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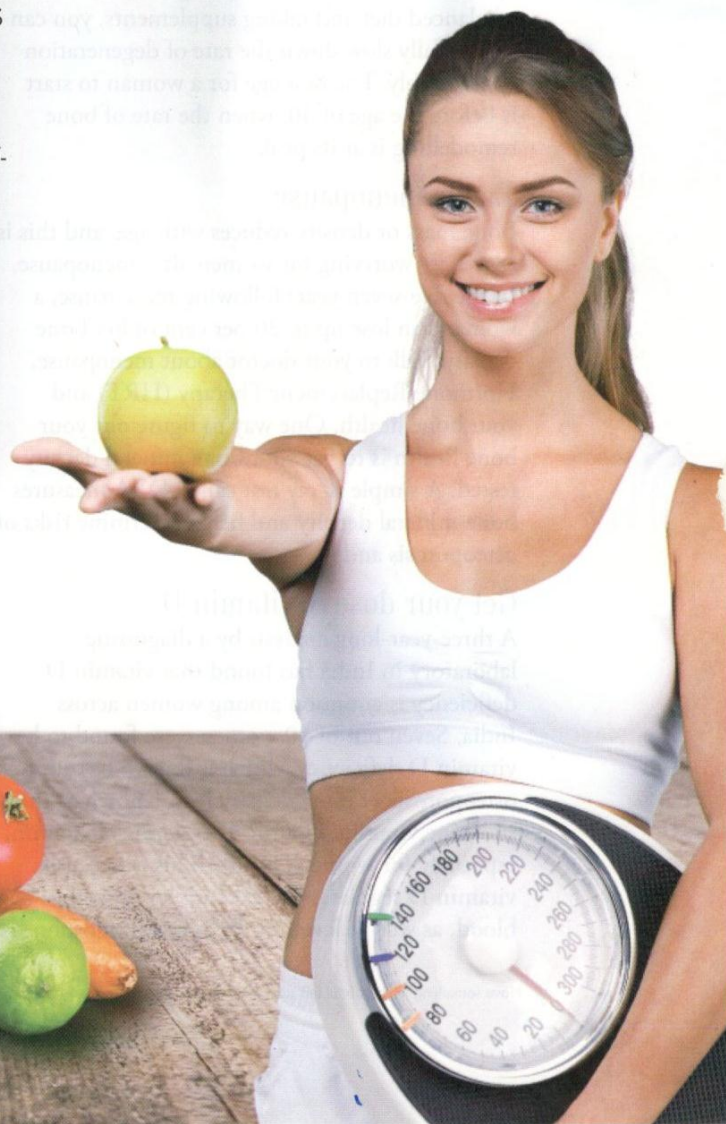
The *Wellness* Issue

50+ HEALTHY WAYS TO HELP LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE



The Beginner's Guide To Dieting

IF THERE IS ONE WORD THAT EVOKES STRONG REACTIONS—NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE, IT HAS TO BE DIET. WHILE SO MUCH HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT DIETS AND DIETING PLANS, THE FIRST-TIME DIETER IS STILL CONFUSED AND HAS MANY QUESTIONS. WE SPEAK TO EXPERTS FOR THEIR TAKE ON THE BEST WAY TO START A DIET. BY **BINDU GOPAL RAO**





If there is one thing that can get ladies talking anytime, anywhere, it has to be conversations surrounding one's weight. While body shaming is out, embracing a healthy lifestyle suiting your body type is of prime importance. And while you are on the path to fitness, there is every chance that you might be flooded with a whole lot of opinion. It is therefore extremely important to know where to start.

Address the cause

People gain weight because of internal issues such as thyroid imbalances, hormonal fluctuations, water retention and metabolic disorders because of which their bodies have a tendency to gain weight. "Weight gain is a symptom; the root cause for it is inside the body. If we just focus on treating the symptom without addressing the root cause, the weight will always come back once the 'dieting' ends. If we instead focus on healing and cleansing the system from inside, so its overall functioning and efficiency improves, one is more likely to witness an improvement in overall good health along with a significant and sustainable weight loss. It is also important to remember that our mind controls our bodies. It continuously tells the system what is possible or not possible; what will give results or not give results. Training your mind to pass on only positive messages to the body consciously and subconsciously significantly improves your chances of getting the results you are looking for," advises Smita Sundararaman, Founder & Managing Director, Nature Healz.



Choose wisely

Be gentle but firm with your diet regime as consistency always pays. Focus on overall good health and weight loss will follow by itself. There are no short cuts to looking good and feeling great, so develop a routine and stick to it. "The body does not give up fat so easily as it is very important for survival. The more we try to skip food the more difficult it is to lose fat. We lose the muscles to save energy and feel very hungry, so never skip your meals and choose your food wisely," advises nutritionist-cum-dietician Nikhil Chaudhary. Mehar Rajput, nutritionist

and dietician, FITPASS adds, "An effective first step is avoiding heavy and fattening foods like junk food, burger, pizza, chips and heavy desserts. Dairy products, beverages, soft drinks and sugary drinks are high in calories and low in nutrition. Instead of soft drinks opt for fresh coconut water, lemon water, green tea, lemon tea and other similar alternatives. Instead of packed juices and soups; homemade tomato soup, cucumber soup or fresh fruits with lemon and black pepper are healthier alternatives."

Weighty issues

For those who want to lose weight, it is important to balance diet, exercise, sleep and stress. "Never stay hungry as that will only lead to binge eating later followed by guilt and depression. That in turn makes you eat more and makes you obese. Aerobic



exercise for 12 minutes is when the body starts to break fat for energy. At least two sets are good enough to start and the more you exercise, the faster you lose weight. If you deprive yourself of enough sleep, it will lead to enormous stress and putting on weight. Study after study has linked less sleep with gaining weight in individuals. Stress is a big contributor to weight gain. Some people lose weight drastically when stressed but most don't and in fact gain a lot of weight. Stress makes us crave for fatty and sweet foods all of which makes us obese. Definitely a big no when you are dieting," advises Chaudhary. Remember not to be in a hurry to lose weight; this will only lead to complications.



to digest and process it. Mixing too many different food items in a meal makes things difficult for the body. Listen to your body and eat only when you are hungry," advises Sundararaman.

Watch out

Depression can make you put on more weight because you tend to eat

sweet and fatty food during stress and depression. So, never stay hungry. When you deviate from your diet for any reason, make sure you control yourself further. It has been proven that when we deviate, we feel that since we are already off the track, why not enjoy the day and start dieting again tomorrow. That does a lot more damage than we think. Always eat before you go for a gathering, function, events, etc. That will help you make healthy choices and you will avoid bingeing. Always be watchful of what you eat during socials. When hungry you have less willpower to choose what you should and instead end up doing what you like. Keep well hydrated, especially in the heat. "Fill a jar with detox water such as ginger water, watermelon water, pomegranate water and many more. Treat yourself in a healthy way by making sure you consume less calories and more with nutrients," says Rajput.

Food matters

When you are on a diet it is important to eat more vegetables and include sprouts in all your meals as they help you lose weight, make you feel full and provide a lot of nutrients with the least amount of calories. Fruits, veggies and dried fruits are a powerhouse of nutrition. These should make up at least 70 per cent of what you eat every day. Choose healthy options like grains, seeds, curd, paneer, fish, chicken, sprouts, coconut water, lemon honey water, fresh juices, etc. to make up the remaining 30 per cent. Likewise, fats are important and should not be skipped. "Ditch the oil, processed fats, trans-fats, animal fats and fried foods and opt for whole unroasted and unsalted nuts and seeds. Eat whole and natural foods avoiding processed foods especially refined carbs like sugar, white flour (*maida*) and white rice, etc. Eat whole grain flour and red rice instead, and avoid taking milk and dairy products as they come loaded with growth hormones. It is also important to get some sun as vitamin D deficiency has also been linked with weight gain," advises Chaudhary. Likewise keep revisiting your food plans need regularly for the body to keep losing weight. "If you eat salads and soup for the rest of your life you won't continue losing weight forever. Our bodies get used to a diet or exercise routine. So, mix it up and keep your body guessing. Keep your food simple so it is easier for your body

Counting Calories

A common mistake made by first time dieters is to get obsessed about calories as they are at best an indicator. A burger and a bowl of dried fruits can both have 400 kcal but they are not equatable in terms of nutrition. Again, one teaspoon of oil is not equal to five almonds though they may be same in calories. The thought that you can exercise and remove the ill-effects of a bad diet is wrong. You might burn the calories but the damage done to the body cannot be undone. Again, avoid crash diets as they rarely give sustainable weight loss results. Losing weight is not difficult but needs proper strategy and science. Calorie counts do not work as all calories are not the same. So take the right route to diet and see the positive changes for yourself. ❧