



## Minimise Your Waistline and Stress Levels

### 9 Easy Eating Tips

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*"Everything that goes into my mouth seems to make me fat, everything that comes out of my mouth embarrasses me"*

*Gabriel Garcia Marquez*

#### **Welcome to this month's ezine.**

Given the fact that our eating habits greatly impact our waistline and stress levels whilst also influencing our motivation and productivity levels, we are dedicating this month's ezine to showing you how to eat to get optimum results in these challenging areas. We provide you with not just the basic tips we all know we should be following but more importantly, "[The Science Behind The Tips](#)" and the relationship between food, stress and our bellies - namely one of balancing sugar levels.

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#### **Easy Eating Tips**

**Stress and fat around our waistlines are intrinsically linked. Here's how to manage both by balancing our sugar levels with our food choices and thereby controlling cortisol, adrenaline and insulin which can be responsible for increasing our waistline and stress levels. Balancing blood sugar levels is the key!**

1. Eat little and often; do not leave more than three hours between meals

2. Include protein, complex carbohydrates and good fat with every meal
3. Substitute refined carbohydrates for complex ones; i.e. white for brown
4. Cut sugar out completely if possible but if not replace with natural sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey and fruits
5. Control your sweet tooth by sprinkling with cinnamon
6. Snack wisely between meals on nut and fruits
7. Get back to basics; stick with whole foods and minimise processed foods
8. Take time out to eat your food- if your body is not relaxed it cannot digest correctly
9. Be prepared; ensure you do a proper weekly shop so you have correct items in cupboards and have pre-packs for your bag, office, car, desk etc.

In summary, following the above will balance blood sugar levels; this is key to motivation and productivity. Check out the science behind the tips below!

## The Science Behind The Tips

You have probably got the message by now - it's all about balancing blood sugars, which are intrinsically linked to our waistlines and stress levels which impact our motivation and productivity. Many of us in the modern world, live under constant stress. We not only cope with it but indeed thrive on a healthy amount of it, which is the way it should be.<sup>(1)</sup> What will be stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Also we all react to stress in different ways. However, if some of us feel we have a lot on our plate, in more ways than one and in addition if we are piling fat onto our waistlines then we need to take extra care - our body is sending us a message. For many of us, managing our stress levels and the flab around the middle has a lot to do with our stress hormones which are adrenaline, cortisol and insulin. These particular hormones are influenced by two things; 1) the food we eat (and how quickly it releases sugar into our systems) and 2) our daily reactions to stress.

In cave man days when we were under stress our adrenal glands released adrenaline and cortisol to enable us to fight or flee. Adrenaline makes us more alert and focused whilst the cortisol increases the level of fat and sugar in our systems to give us energy to do something physical. If we did something physical (fight or flee) all the energy generated by the cortisol would be used up and the body would be restored to normal. Generally as we don't fight or flee in the modern world, the cortisol or sugar and fat it generates is not used up. In fact, whilst the level of adrenaline will drop back to normal the level of cortisol will remain high for sometimes days on end. If the body is always under pressure and has constant high levels of cortisol then a few things may happen:

1. The body will think it needs constant fuel and as such fat will be stored around our waistline as it is close to our liver which can instantly convert it to energy to flee if needs be
2. The cortisol will be telling the liver to also release the fat and sugar back into the blood stream which is not being used. As such the levels of blood sugar will get high and trigger the pancreas to release insulin
3. The insulin tells the body to store the fat and also calls for something sweet and fatty like chocolate, white bread, caffeine and alcohol - anything high in sugar and calories. We've all had those cravings; some more than others! Then when we eat these sugary, processed foods, a vicious cycle starts to play out. Sugar is released quickly into the system, it is not being used so again it is being stored around the waist and insulin is being produced to deal with it. And so the cycle goes on. Whilst the body can adapt relatively well, if it is pushed too hard it can become insulin resistant and we can develop what is now being called metabolic syndrome or Syndrome X. Excess fat around our waistline is an obvious symptom; the less obvious is a pre-disposition to high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and even cancer. Fat around the hips and legs is nowhere near as dangerous as fat around the middle. (2)

So one way to manage the levels of adrenaline, cortisol and insulin in our bodies is to regulate the amount of sugar released into our blood streams. The 9 tips facilitate this and here's the facts behind them:

By eating little and often your body will not get stressed as it would do if you restrict calories which will give it the signal that there is a famine and as such it will release the stress hormones, (adrenaline and cortisol) and go into starvation mode and store fat. Blood sugar levels will also drop which again release adrenaline and cortisol and follow the cycle described above. Eating every three hours can reduce your body's damaging cortisol levels by 17% in just two weeks. (3) When we crash diet and lose weight quickly, we not only

repeat this cycle and put the weight back on quickly but indeed put more on - it's called yo- yo dieting. And remember it's the fat around the tummy, not the bum which causes the X Syndrome and all the associated health issues.

No point in eating little and often unless you are eating the correct foods. You have probably got the message by now - it's all about balancing the blood sugar levels.

As a rule of thumb, the more whole and less processed the food is, the less it will impact your blood sugar levels negatively. Some natural foods such as bananas, grapes and carrots will release sugar quickly into your system and as such have a high glycemic index (GIs). This doesn't mean they should be avoided completely. A banana is the lesser of two evils in that it is better for you than a bar of chocolate in terms of managing your sugar levels. Grapefruit, apples and pears have lower GIs. However, rather than try and remember all the GIs of different food stuffs there are a couple of rules of thumb which can be applied:

- Vegetables grown under the ground (carrots and potatoes) will have a higher GI (i.e. release sugar more quickly) than vegetables grown above the ground
- Anything white and processed will have a higher GI than non processed foods.
- If you want to eat freely and yet manage your blood sugar and energy levels, then combine low GI foods with high GI foods - this means that you will be bringing down the Glycemic Load. (GL) The simple way to do this is to have balanced meals; i.e. a little protein, (Nuts, seeds, eggs, fish, meat and chicken) and good fat (nuts, seeds, fish, vegetable oils) with every meal which also contains complex carbohydrate (brown breads, fruits and vegetables etc.)
- If you have that extra sweet tooth, cinnamon has been shown to be helpful as it assists in moving glucose into the cells and has been shown to lower glucose levels in Type 2 diabetes. It, like celery and lettuce, burns off more calories than it takes to eat them - it has a thermic effect (4).

"You Are What You Eat" is not really accurate; rather you are what you digest. So now that we understand the impact of stress on adrenaline, cortisol and insulin, we should think carefully before we grab lunch on the go again. To minimise our waistline and stress levels, it makes sense to sit down and eat food in a relaxed

manner. However like everything in life, it's about balance but if we fail to prepare ,we prepare to fail. That's why it is so important to do a planned weekly shop.

In short, if we have flab around the belly and our stress levels are high we need to be mindful about what we eat and practise the stress busting tips from our last ezine to minimise our wasitline and stress levels! Otherwise serious health issues such as diabetes, stroke not to mention cancer,exhaustion and burn out might be just around the corner. Not only will this affect our motivation and productivity in the short term, it will do lasting damage in the long term both on and off the job.

References:

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- (2) Dr. Marilyn Glenville - Fat around the middle - p 30 Kyle Cathie Limited 2006 - ISBN 1856266559
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- (4) Khan,A. et al 2003. "Cinnamon improves glucose and lipids of people with Type 2 diabetes" Diabetes Care , 26 12, 3215 - 3218"

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Kind regards,

The AFRESH Team

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