

## **Fat burns faster if you light a fire under it – how to keep your metabolism ‘firing’ to burn fat more effectively.**

Ever been told that your metabolism is ‘fixed’? That you were either born with a fast or slow metabolism and that you’re stuck with whichever one you got? Or that your metabolism slows with age? Do you really understand what your metabolism is?

Think of it this way – your metabolism is your body’s engine, and the foods you eat are:

- used for energy to fuel your engine, or
- stored as fat, or
- eliminated as waste.

There are generally three main reasons why you might carry more weight than you’d like:

1. You’re taking in more fuel (food) than your body can burn up and so the excess is being stored as fat.
2. You’re not moving your body enough to burn the energy you are taking in and have already stored.
3. Your metabolism has slowed to the point that, even though you may not be eating much, you are still holding weight.

Now, I know that item number three on this list is by far the most attractive reason to justify why we may be slow to lose weight. I know for myself, and from the majority of clients I saw in my clinics, that it is easier to believe that our metabolism is the problem, rather than that we are overeating or being under active!

The fact is that it is possible to speed up or slow down our metabolism at any age by adjusting the amount of exercise we do, the amount we eat and what we eat. Exercise is an obvious one – do more exercise, burn up more energy/do less exercise, burn up less energy. But would you believe you can actually slow your metabolism by reducing the amount you eat and speed it up by eating more? Before you reach for the Tim Tams though, yes, it does matter what you eat and when.

You see, just like we need to keep adding fuel to a fire to keep it burning strongly we need to keep giving our bodies regular good fuel to keep our metabolism firing along. And the reason for this is simple survival – if you reduce the amount of energy you are putting into your body, it thinks that you are experiencing famine conditions, so it hits the brakes on your metabolism to give you a greater chance of survival. And while this was the perfect physiological response in times when we had to go out hunting for our dinner, it’s not so great for our modern way of life. The key to speeding up your metabolism is to eat more frequently to keep the fire stoked. Five or six small meals a day is ideal (you can read more about the ideal eating plan in 7 Steps to Sanity®). And as well as eating more of the right foods more regularly, you can also supplement your diet with foods that have been shown to give the metabolism an extra boost. Try incorporating some of these into your daily diet:

**Soybeans** – are excellent to start with, make sure you go for the non-GM kind that you can buy in health food stores. They contain lecithin, which guards your cells against accumulating fat, and can help to break down already accumulated fat stores in your body. Try to have soy products about three times a week. If you are not into soy, buy lecithin granules and put them on your cereal instead.

**Garlic** – is one of my favourite foods on the planet. Natural garlic, preferably uncooked or very lightly cooked, not only has basic antibiotic and antioxidant qualities but it has also been known to help mobilise stored fats in the body.

**Chilli** – can enhance the way that cholesterol and fats are processed. Studies have found that capsaicin (an ingredient in chilli) works in two ways to reduce fat levels: it decreases cholesterol absorption by the body so that more is excreted in the faeces, and it increases the enzymes responsible for fat metabolism in the liver, so that more triglycerides (the hard insoluble fat) are secreted by the liver rather than accumulated in

the body.

**Vitamin C** – food experts at Arizona State University reported in 2006 that vitamin C in the blood is directly linked to fat oxidation, which is the body's ability to use fat as a fuel source both during exercise and rest. Vitamin C is found in foods like citrus fruits, berries, red capsicums and kiwi fruit, which are easy to add to your daily diet. Eat the whole fruit, instead of just sculling a big glass of juice so you also get the fibre to help the rest of your body as well.

**Green tea** – *researchers in Japan have discovered that the long-term consumption of tea catechins, found in green tea, is beneficial in offsetting the obesity-inducing effects of a high-fat diet, and that the effects could be attributed partly to the activation of hepatic lipid catabolism, involving the release of energy and resulting in the breakdown of complex materials. To tap into the fat-burning properties of green tea you need to consume around four lightly brewed cups per day.* I love green tea because it is also loaded with antioxidants that protect your body. In the hot weather I brew a jug in the morning and drink it iced throughout the day. Lightly brewed green tea counts as part of your daily water intake too.

I regularly get asked if there are any 'magic' foods that have negative calories – as in, they use more energy to digest than they contain. We'd all love that, but unfortunately the answer is no. There are however some foods that are extremely low in calories and very high in nutrients, so try adding some of these more regularly to your diet:

- Asparagus
- Beetroot (I love them grated raw onto a salad)
- Cabbage
- Brussels Sprouts
- Carrots
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Onions
- Tomatoes
- Dark leafy greens

Remember, it is the total amount of calories that you take in during the day, compared to what you burn up by moving your body that gives you the calorie deficit and associated weight loss. So to kick-start your metabolism, eat small, regular meals balanced with some protein, make your meals colourful and lively by adding chilli, ginger and garlic, and move your body (exercise) in some way every day – and over time, you will see your weight start to move in the right direction again.