

DO YOU NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT

7 Questions That Can Help You Decide

By Dulce Zamora, Reviewed by Charlotte E. Grayson Mathis, MD

So your favorite jeans have gotten a bit too close-fitting for comfort. Maybe you don't cut quite the figure in your bathing suit that you did a few years ago.

But do you really need to lose weight? Are you putting your health in danger -- or just carrying around a little harmless extra padding?

The standard answer is that you're overweight if your body mass index (BMI) is 25 or higher and obese if your BMI is 30 or higher. Seven questions you should ask yourself.

- **What is your lifestyle?** Regular physical activity and healthy eating are important, no matter what your weight or your BMI.
- **What is your family history?** If a close relative has a history of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, or other weight-related ailment, it's crucial to be mindful of your weight.
- **What is your weight history?** People who have consistently gained weight over the years need be careful. Experts say your BMI should not increase dramatically, even as you age. Even moderate weight gain in adulthood can increase your risk of diabetes.
- **How is your weight distributed?** Weight gained above the hips -- the so-called "apple" shape -- can be problematic. In both men and women, bigger abdomens can signal trouble.
- **What is your waist size?** The National Institutes of Health has determined that a waist circumference of over 40 inches in men and over 35 inches in women signifies a health risk, particularly in people with BMIs of 25-34.9 (the overweight category). Clothing size is not a good indicator of weight or health, since sizes vary with different manufacturers. But you can use your own clothing -- maybe a favorite pair of pants -- as a personal gauge of your weight.
- **What is your health profile?** If your cholesterol and blood pressure levels are high and your BMI falls into the overweight or obese category, it's important to lose weight. If your BMI is in the high end of healthy or in the low overweight range, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor about whether weight loss is right for you.
- **How do you feel?** Seriously consider weight loss if you are overweight and have joint problems, shortness of breath, or other health troubles that limit your day-to-day living.

The Body Mass Index

To understand the issue of weight and wellness, you first need to know your BMI, the common measure of fatness that is at the heart of the debate.

You can find out your own BMI with a simple formula: Divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared. Multiply by 705.

For example, consider a woman who is 5'6" and weighs 190 pounds:

Height of 5'6" = 66 inches

66 squared (66 x 66) = 4,356

190 divided by 4,356 = 0.0436

0.0436 x 705 = 30.75

This individual's BMI would be rounded up to 31.

A BMI of:

- 18.5 or less is considered underweight
- 18.5-24.9 is considered ideal weight
- 25-29.9 is considered overweight
- 30 or higher is considered obese

Many doctors and researchers say the BMI is a useful tool to determine whether someone is overweight or obese, though they concede it has limitations. But critics say the BMI is an inaccurate gauge of wellness.

"This overweight category of body mass index of 25 to 29.9 is a phony category. It doesn't have medical justification," says Paul Campos, JD, a law professor and author of *The Diet Myth: Why America's Obsession with Weight Is Hazardous to Your Health*.

Campos says the BMI was developed as a statistical sorting tool for researchers and was never meant as a gauge for weight loss.

"It just doesn't make sense," he says, pointing to muscular celebrities such as Matthew McConaughey and Brad Pitt, who he says would be considered too heavy based on their BMI numbers.

The well-muscled and the big-boned have often found themselves in the BMI's overweight or obese categories, a frequent criticism of the body fat measurement. Indeed, one recent study found that more than half of National Football League (NFL) players were obese according to their BMIs. Patrick M. O'Neil, PhD, director of the Weight Management Center at the Medical University of South Carolina, agrees that BMI numbers alone should not be used to determine whether someone needs to lose weight. It's important to believe one's eyes, he says.

However, O'Neil believes the BMI is generally a good clinical tool for initial screening. "The BMI is an excellent tool for helping you figure out where you are," he says. "It's a lot less useful for helping you figure out where you personally need to be."

Your Waist-to-Hip Ratio

Last, but not least, your doctor may also mention your waist-to-hip ratio.

Those who are considered "apple-shaped" (fat accumulates around the belly) are at a much higher risk for heart disease and hypertension than those who tend to carry their weight in the hips or thighs.

Who Should Lose Weight?

Tara Gidus, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association, says it's possible to be fit and fat -- and that's better than being unfit and fat. But if you're overweight, she says, you still need to lose weight.

The best time to start thinking about weight loss, says Gidus, is when you hit the BMI range of 25 to 27 -- overweight and heading into obesity.

Another expert, Vincent Pera, MD, director of the Weight Management Program at Brown University's Miriam Hospital, says the question of whether someone needs to lose weight must be determined on a case-by-case basis. That's because everyone's bodies and health profiles are different.

Also, he says, there are still a lot of unknown factors about obesity.

"We don't understand all the causes of obesity, and why it is so difficult for some people to control their weight," says Pera. "We don't understand why some people with obesity have so many problems and others don't have those problems."

Risks of being overweight and physically inactive

If you are overweight (BMI over 25) and physically inactive, you may develop:

- Cardiovascular (heart and blood circulation) disease
- Gall bladder disease
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes

- Osteoarthritis
- Certain types of cancer, such as colon and breast cancer.

Risks of being underweight

If you are underweight (BMI less than 20), you may be malnourished and develop:

- Compromised immune function
- Respiratory disease
- Digestive disease
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis
- Increased risk of falls and fractures.

Body fat distribution and health risk

A person's waist circumference is a better predictor of health risk than BMI. Having fat around the abdomen or a 'pot belly', regardless of your body size, means you are more likely to develop certain obesity-related health conditions. Fat predominantly deposited around the hips and buttocks doesn't appear to have the same risk. Men, in particular, often deposit weight in the waist region.

Studies have shown that the distribution of body fat is associated with an increased prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. Generally, the association between health risks and body fat distribution is as follows:

- Least risk – slim (no pot belly)
- Moderate risk – overweight with no pot belly
- Moderate to high risk – slim with pot belly
- High risk – overweight with pot belly.

Genetic factors

The tendency to deposit fat around the middle is influenced by a person's genes. However, you can take this genetic tendency into account and do something about it.

Being physically active, avoiding smoking and eating unsaturated fat instead of saturated fat have been shown to decrease the risk of developing abdominal obesity.

Things to remember

- BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat.
- Being underweight or overweight can cause health problems, especially if you are also inactive.
- Your waist circumference is a better predictor of health risk than BMI.

ARE EXCUSES HOLDING YOU BACK FROM GETTING HEALTHY AND LOSING WEIGHT?

Editors Note: This post is written by weight loss expert (and former couch potato) Meg McFarlane. Meg has experienced the weight loss journey first hand has a Bachelor of Science from Sydney University is currently working in IT. 18 July 2009

We all know long before we do anything about it that we need to lose weight and get healthy. However, we tell ourselves lots of excuses about why we can't start eating right and lose weight. If you are currently in this position and your excuses are preventing you from starting your healthy new life, here are the top five excuses and how you can overcome them.

1. I hate dieting

When you think about fad diets that only have you drinking liquid shakes or eating soup, no wonder everyone hates diets. You feel hungry all the time and just long for a decent meal. However, diets or as I prefer to call them healthy eating plans don't mean bland foods, going on a liquid diet or constantly being hungry. By choosing low calorie versions of the foods you are now eating and eating more vegetables and lean proteins, you can lose weight without ever feeling hungry.

2. I don't want to give up my favourite foods

Then don't. Eating healthy doesn't mean that you can never have your favourite foods like chocolate or ice cream ever again. However, it does mean that you have to eat less of them. Make your favourite foods a special treat that you only have once a week. Now this doesn't give you license to eat a whole family sized chocolate block or a tub of ice cream once a week, but there is nothing wrong with having a bowl of ice cream or a small chocolate bar to reward yourself for sticking to a healthy eating plan. Besides, your favourite foods taste even better when you are not eating them every single day.

3. Eating healthy is expensive

There is a common misconception that healthy eating is expensive. If you are buying fresh organic fruit and vegetables, then yes the cost can add up, however, you can eat healthy on a budget. Frozen vegetables and fruits can be very cheap and they are just as good, if not better, than the fresh stuff. Frozen vegetables are frozen just after picking them and often have more nutrients than the fresh variety and there is no wasting money by having them go off in the bottom of the fridge before you have a chance to eat them. Also you can save money by buying your meat in bulk and freezing it in meal sized portions.

4. It is too hard going on a diet when you have kids

Having kids is not an excuse as to why you can't eat right; instead they should be the reason why you start eating a healthy diet and start exercising. By providing healthy meals and setting an example to your kids about healthy eating, you can help prevent your kids from experiencing health problems when they get older and give them the gift of knowing the right amount of the right foods to eat for the rest of their lives.

5. Diets don't work

Diets don't work. I always put the weight straight back on. Does this familiar? You diet, you lose weight, you go back to eating normally and you put the weight straight back on plus some. This excuse is actually true - diets don't work, but healthy eating plans for life do work. Stop thinking about your new eating plan as a diet and think about it as eating for life. Therefore, you should never start a "diet" that you can not commit to for the rest of your life. Sound too hard? Choose a healthy eating plan that has a moderate amount of proteins, carbohydrates and healthy fats and learn as much as you can about portion sizes. By eating the right amount of the right foods, you will lose weight and get healthy.

Do you know anyone that has started a diet, lost the weight, and stuck to it for a minimum of 2 years? Do you think they see it as a 'diet' I bet not!

H2... OH!

Water and Weight Loss

We have all heard about the importance of drinking those eight glasses of water a day, but did you ever stop to think how drinking enough water might help your weight loss efforts?

Water Works!

Here is what one successful weight loss member says about drinking enough water and being at the top of her list of weight loss tactics:

"To me, the most beneficial weight loss strategy is drinking plenty of water. At least two liters a day makes a huge difference, and it's really not as hard as it seems after you do for a few days. Not only does it help shed pounds, but it improves your complexion, too!"

Another successful loser knows all about the wonders of water. She has found that water is a worthy adversary against cravings. When a visitor recently asked if drinking enough water is really all that important to weight loss, she had a lot to say:

"I have to personally vouch that it works. Not only is it completely healthy for you and something you should be doing already, it's also a natural appetite suppressant. In fact, many times when you feel hungry for a snack, you are really just thirsty. It's really easy to train your body to crave water instead of a candy bar; if I am tempted, I immediately grab my water and take a large gulp. I bring water to work in a large sport container so I can drink it there too. People call me the 'Water Girl!'"

Did You Know You May Be Dehydrated?

One of our modern comforts actually contributes to dehydration. Air conditioning and heating systems in offices, homes, even cars decrease the humidity in the air. On average, we lose about 10 cups of water a day. That's pretty scary when you realize that our bodies are predominantly made up of water!

The weather plays a big part in dehydration, too -- especially in these dog days of summer. It is extremely important to drink enough water when you are going to be playing, working or exercising outside in the heat. If you begin to feel weak or dizzy, then it's time to cool down. Nausea may indicate that you are beginning to experience heat illness. If your symptoms do not improve, or, they worsen, do not hesitate to seek medical attention. Heat stroke claims many lives every year, especially in unusually hot summers like the heat wave much of the U.S. is experiencing at the moment.

Being thirsty is not the only symptom of dehydration. In fact, once you actually feel physical thirst, you may be well on your way to dehydration. Other signs of dehydration are dark or foul-smelling urine. Even mild dehydration is not only perilous to renal (kidney) function, but it can also have other physical and psychological ramifications like severe headaches or decreased concentration levels.

WEIGHT LOSS BENEFITS OF DRINKING WATER

Drinking water and losing weight!

"Drink 8 glasses of water each day" is what we hear all the time but what weight loss benefits do we get from drinking water?

All functions within the body require the presence of water. A well hydrated body enables these functions to occur quickly and efficiently. All chemical processes involve energy metabolism and drinking plenty of water will make us feel more energetic and boost our [metabolic rate](#).

Water makes your metabolism burn calories 3% faster.

Drinking water is important if you're trying to lose weight, some studies have shown that thirst and hunger sensations are triggered together. If there is a slight dehydration the thirst mechanism may be mistaken for [hunger](#) and one may eat when the body is actually craving fluid. As most food contains some water, if one doesn't drink much they may be subconsciously driven to eat more to gain the necessary water supply however, you also gain the undesired effects of [increased calorie consumption](#). Drinking more water can help to prevent overeating and benefit [weight loss](#).

Importance of drinking water in the modern diet

So many new food product created today not only contain high amounts of energy from added sugar and fats, they also contain very little water. Foods today need to be stored for longer periods and foods with a high water content tend to spoil much faster, think about milk, yogurt, eggs, fruits and vegetables. It may be great to think that we can stock our cupboards full of all these tasty foods that last for months, trouble is, it means less water consumption from foods.

If a weight loss diet doesn't allow much food or if food consumption is mainly processed TV dinners, it may be necessary to drink even more water to help stop strong cravings for food.

How Much do I need to drink to benefit losing weight?

For the average person experts suggest getting at least 64 ounces of water daily or eight 8-ounce glasses. If you are on a diet to lose weight it is more important to consume more and keep drinking water throughout the day, unless you have any medical condition that doesn't allow much water intake. A good guide for daily intake is to drink 1 ounce of water for every 2 pounds of body weight. A 200 pound person should be drinking around 100 ounces (12.5 cups) of water in order the gain the benefits of increased energy and [metabolism](#).

If exercising is part of a weight loss program a bit more water should be included to account for water loss from sweating. Drinking water before, during and after [exercise](#) will keep energy levels high and help recovery after training.

Many people don't like drinking pure water. Gaining water from [eating fruit](#) high in water content is a great way to boost water consumption without drinking it directly. Fruit will also help fill up the stomach with low calories and gain tons of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients to increase vitality. In fact any food with high water content can boost water consumption, most foods high in water are naturally occurring, healthy foods, another reason to eat a healthy diet!

Health benefits of drinking water

- regulate appetite
- increase metabolism
- boost energy levels
- less water retention
- alleviate some headaches
- help reduce blood pressure
- help reduce high cholesterol
- ease joint pain
- decrease in risk of some cancers
- less chance developing kidney stones
- release toxic waste products
- improves skin

Water Tip: On feeling hungry, drink some water, 15 minutes before eating!

Cautions to consider

People with kidney problems or other conditions where fluid intake needs to be limited should follow their doctor's recommendations with correct sodium intake. One potential but rare side effect of fluid intake can be hyponatremia in which electrolytes become imbalanced. Always seek advice from your doctor before trying any new diet or changing eating / drinking habits!

WEIGHT LOSS BENEFITS OF DRINKING WATER

By Kim Beardsmore

If I were asked, "what is the most difficult thing many people find to do when they start a weight-loss program?", I would have to say right near the top of the list is this - they don't drink enough water!

Few people realize at first just how essential water is to the success of their weight-loss program. In fact, the essential place of water in our diet extends to everyone - whether they want to lose weight, gain weight or stay the same weight! We all know we can't live without water, but just why is it so important? Well there are many reasons. Read on and discover why water can help your loss weight and why it is your essential life-force.

Apart from 60-70% of your body being composed of water, water has an extensive range of functions essential to life.

- Assists digestion, absorption and assimilation of food. If you don't drink enough water you can't get the full benefit of nutrients in the food you eat.
- Assists excretion of waste from bowel and kidneys. If you don't drink enough water you get constipated and put your kidneys under stress.
- Regulates body temperature. If you don't drink enough water you compromise the evaporation process you skin uses to keep you cool.
- Your blood is 92% water. This is your body's transport system distributing nutrients around the body.
- Body secretions and digestive juices are almost entirely water.

Why should you drink water when you want to lose weight?

Water is a natural appetite suppressant . Do NOT underestimate the power of this statement. Lack of water can lead to over eating. Your brain does not differentiate between hunger and thirst. So, when you think you are feeling hungry, your body may in fact be signaling to you that you are thirsty! If you are not consuming enough water each day and you feel hunger pains, chances are, your body really is crying out for water. In many instances people will find what they thought were hunger pangs were in fact, satisfied by water. Try it! You have nothing to lose, except some weight. How do you know whether you are drinking enough water each day? Well the answer is not difficult.

The average person needs around 6-8 large glasses every day.

Well then, how should you drink the 6-8 glasses per day? The aim is to drink water consistently. If you drink too much all at once or too fast, it will simply pass through you, with little or no benefit to your body.

If you are someone who enjoys the 'taste' of water, then perhaps you could fill a 1 litre empty soft drink container with water the drink through it twice during the day. Room temperature or cold water, even warm as some people like - whatever you prefer. Place it on the desk at work in front of you as a constant reminder to sip continuously throughout the day.

Other people find they need a water 'diet' to help them keep on track. So for you, here is a program easily followed to ensure you are well hydrated every single day.

1. When you wake up you will often be thirsty because your body loses water while you are sleeping through breathing and perspiration. Drink a large glass of water with a slice of lemon for zing.
2. Drink another glass of water with breakfast or a cup of herbal tea before setting off the day.
3. Mid morning - snack on a piece of juicy fruit such as orange, watermelon, cantaloupe, honey dew. Have a glass of water and perhaps try a dash of herbal aloe juice which is wonderfully soothing to the digestive system.
4. Lunch - think of soup or have a glass of water before your meal, or perhaps a herbal tea.
5. Mid afternoon - While you are preparing your evening meal, drink a glass of water and snack on some crunchy fresh vegetables.
6. Evening - Sip a glass of water before your meal with a dash of your favourite fruit juice for flavour.
7. After dinner - before bedtime drink your final glass of water and sleep well!

A few changes will happen when you start out with your water program. Obviously you may find that you need to 'spend a penny' more often. Why? Because your body isn't used to being well hydrated.

There is absolutely no doubt about it. When you start drinking enough water regularly, there are great benefits. You may notice your skin significantly improve and even tired muscles will thank you. Many people find their energy is increased and constipation and headaches are reduced, as well as hunger pains.

Now here's the really exciting part - many people notice a reduction in weight and centimetres, as their body's water store becomes redundant and so decreases. If your diet has been one that did not provide you with adequate water, your body will have developed a pattern of storing water. It's part of the body's in-built survival mechanism - to store up the essential nutrients in short supply - just in case they aren't available in the future. So if you don't drink enough water, you are 'conditioning' your body to store water. And water is bulk and unwanted centimetres. It's so simple...drink water! 6-8 large glasses a day.

How do you know if you are not getting enough water each day? This is a really important question because so many of us have deprived ourselves of water for years that we have become accustomed to doing without the full amount of water our body requires and we don't recognize the symptoms of thirst.

- **The most common symptom is headaches.** A major function of water is to flush toxins from the body. Your brain is 75% water, so even being slightly dehydrated can cause headaches.
- **Poor concentration/fatigue.** If your body can't get rid of the toxins it will struggle and you will feel less energetic as your body diverts energy to deal with the toxins.
- **Constipation.** Your body will divert water to more essential functions and as a result your stools will be harder and more difficult to expel.
- **Reduced urine output or dark urine.** Did you know that up to 200 litres of water is passed through your kidneys daily? Without a fresh supply of water for the kidneys to filter waste products out of the blood, your urine will become darker.
- **Furry tongue or bad breath.** If you don't have enough water passing through the mouth to wash away food particles, bacteria can proliferate and result in that 'furry' feeling or bad breath.
- **Skin.** Your skin should feel elastic. When you pinch the skin on the back of your hand it should snap back instantly.

Final thoughts

Caffeinated drinks cause the body to lose water. They are what's known as diuretics as they cause your body to dehydrate. You will do your body an enormous favour by cutting back. For every cup of coffee you drink you will need to drink another TWO glasses of water to counter the diuretic effect. Explore the world of herbal teas instead, you may be pleasantly surprised!

Did You Know if You Drink Soda, You Should Drink More Water?

A friend on the program related to me that her coach told her group that each time she drank a diet soda that she should in turn drink two extra glasses of water (in addition to recommended daily amount). That's because drinking sodas and other beverages that contain caffeine actually contribute to dehydration. These types of beverages act as diuretics and cause us to empty our bladders more often.

Water Yourself

The good news is, water is available in lots of forms; you don't have to get bored with the water cooler at the office or by visiting the water fountain numerous times a day. Instead, keep a nice cold bottle on hand at all times. In the meantime, you can increase the amount of water you're taking in by eating foods that contain a high water content like fruits and vegetables.

You also should keep in mind the heat and humidity factors as well as your exercise and work habits. If you are exercising, you need to drink more water than the average person before, during and after your workout. If you are doing strenuous labor, or outdoors work in the heat, you will definitely want to go over the minimum as well. How much is enough? Six cups is okay; eight cups is great and 10 cups is super.

"But I Don't Like Water!"

Try adding lime slices, lemon juice, even peppermint to your water to add a little zing to it. You may find in time you simply develop a taste for plain water. Think back to when you were a kid. Were there a few vegetables you simply couldn't tolerate? Did you ever get caught hiding them in your napkin or trying to get the dog to eat it? Do you eat any of those vegetables now? Do you actually enjoy them? Over time you developed a taste for the offending veggie. Although most of us have grown very used to drinking our sodas, coffee or tea and the thought of drinking plain water makes us cringe, in time, you will find that you not only enjoy drinking water, you will crave it.

Another trick is to buy seltzer or carbonated mineral water in the beginning and add your citrus or mint flavorings to give the impression of soda. You could try the diet flavored waters like Clearly Canadian. After you have adjusted from having soda as a mainstay, you may gradually begin seeing that what you really want is the plain water and you can in turn give up the "zing" and the "fizz" of soda altogether.

Are You Hungry or Thirsty?

Many successful "losers" swear by using an ice-cold glass of water to curb their food cravings. If you don't believe it works, why not give it a try? When you feel the urge to splurge coming on, try downing an entire glass of water and see if your craving is still around afterwards. Try not to gulp all of it down at once, though. Sip it slowly and give your brain time to register the fact that you have just been hydrated.

If your craving has dissipated after you finish off that glass of water, then that just goes to show you weren't experiencing "true hunger." If you do feel actual hunger pangs at that point, by all means, eat. However sometimes when we think we feel hungry, we are actually thirsty. Our bodies are dehydrated and we get our "wires crossed" and start a feeding frenzy instead of giving our bodies what they really need -- hydration.

Fill 'Er Up

Second, another way drinking water may help you lose weight is by making you feel fuller. The trick here is to be consistent. Drinking one extra glass of water isn't going to help you feel satiated throughout the day. You've got to keep water on hand and cold, or else you probably won't keep the habit up. If you have access to a refrigerator at work, perfect. Put a gallon carton in the fridge in the morning and help yourself throughout the day. If you work at a place that has a water cooler, that's even better.

If you don't have a refrigerator or watering hole, why not carry one of the small picnic coolers and stock it with small bottles of water? Keep it next to your chair or under your desk. Other tricks include buying a sports bottle or one of those insulated mugs with a lid on it. Fill it up in the morning and refill it from the kitchen, break room or bathroom sink throughout the day.

A Final Word

So you want one more reason to drink water? Last but not least, some weight loss experts say that drinking ice cold water may even speed up your metabolism!

Drinking water is like any other healthy behavior: you have to make a habit of it in order to stick with it. If you can, then your general health as well as your weight loss efforts will benefit from the power of H2O!

PROTEIN: HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

Are You Getting the Right Amount of Protein?

High Protein Foods

What is protein? How much protein do we need? Is it possible to eat too much protein? These are important questions for people following a low carb way of eating, who usually are replacing part of their carbohydrate intake with protein.

What is protein?

Protein is one of the basic building blocks of the human body, being about 16 percent of our total body weight. Muscle, hair, skin, and connective tissue are mainly made up of protein. However, protein plays a major role in all of the cells and most of the fluids in our bodies. In addition, many of our bodies' important chemicals -- enzymes, hormones, neurotransmitters, and even our DNA -- are at least partially made up of protein. Although our bodies are good at "recycling" protein, we use up protein constantly, so it is important to continually replace it.

Proteins are made up of smaller units called amino acids. Our bodies cannot manufacture nine amino acids, so it is important to include all these amino acids in our diets. Animal proteins such as meat, eggs, and dairy products have all the amino acids, and many plants have some of them. Learn more about amino acids in our diet.

How much protein do we need?

Our protein needs depend on our age, size, and activity level. Next week you will learn your own personal numbers. Please use the following until next week. An average woman under 225 lbs should have 75-100 grams of protein per day. An average man under 325 should have 125-150 grams of protein per day.

What happens if we don't eat enough protein?

Unlike fat and glucose, our body has little capacity to store protein. If we were to stop eating protein, our body would start to break down muscle for its needs within a day or so.

Is it OK to eat a lot more protein than the minimum recommendations?

This is the crucial question for people on diets which are higher in protein than usual, as low carb diets tend to be. In a review of the research, the National Academy of Sciences reported that the only known danger from high animal protein diets is for individuals with kidney disease. They point out that increased protein could be helpful in treating obesity. There is also accumulating evidence that extra soy protein may help prevent osteoporosis.

Extra protein can be broken down into glucose in a process called gluconeogenesis. On low carb diets, this happens continually. One benefit of obtaining glucose from protein is that it is absorbed into the bloodstream very slowly, so it doesn't cause a rapid blood sugar increase.

BENEFITS OF SOY PROTEIN

If you are currently a vegetarian, or are even toying with the idea of becoming one, you will need to learn about the **benefits of soy protein** for a vegetarian diet. This is important because when you choose to delete meat and meat products from your diet, you are deleting a major source of protein.

If you don't provide your body with the right amount of protein it can lead to deficiency. Protein deficiency can lead to fatigue, insulin resistance, hair loss, loss of muscle mass, low body temperature, and even hormonal irregularities. In severe cases it can even be fatal.

Soy is one of the protein food sources available, and it is a great option for vegetarians because it is a natural source and comes in many realms.

Benefits of Soy Protein

The benefits of soy protein for a vegetarian diet are obvious, as it is the closest vegetable protein that resembles meat. There are also huge benefits for non-vegetarians when they include soy as part of their regular diet.

Soy protein can:

- aid in digestion
- provide structure within your body
- assist in everyday movement
- aid in the prevention of many types of cancer (breast, colon, prostate, uterine)
- aid in the prevention of heart disease
- assist in alleviating menopausal symptoms
- lower cholesterol
- help prevent osteoporosis
- help lower blood pressure

Uses of Soy Protein

Some foods that include soy protein are:

- whole soybeans
- soybean oil
- soy milk
- tofu
- tempeh
- miso
- soy flour
- edamame
- some sports bars
- breakfast cereals
- veggie burgers
- soy nut snacks

Some vegetarians choose to include soy powder when making common food recipes such as soups, stews, muffins, and other baked goods. You can also use soy milk to make pudding or milkshakes and tofu to make casseroles. There are now many cookbooks and recipes available that include soy protein as main ingredient.

For optimum benefit of soy protein in a vegetarian diet, soy should be used in moderation; in other words, don't overdo it! Soy protein should also be ingested as part of a food source as opposed to pill form. This is so that the soy can naturally interact with other foods to create the needed amino acids and enzymes.

What Foods Have the Most Protein?

Meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, legumes, and nuts all have substantial amounts of protein. Helpful information (*Shortcut: An ounce of meat or fish has approximately 7 grams of protein*):

Beef

- Hamburger patty, 4 oz - 28 grams protein
- Steak, 6 oz - 42 grams
- Most cuts of beef - 7 grams of protein per ounce

Chicken

- Chicken breast, 3.5 oz - 30 grams protein
- Chicken thigh - 10 grams (for average size)
- Drumstick - 11 grams
- Wing - 6 grams
- Chicken meat, cooked, 4 oz - 35 grams

Fish

- Most fish fillets or steaks are about 22 grams of protein for 3 ½ oz (100 grams) of cooked fish, or 6 grams per ounce
- Tuna, 6 oz can - 40 grams of protein

Pork

- Pork chop, average - 22 grams protein

- Pork loin or tenderloin, 4 oz - 29 grams
- Ground pork, 1 oz raw - 5 grams; 3 oz cooked - 22 grams
- Pork chop, average - 22 grams protein
- Pork loin or tenderloin, 4 oz - 29 grams
- Ground pork, 1 oz raw - 5 grams; 3 oz cooked - 22 grams

Eggs and Dairy

- Egg, large - 6 grams protein • Milk, 1 cup - 8 grams
- Cottage cheese, ½ cup - 15 grams
- Yogurt, 1 cup - usually 8-12 grams, check label
- Soft cheeses (Mozzarella, Brie, Camembert) - 6 grams per oz
- Medium cheeses (Swiss) - 7 or 8 grams per oz
- Hard cheeses (Parmesan) - 10 grams per oz
- Soy Milk - 9 grams in 8oz
- Herbalife Shake - 15 grams of protein

Beans (including soy)

- Tofu, ½ cup 20 grams protein • Tofu, 1 oz, 2.3 grams
- Most beans (black, pinto, lentils, etc) about 7-10 grams protein per half cup of cooked beans
- Soy beans, ½ cup cooked - 14 grams protein • Split peas, ½ cup cooked - 8

Nuts and Seeds

- Peanut butter, 2 Tablespoons - 8 grams protein
- Almonds, ¼ cup - 8 grams
- Sunflower seeds, ¼ cup - 6 grams
- Pumpkin seeds, ¼ cup - 19 grams
- Flax seeds - ¼ cup - 8 gram

Ask your coach about the great Herbalife Protein Snacks!

Keep a Food Diary

Health's Disease and Condition content is reviewed by our Medical Review Board

Keep it Real

A food diary is an excellent first step in assessing how you eat. It can also help you understand *why* you eat the way you do, which is often just as important when it comes to long-term weight management. The most important factor in keeping an effective food diary is to make it an honest one. A study showed that women in particular tend to fudge when keeping a food record -- coming up short by close to 1,000 calories wasn't unusual.

Why go to the trouble of keeping a food diary if you aren't going to be honest with yourself? Remember, no one has to see it but you, so do yourself a favor and stay truthful.

What to Include

Here are some ideas on what you can track with a food diary:

- [Fat](#) grams, [calories](#), carbs, protein, fiber, etc.
- Your [danger zones](#)
- Your [underlying reasons](#) for eating (aside from true hunger)
- Your appetite and/or [cravings](#)
- Your [portion sizes](#)
- Your feelings after eating

In order to track your fat and/or caloric intake, keep a nutrient guide book handy or use a food database like fitday.com

Using your computer or just an old-fashioned notebook, simply create a column for the name of the food and the required number of columns for each nutrient you will track. Divide the columns into sections according to meal and/or time of day so you can stay organized.

Do You have Portion Distortion?

If you're not ready to keep tally of your fat and calories yet, try just writing down how much you eat over the course of the day. (If you can't figure out where your extra weight is coming from, it may be that you are overeating and don't know it.)

You don't need to buy a scale or pull out measuring cups. Why overcomplicate it when you're just starting out? Use your own measurements (e.g. a salad bowl of popcorn, a fistful of M&Ms, a mug of hot chocolate) for now.

Remember, a rough estimate as you start keeping a record is better than not keeping one at all. (Something as simple as logging how many cans of soda you drink each day may well be an eye-opening experience.)

In a few weeks, when you've become accustomed to writing everything down, you'll be ready to start keeping a more in-depth record.

Get to the Heart of It

If you tend to binge due to stress, or you regularly give in to emotional eating, your food diary can help you cope

When you catch yourself eating when you're not hungry or giving into a binge, spend some time in reflection so you can figure out why it happened. Then -- as tough as this may be to admit -- write down why you ate (hunger, boredom, etc.) and how you felt afterward (guilty, deserving, etc.). You may find it helpful to record when you tend to overeat so you can plan to arrange other activities in the future that will take your mind off of food.

Here are some examples of questions you may want to answer when you eat for emotional reasons:

- How were you feeling before you ate?
- Did you feel [gut hunger](#)?
- Who were you with?
- Did you eat hurriedly or calmly?
- Can you recall everything you ate?
- Did you eat [normal portions](#)?
- Were you doing another activity (like [watching television](#)) while you were eating?
- How do you feel now (e.g. satisfied, healthy, guilty)?
- Overall, was this a positive or negative eating experience?

You will find writing down and acknowledging these questions and answers will go a long way in helping you understand and prevent emotional eating.

When you see everything you can do with a food diary, there's no reason not to do one! You don't have to wait for a special day or a special meal. Just do it.

HEALTHY BREAKFAST: FEEL GOOD AND CONTROL YOUR WEIGHT

