

FIND YOUR WEIGHT LOSS MATCH

Fad diets and working up a sweat haven't budged those kilos, but as Lorraine Sathicq finds out there's a solution that's just right for you

Shifting those extra kilos is as easy as eating less and exercising more, right? Maybe for some, but in reality most of us have a problem sticking to restrictive eating plans or finding the time to fit enough exercise into an already busy lifestyle. If it feels like you've tried all the latest diets and worked hard at the gym only to realise you haven't actually lost much weight, take heart because help is at hand.

CONSULT A DIETITIAN

The first thing a decent nutrition expert will tell you is to stop dieting, says Gabrielle Maston, clinical dietitian, exercise physiologist and founder of changingshape.net.au.

"An eight or 12-week eating plan will generally fail because these types of diets are unrealistic, often advising you to eat foods you wouldn't

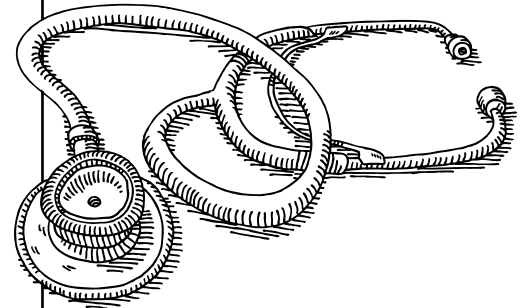
normally eat long-term," she explains. "It's much smarter to learn all you can about making healthy food choices so you can develop eating habits that will last forever."

You can find a dietitian at daa.asn.au. If you have a chronic weight-related health condition like diabetes or high blood pressure, ask your GP for a referral and Medicare will cover your first five visits.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you're constantly jumping from one diet to another with no sustainable results, or if you're confused by conflicting advice, a dietitian can help you sort fact from fiction.





GET A DOCTOR ON YOUR SIDE

Your GP can diagnose and treat the possible medical reasons for your weight-loss struggle, including hormonal problems like low thyroid function or polycystic ovarian syndrome, both of which can make it difficult to lose weight. “Your doctor knows your medical history and can tailor a plan to suit you,” says Queensland weight-loss GP, Dr Janet Fairweather. “If you need to access an allied health professional like a psychologist, dietitian or exercise physiologist, your doctor is ideally placed to coordinate the whole lot.”

With Medicare covering allied health referrals for certain people, asking your doctor about services that may help you lose weight could be much cheaper than using Google to find the right expert. Your doctor can also advise you about weight-loss medication and surgical options – but they are not for everyone and will usually be used as a last resort, says Fairweather. If you’re looking for a local GP with a special interest in weight management, visit doctoronyourside.com.au and check out their postcode search tool.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you suspect there might be a medical reason for your weight problems or you think a coordinated approach might work better for you, your GP is a great place to start.

SEEK A PRESCRIPTION FOR EXERCISE

So you were all keen for bootcamp, but then you hurt your knees in the first session? An exercise physiologist can create a fitness program that works around existing injuries and protects you from doing further damage.

Some people are 'non-responders' to exercise and don't find it helps them lose weight but for most of us, disappointing weight-loss results are caused by not working hard enough, says Maston. If you're trying to lose weight, you need to do more than 30 minutes of exercise a day. "Most people should aim for least 300 minutes a week, including

two sessions of full body-weight resistance training," she advises. "This is achievable even if you have injuries or a chronic illness."

IS IT FOR YOU?

If the one-size-fits-all approach to exercise has you dreading your next fitness class, an accredited exercise physiologist (AEP) might be just the thing. You may find that you don't even need a gym membership to get results. Find an AEP near you at essa.org.au.



SLEEP ON IT

If scientific research is anything to go by, sleep is every bit as important as diet and exercise for weight control, says Dr Carmel Harrington, author of *The Sleep Diet*. "The area of the brain that controls sleep also controls appetite and metabolism," she explains. "We know that not getting enough sleep not only increases the desire to eat but also decreases the metabolic rate, meaning that even if we eat less we will gain weight."

Sleep can affect your weight even before you're born. Studies show that babies born to women who are sleep-deprived during pregnancy are more likely to be overweight in adulthood.

IS IT FOR YOU?

It might be time to look at your sleep habits if you can't wake up without an alarm clock, you sleep in more than an hour on weekends or you often find yourself longing for pick-me-up snacks to boost your energy. Check out Dr Harrington's new book *The Complete Guide to a Good Night's Sleep*.



GET IN THE RIGHT HEADSPACE

Your emotions could have as much to do with your struggle with weight-loss as your diet and exercise habits, says Glenn Mackintosh, psychologist and founder of weightmanagementpsychology.com.au.

A psychologist who specialises in eating, weight and body image can help you deal with the issues that are causing you to sabotage your own best efforts. "It's great to enjoy eating for taste and pleasure, but eating is often a way to deal with uncomfortable feelings," he explains. "A psychologist can help you change the way you deal with these feelings and also address body image problems so that you feel better about your appearance and are more able to accept realistic weight-loss goals."

Treatment options may include cognitive behaviour therapy, emotional freedom techniques, and some psychologists also provide hypnotherapy for weight loss.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you can relate to comfort eating, yo-yo dieting or sporadic bursts of fitness enthusiasm, this is definitely worth a try. Find a therapist at psychology.org.au.

CONSIDER SURGERY

People with a BMI that puts them in the obese category (BMI of 30 or over) may benefit from surgical intervention, especially if their weight puts them at risk for serious health complications such as diabetes, high blood pressure, joint pain and heart disease, says bariatric surgeon Robert Wilson from the Sydney Institute for Obesity Surgery.

"Surgical options range from lapband procedures, which are adjustable and reversible, to gastric sleeve surgery, which removes most of the stomach

and is irreversible, to gastric bypass, a procedure that leaves you with a functionally smaller stomach and shorter small intestine," says Associate Professor Wilson.

A gastric sleeve or gastric bypass procedure produces quicker results but is reserved for people at the higher end of the obesity scale.

"Any obesity surgery should ideally involve consultation with a dietitian and a psychologist, as it involves diet and lifestyle changes," says Associate Professor Wilson. He adds that anyone considering

this option should be aware that regular medical follow-up is essential. For people having gastric surgery for obesity, this will mean check-ups for the rest of your life.

IS IT FOR YOU?

To find out your BMI, visit mydr.com.au and click on BMI calculator. If you feel that your weight is out of control and you're worried about complications like heart disease, diabetes or liver problems, you can find out more at sydneyobesity.com.au.