating appetite. Leptin is a hormone produced in the fat cells. It signals the brain to reduce appetite, plays the role of suppressing food intake, and therefore induces weight loss. Surprisingly, studies show that obesity is often linked to leptin resistance, which means high concentrations of leptin in the blood. The leptin is not working properly, so the mechanism for regulating appetite is impaired. Ghrelin, on the other hand, is secreted primarily in the stomach. It increases hunger and slows down metabolism; in other words, it decreases the body's ability to burn fat. Ghrelin increases before you eat and decreases after you eat. Similar to leptin, the mechanism of ghrelin appears to be altered with excess weight. Studies found that individuals with excess weight tend to have less ghrelin in their blood than those with a normal weight. One explanation is that excess weight may increase sensitivity to ghrelin, so less ghrelin is needed to stimulate hunger.¹

What about your thyroid function? You may blame your low thyroid function for your weight gain and difficulty losing weight, which is called hypothyroidism. One of the typical symptoms of this condition is weight gain. One reason for hypothyroidism related to diet is iodine deficiency. Iodine is a trace mineral that is

found primarily in seafood, eggs, dairy products, seaweed and iodized salt. However, iodine deficiency is rare in North America. Interestingly enough, a new study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition revealed that participants taking relatively higher doses of supplemental iodine, over 400 micrograms a day, paradoxically began developing subclinical hypothyroidism.² This finding suggests that taking too much iodine may also cause hypothyroidism. Therefore, you need to be very careful with taking supplemental iodine.

What about hormone changes in women? In fact, many women gain weight around the menopause transition. The hormonal changes of menopause might cause you to gain belly fat. For women in perimenopause, common weight gain issues may relate to fluctuating estrogen and progesterone levels, and for menopausal women, weight gain may be linked to diminished sex hormone levels. Progesterone is a precursor to estrogen; it helps with burning fat, normalizes blood sugar levels and prevents osteoporosis.³ Low progesterone levels may cause insulin resistance and slow down your metabolism, therefore increasing fat storage, especially around your belly. Estrogen is primarily produced in the ovaries; however, a small amount of estrogen is also produced by secondary production sites, such as the liver, adrenal gland, breasts and fat cells. As estrogen production falls, your body turns to secondary production sites, such as fat cells, which makes your body fat more valuable to keep and makes it more difficult to lose weight. Menopausal weight gain can increase your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers and other health issues.

Are your food choices affecting your mood and behaviors? Overconsumption or severe restriction of certain macronutrients can cause mood swings, depression and food cravings.⁴ For example, the neurotransmitter serotonin is important to regulate mood, sleep and appetite. If you limit your food choices that are rich in serotonin, you may be at risk of serotonin deficiency, which causes food cravings and weight gain. Meat products, dairy products, legumes and sea foods contain tryptophan, an essential amino acid that converts to serotonin in the brain. Tryptophan works best when consumed in conjunction with a small amount of carbohydrates such as grains, fruits and vegetables.

Metabolism

You've probably heard people blame their weight on a slow metabolism. Metabolism is the process by which your body converts what you eat and drink into energy. Even when you are at rest, your body still needs energy for normal functions, such as breathing, circulating blood, digesting foods and repairing cells, and this is reflected by your resting metabolic rate, which is also closely linked to your basal metabolic rate. At rest, your muscle is three times more metabolically active than fat. The more muscle you build, the more calories your body will burn, even at rest. When you lose muscle mass, you gain weight more easily because your resting metabolic rate is decreased.

Strategies for Successful Weight Loss

Diet Control

Eat small frequent meals throughout the day

Skipping breakfast is strongly linked to the development of obesity, as this slows down your metabolism and reduces your energy level during the day. People who do not eat breakfast try to overcompensate later in the day with high calorie foods that are high in sugar and fat, which likely leads to weight gain. More important, your brain is not getting proper nutrients such as serotonin on time, which is crucial to help stabilize your mood and prevent food cravings during the day.

- Don't skip breakfast! Breakfast should be eaten within 1-2 hours after you get up to boost your metabolism
- Moderate protein intake at each meal and protein snacks between meals will keep you full longer and help you stay energetic
- Take a snack with a good source of protein every 2-3 hours, such as Greek yogurt and cheese, etc.; this may help prevent the release of the stress hormone for food cravings later during the day
- Be aware that sugar may induce more food cravings! Limit those snacks that are high in sugar, such as juices and desserts, etc.
- Cut down on the salt intake; salt causes water retention in your body and makes it more difficult to lose weight. Limit high salt foods and pay attention to the hidden salt in foods, such as potato chips and pickles. Do the label reading!
- Portion control and all the numbers count! 1 large bagel = 4 servings of grains, 1 restaurant order of pasta = 6-8 servings of grains

Make vegetables your daily friends

Vegetables are low in calories, high in fiber and essential nutrients. There are two types of fibers: soluble fiber and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and insoluble fiber does not. Health benefits of fiber include cholesterol reduction, blood sugar improvement, weight control and a healthy gut.

- Soluble fiber delays the emptying of your stomach and makes you feel full longer, which helps control weight. Sources of soluble fiber are oatmeal, lentils, beans, peas, nuts, some fruits and vegetables, flaxseeds, psyllium, etc.
- Insoluble fibers are considered gut-healthy fiber because they have a laxative effect and appear to help food pass more quickly through the stomach and intestines, which helps prevent constipation. Sources of insoluble fiber are whole grains, wheat bran, brown rice, barley, leafy vegetables, etc.
- Fill at least half of your plate with vegetables
- Be creative: add vegetables in your soups and salads; try them cooked or raw, fresh or frozen, roasted or steamed; add them into stir fries
- If you want to stabilize your blood sugar and control your total calorie intake, watch your portions of starchy vegetables such as potatoes and beets, as they are high in carbohydrates.

Choose ***high fibre*** and ***low glycemic index*** starches (grain products) at meals

The Glycemic Index, or GI, describes the difference by ranking carbohydrates according to their effect on our blood glucose levels. Low GI carbohydrate foods, the ones that produce only small fluctuations in our blood sugar levels, help maintain weight loss and reduce insulin resistance. Adding acid to food, such as lemon juice and vinegar, can help reduce the Glycemic Index of foods. Health benefits of low GI foods include:

- Help weight loss and weight maintenance, reduce hunger and keep you full longer
- Increase the body's sensitivity to insulin
- Improve diabetes management and reduce the risk of heart disease

(Sign up for my e-newsletter and get your FREE copy of my eBook: Weight Resistance Diet! Please visit my website: <http://optimalhealthsolutions.ca>)

Drink water!

- Water helps maintain muscle tone and support the supply of oxygen for the cells in your body through the bloodstream, and it lubricates your joints, especially when you exercise. You need more water when exercising to prevent dehydration.
- Limit high sugar beverages such as pop, juice, punches, cocktails, alcoholic beverages, and energy drinks, as they serve as liquid foods and add to your total daily calorie intake
- Initial weight loss is largely due to loss of water; adequate water intake prevents dehydration during this process
- Water plays an important role in the biochemical process of burning calories; dehydration slows down the fat-burning process
- Water removes toxic waste from your body and enhances your body's fat-burning efficiency
- Drinking a glass of water before each meal may prevent overeating

Limit high fat foods and choose healthy fat

1 gram of fat contains 9 calories, while 1 gram of protein or carbohydrate contains only 4 calories; fat has more than double the calories compared to protein and carbohydrates. Choose healthy fats, such as monounsaturated fat (MUFAs) and polyunsaturated fat (PUFAs), especially omega-3 fatty acids, which help improve your blood cholesterol profile and decrease your risk of heart disease. Omega-3 fatty acids also reduce inflammations in the body, such as in the blood vessels and joints; therefore, they may help reduce joint pain and improve symptoms of asthma, which are related to inflammation. In addition, omega-3 fatty acids have health benefits in other medical conditions, such as depression and cognitive function, including dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

- Choose lean meat and limit trans fats foods containing shortening or hydrogenated fats such as pastries, snack crackers, and deep fried foods
- Include small portions of healthy fats: 1-2 teaspoons at each meal, such as olive oil, flaxseed oil, avocados, nuts, etc.
- Increase the intake of omega-3 rich foods, such as salmon, sardines, tuna, oysters, flaxseeds (grounded) and walnuts, etc.

Limit added sugars and concentrated sugar sources

Food cravings are usually linked to satisfying emotional needs, such as reducing stress and anxiety. Cravings that are triggered by emotions are typically for foods that are high in fat or high in sugar or both. Sugar or simple carbohydrates help release serotonin from the brain. Serotonin is a brain chemical that makes you feel good. When you are emotionally stressed out, which may indicate that your serotonin level is low, you may

crave foods that are high in sugar to comfort you. So you feel good temporarily, then your serotonin starts to drop again and you crave more sugar, and the cycle repeats. As a result, the more sugar you eat, the more sugar you are craving, which leads to weight gain!

- Limit added sugar, such as white and brown sugars, honey, and syrups
- Replace fruit juices with fresh fruits instead. Most fiber is lost in the juice during the processing. Whole fruit provides you with a whole lot more nutrition than fruit juice
- Avoid high sugar beverages such as regular pop, iced tea, lemonade, fruit cocktails and many sports drinks
- Sugar substitutes may be used in moderation. Artificial sweeteners are one type of sugar substitute. They are also many times sweeter than regular sugar, so they may indulge your sweet tooth and mask your real sugar craving.

Include a source of protein at each meal

Protein is a “macronutrient,” just like fat and carbohydrates, which means that the body needs relatively large amounts of it. Protein is an important component of every cell in the body, the enzymes, hormones, blood and other body chemicals. It is also an important building block of bones, muscles, cartilage and skin. Protein plays an important role in weight management and satiety. One of the reasons is that protein causes fewer insulin spikes and leads to less fluctuation of sugar levels and therefore reduces food cravings. Another reason is that protein may have an impact on hunger hormones and brain chemistry. Protein-rich foods offer a greater sense of satiety than other foods. Recent studies supported that high protein diets are associated with reductions in hunger and increased fullness throughout the day. In addition, high-protein diets spare lean muscle mass and help prevent a decrease in metabolic rate, which helps prevent rebound weight gain after initial weight loss.⁵ However, one size cannot fit all; how much protein do you need as an individual? Check our newly released breakthrough weight loss program “Ultimate Weight Loss” that will individually design your weight loss program and support your ongoing weight loss goal: www.optimalhealthsolutions.ca/weightloss

- Lean protein options include fish, shellfish, lean meat, low fat dairy products, lentils and eggs
- Nuts, seeds, and natural nut butters such as peanut butter or almond butter can be an excellent protein source, but they are very high in fat too, so watch the portion. 2 oz. a day is reasonable.
- Choose plant sources of protein at least 1-2 times per week, such as beans, lentils and tofu.
- In general, the size of your palm is one serving for meat products.

Exercise

Exercise is a must for weight maintenance. Balancing your energy output through exercise with the calories you intake will help you achieve your desired weight. The key to successful weight loss is to stay active and make physical activity part of your daily routine.

Establish a serious exercise routine

- Aim to build an exercise routine 4-5 times a week and at least 30 minutes a day. Sprint exercise is very efficient for fat burning
- *(For more information about sprint exercise and fat burning workout, please visit <http://optimalhealthsolutions.ca/how-to-burn-fat-faster/>)*
- Add 2-3 days per week of weight training/resistance exercises in between aerobic exercise to help improve muscle mass
- For those with physical limitations, consult your healthcare provider for any vigorous exercise; walking or water aerobics may be better tolerated
- Be patient and persistent. Build up a healthy lifestyle that will help maintain long-term success

Reduce Inflammation

These anti-inflammation weight loss tips will help you reduce inflammation, increase your energy level for a better weight loss outcome, and also improve your health condition.

- **More vegetables!** Increase your vegetables intake every day. Vegetables such as spinach and broccoli are powerful anti-inflammatory foods.
- **Antioxidants!** Fruits such as cherries, strawberries, blueberries and pomegranate contain special phytonutrients, such as carotenoids, flavonoids and resveratrol, which have a strong anti-inflammatory effect and keep you healthy. Make sure they are not sweetened or processed; it is best to eat them fresh or fresh frozen.
- **Omega-3 fats!** They reduce the inflammatory process that causes many chronic conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, arthritis, asthma, heart disease, etc. There are two main types of omega-3 fatty acids. The first type is long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, including EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). These are found in fish and shellfish. Algae often provide only DHA. The second type is short-chain omega-3 fatty acids, called ALA (alpha-linolenic acid). These are found in plants, such as flaxseed, chia seeds and walnuts. Studies show that ALA omega-3 fatty acids have less potent health benefits than EPA and DHA.
- **Probiotics/prebiotics!** Prebiotics are non-digestible food ingredients that stimulate the growth and/or activity of beneficial bacteria in the digestive system that provide health benefits. Good sources of prebiotics are inulin from artichoke, chicory, garlic, leek and onion, etc. Probiotics, on the other hand, are bacteria that help maintain the natural balance of microflora in the intestines. The largest group of probiotic bacteria in the intestine is lactic acid bacteria, also known as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. These bacteria are found in Greek yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, miso, etc. Probiotics are also available as dietary supplements. Studies have shown that prebiotics and probiotics may help maintain a healthy immune system and digestive health, which may be helpful for people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). When the digestive tract is healthy, it eliminates harmful bacteria, toxins and other waste products.
- **Spice up!** As the most abundant antioxidant, polyphenols in herbs and spices contribute to the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, osteoporosis, neurodegenerative diseases and diabetes mellitus.^{6,7} Certain herbs and spices are super anti-inflammatory, such as cinnamon, garlic, oregano, basil, thyme and rosemary. Recent research reveals that cinnamon not only decreases inflammation but also improves insulin sensitivity and stabilizes your blood sugar, which has a direct impact on your waistline. You could use herbs and spices to satisfy your taste buds without extra calories, and it may decrease your intake of salt, fat and sugar.
- **Enjoy sun!** Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays an important role in bone metabolism and seems to have anti-inflammatory and immune-modulating properties. Several new studies demonstrate the power of vitamin D to reduce inflammation, pain and other medical conditions, such as cancer^{8,9}. In humans, the most important compound in the vitamin D group is vitamin D₃ (also known as cholecalciferol) and vitamin D₂ (ergocalciferol). Syntheses from exposure to sunlight, as well as intake from the diet and supplements, all benefit your adequate serum vitamin D level. Make sure to get at least 1,000 IU of vitamin D a day. Vitamin D deficiency is associated with increased inflammatory process in the human body.¹⁰

- A good night's sleep! If you are not getting enough sleep or good quality sleep, your metabolism will not function properly¹¹. When you are sleep deprived, your body produces more ghrelin, which gives you the signal that you are hungry and you need to eat. Sleep deprivation also means your body produces less leptin; leptin helps control your appetite. Sleep deprivation itself is highly inflammatory and triggers the body to release the stress hormone cortisol¹². In order to have a good night's sleep, avoid any caffeine in the afternoon because it may keep you awake at night. Exercises help improve sleep quality, but don't exercise right before going to bed, because exercise raises your body temperature. Your body temperature is falling five to six hours after exercise, which makes sleep easier if you work out early in the evening. Watch what you eat before bedtime. Heavy and rich meals before bed can increase the risk of heartburn, which may keep you up at night. (*For more information about a good night's sleep, PS visit <http://optimalhealthsolutions.ca/corner-of-self-care/how-to-overcome-insomnia/>*)

Reduce Stress

Meditation

Research suggests that daily meditation improves both physical and emotional responses to stress. People who meditate regularly show less activation of their immune systems and less emotional distress when they are in stressful situations. The relaxation response from meditation helps lower blood pressure and improves heart rate, breathing, and brain waves.¹³

Breathing exercise

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. The movements of the diaphragm during the deep breathing exercise massage the stomach, small intestine, liver and pancreas. The upper movement of the diaphragm also massages the heart. Deep breathing triggers your parasympathetic nervous system to respond, which leads to relaxation.

Laughter

Laughter triggers the release of protective endorphins. These endorphins, one of the complex neuropeptide chemicals produced in the brain, manage pain and promote feelings of well-being.¹⁴

Listen to the music and get moving

Listening to music can have a tremendously relaxing effect on our minds and bodies, especially classical music, which can have a beneficial effect on our physiological functions, such as slowing the pulse and heart rate, lowering blood pressure, decreasing the levels of stress hormones, and may be beneficial to heart disease patients.¹⁵ Additionally, physical activities such as dancing ease your stress level by increasing the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters (endorphins) and improving your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress.

Mind Control

The Mindset!

- Get your mind set on more realistic goals and accomplishments and you'll be happier and healthier.
- Be accountable and take responsibility. You have to be accountable for what you eat and how often you work out. Once you can take responsibility for your health and fitness, you'll be one step closer to meeting your goals.
- Change your programming. Many of us have programmed our brains to think we are fat, unhealthy and will never look or feel like we want to. By changing your mental programming, you'll change what you're capable of in weight loss.
- Stay positive! Staying positive will help you feel better about yourself, keep you motivated and reduce stress, which will help you lose more weight.
- Be conscious. Always be aware of what you're eating. Eating mindlessly while watching TV can lead to overeating.
- Look at food differently. Food isn't your enemy or your friend. Learn to look at food as a source of nourishment rather than a reward or a way to comfort your emotions.
- Get unhealthy foods out of your vision and surround yourself with healthy foods and images. When you are calm and relaxed, you will be in control of your mind and body, and you will let go of your mental fantasies about unhealthy foods and behaviors.

Motivation!

- Set smaller daily goals, which will give you more of a sense of accomplishment and change your mindset regarding success on a daily basis.
- Use support from friends and surround yourself with good role models. Pair up for exercise or spend time with friends who have similar interests and goals about healthy body image and healthy lifestyle.
- Reward yourself. When you've worked really hard to meet your goal, reward yourself with a gift, massage or something else that is not food related.
- Pick out a motivational photograph. Whether you want to look more like you did 20 years ago or have the physique of someone else you admire, choose a photograph you can look at when you're struggling to help keep yourself motivated.

Body Image!

- How you see yourself can have a big impact on how much weight you lose. Train your mind to see yourself as attractive at any weight and you'll see more weight loss progress.
- Collect photos that motivate you. Use your imagination. Our imaginations are very powerful, and you can picture your body and your life the way you really want them to be.
- Stop focusing on the numbers. You might not have met your goal weight yet, but focusing on changes in how you feel can help keep you motivated and feeling good about yourself. So listen to your body and focus on how you feel, not the scale.
- Stop sabotaging yourself. Negative thoughts aren't going to help you lose weight. If you miss your workout one day, simply start again the next day from a positive standpoint.
- Picture yourself thin. If you believe that you can and will be thin, then you give yourself the motivation and drive to actually make it happen.

- Fill yourself with love. It doesn't matter how much you weigh; you can look good and feel good about yourself. Make part of the process learning to truly love yourself. For women, maybe styling your hair and wearing your favorite clothes will make you feel good about yourself. It will change how you see yourself and how others see you as well.
- Picture yourself wearing something you've always wanted to wear. A big reason many people want to lose weight is to fit into the clothes and style that they dream of, which gives them some motivation.

Be Persistent!

- Create a routine. Success with any weight loss program requires creating a routine and sticking to it.
- True fat loss does not happen in just a few days. Gradual weight loss (1-2 lbs per week) is most likely to be maintained over the long term.
- Remember, it is lifestyle change, not just the diet change. Any change takes time and repetition to become a long-term habit.
- Make sure your goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

How to lose weight naturally and effortlessly? How to create a healthy body image from the inside out and achieve your best version? Check out our comprehensive weight loss program: [Harmonious Weight loss Program](#)

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About Author

As the founder of optimalhealthsolutions.ca, Lucy Liu's mission is to assist others to achieve optimal health and create a life that is full of happiness, abundance, good health and wellness. Lucy has developed a holistic approach to help others by creating harmony between the mind and body. Lucy works on the body as a whole. Her unique approach for health solutions is based on her philosophy that optimal health is the alignment of emotional health, physical health, mental health and spiritual health. When all these components are in harmony, a bliss state of optimal health can be achieved and maintained. Lucy values health as the greatest wealth, because it is the foundation of happiness, abundance and loving relationships.

Lucy has not only established a widely recognized reputation in health and nutrition, but also has in-depth knowledge in Traditional Chinese Medicine and energy medicine.

After years of experience serving patients and clients as a Clinical Dietitian, Lucy has devoted herself to bringing a holistic approach, which combines Western medicine, Chinese medicine and Alternative medicine together, to help clients and patients achieve optimal health.

Lucy has been invited to speak to many special groups and college students on various topics regarding health and nutrition. Lucy also published many blogs about Holistic Health, Women's Health, Children's Health, Functional Food, Healing Food and Natural Remedies, Anti-aging Solutions, Weight Loss, Sports Nutrition as well as Mental health. Her approach is to dig into the root causes for illness and sub-optimal health conditions, and provide a broad range of solutions from Herbal medicine, Energy medicine, Holistic nutrition and many other healing modalities to help others achieve optimal health.

Lucy is a member of:

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