



WEIGHTING ON A CURE



BY SARAH LINNEY

WITH ONE IN TWO AUSTRALIANS CLASSIFIED AS OVERWEIGHT AND FIGURES EXPECTED TO RISE BY 15 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS, EXPERTS ARE URGING AUSTRALIANS TO TAKE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THEIR HEALTH.

A report released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that Australia's obesity rates have been increasing faster than any other developed nation over the past 20 years. Sally Symonds, author of *50 Steps to Lose 50kg ... And Keep It Off* and *50+ Recipes to Lose 50+kg ... And Keep It Off*, says we live in an obesogenic world. "We are surrounded by an abundance of unhealthy food and are conditioned to think 'now now now' in relation to everything from food to information. We have been repeatedly desensitised because we are constantly overstimulated by sights, smells and tastes. In terms of treats, what was once a treat has now become the every day."

Weight loss marketing and the media have instilled a sense of urgency in those seeking to lose weight, with quick fixes and miraculous diet stories dominating the Australian culture. Sally says this approach can be quite destructive. "Quick fixes leave lasting results but not the kind you want. Every person who takes their first small step towards a 'lose fat fast' diet is leaping towards a yo-yo dieting cycle which can ruin their metabolism in a few short years."

Sally says consistency and motivation are the keys to weight loss success. "Everyone knows what to do to lose weight – they just do not know how to keep on doing it day in and day out. Healthy living is all about striking a balance between what works for you on a physical, practical and psychological basis."



As featured in
The CEO Magazine
For more info visit
theceomagazine.com.au



“Always carry healthy snacks in your handbag or briefcase. Similarly, always have healthy frozen foods in your freezer which are only a microwave zap away. Planning and preparation will win when willpower wanes.” - Sally Symonds

It is important to change what you eat *and* how you eat, according to Sally. "When I was overweight, I enjoyed eating; but I actually enjoy eating even more now because I focus on the act of eating and do not eat foods that make me feel bad. Today, many people mindlessly stuff their mouths with food without considering what they are eating or whether they are really hungry."

Sally suggests that people should avoid eating in their car or while walking down the street, and should set their dinner table before sitting down – to avoid distractions while eating. She also recommends using large bowls for salads and small bowls for desserts to encourage effective portion control.

Another way to avoid eating on autopilot is to wait small barriers of time between wanting food and eating it. This will help individuals determine whether they are hungry or just thirsty and will diminish their 'now, now, now' attitude to food. Additionally, Sally advises people to record in a diary what they eat. "Studies show that the most common characteristic among people who lose a lot of weight and keep it off is that they keep a food diary. I am a big fan of food diaries. I have several years' worth sitting on my bookshelves. However, it does not really matter what accountability method you use; you just need to have some kind of system in place to keep you on track. It can be your bathroom scales, an old pair of jeans, or even a weight loss coach," says Sally.

Sally stresses the importance of ensuring the content of the meal and being specific when ordering if eating out. This will ensure that no excessive oils or butters are used in the preparation. Additionally, Sally recommends carrying healthy snacks. "At some point, you will be caught somewhere where lard-laden foods are the only option. Always carry healthy snacks in your handbag or briefcase. Similarly, always have healthy frozen foods in your freezer which are only a microwave zap away. Planning and preparation will win when willpower wanes." →

DIET

A nutritious and well-balanced diet is an essential part of the weight loss process. However, conflicting methods and ideologies can cause confusion and disappointing results. Portion control is a commonly recognised method, with many experts suggesting people should use the palm of their hand as a portion guide. Sally says, "I eat until I am full, but not over-full, similar to what the Okinawans refer to as *hara hachi bu* – eating until about 80 per cent fullness. However, it is also important not to under-eat. If you eat and are not satisfied, it probably means you are eating too little, which could have a negative effect on your metabolism and your mindset as you will still be obsessing about food after you have eaten."

Caloric counting, another staple of the weight loss industry, is a well-known way to determine the effects of food intake. However, Sally says it is not a foolproof method. "While it is true that you will lose weight if you burn more calories than you consume, not all calories are created equal. You need to consider the nutritional density of the food as well, the quality of what you consume, as well as overall quantity."

Sally speaks from personal experience. In 2002–03, she lost 45 kilograms over 33 weeks and maintained that weight for five years before losing a further 8.5 kilograms. In total, she has lost more than 50 per cent of her body weight.

'Everything in moderation' was one rule that did not work for Sally. "It is one of those classic rules written by someone who has never struggled with their weight. It sounds great in theory, but it just does not work on a practical level." Instead, she focused on occasionally indulging in unhealthy foods and finding healthy meals that she enjoyed eating. By following this method, she allowed herself a little leeway. "One reason I have been so successful at losing weight and keeping it off is because I was never that hard on myself. I never forced myself to eat things I did not like, but I did not let my mind control my tastebuds either. I kept exploring new options. When trying to convert myself to a healthier alternative, I began by mixing a little of the 'good' with a little of the 'not so good' and gradually increased and decreased their proportions appropriately," says Sally.





WATER

A common piece of advice is to drink eight glasses of water a day. However, the Institute of Medicine in the United States found that the average healthy adult living in a temperate climate should drink three litres or 13 cups for men, and 2.2 litres or nine cups for women. Health Consultant Eloise Howard from Eat Well Move Well Live Well says there are varying recommendations surrounding the issue. “The power of adequate hydration is underestimated, with dehydration causing anything from headaches and lack of concentration to fatigue. It is recommended that you consume approximately two litres of water each day, with an extra litre per hour of exercise.”

EXERCISE

Exercise plays an essential role in losing weight and keeping it off. The national Department of Health and Ageing recommends people do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. However, Sally says, “If you are currently doing nothing or very little, it is unrealistic to think you are going to be able to transform yourself from an exercise-loather to an exercise-lover overnight.”



According to Sally, the most important and underrated aspect of exercise is weight training. “One of the most common misconceptions about weight training is that it has to involve actual weights. It does not. Weight training can be as simple as using your own body weight whilst doing exercises such as squats, lunges, step-ups, push-ups, pull-ups, tricep dips or planks. Weight training is a much better value-for-time exercise than cardio. With weights, not only are you increasing your metabolism whilst you are working out, but the effect of an increased metabolism can last for several days after a bout of weight training, whereas it only lasts for several hours after cardio.”

Another underrated exercise method is balance training, which Sally says is a great way to relieve stress. “It is both physically and mentally challenging; you cannot think about anything else when you are doing it, so it is a great way to escape from the world. Physically, balance work is great for developing a strong core, and being able to balance can be a great time-saving workout tool. If you do not have time to train your arms and core, you can train them simultaneously by doing bicep curls whilst standing on a Swiss ball.”

IN THE OFFICE

To address Australia’s obesity problems, many companies are focusing on the health and wellbeing of their employees. Sally provides ‘workplace transformations’ through health and fitness programs and motivational seminars. Sally says Australian businesses need to initiate organisational change. “Workplace wellness programs have been on the increase in both the United Kingdom and the United States for a number of years. Over three-quarters of FTSE 100 companies now include health and wellbeing data in their annual reports. In Australia, this trend is only in its infancy, but it is on the rise.” ♦

For more information, go to sallysymonds.com.au.

SUPERFOODS

The term ‘superfoods’ refers to foods that provide a vast array of health benefits through antioxidants, vitamins, protein and other natural boosters. Health Consultant Eloise Howard says people should ensure they consume a variety of ‘superfoods’ as a large part of their diet. “The thing to note is that all these foods are natural – that is, fruit, vegetables, grains, et cetera. They all have natural benefits for us and they have always been foods we are supposed to consume. Because berries contain large amounts of antioxidants, it should come as no surprise that those natural foods are so good for us!”

Some commonly recognised ‘superfoods’ include:

- Acai
- Goji berries
- Yogurt
- Kale
- Broccoli
- Barley
- Lentils
- Quinoa
- Sweet potatoes
- Spinach
- Blueberries
- Garlic
- Wild salmon

