

# Suggestions for Healthy Eating and Weight Management

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Between the ages of 40-60, most women will experience an average weight gain of 15 pounds with a redistribution of fat around the waistline. There are many ways we can change our lifestyle to avoid this natural tendency towards weight gain. Fat that accumulates around the waistline is more dangerous than fat in other places of the body. You will often hear it is better to be a pear shape than to be an apple.

As a guideline, the waist measurement in North American women should be less than 35 inches (40 inches in men) and an ideal waist to hip ratio of less than 0.7 (0.9 for men). Insurance companies commonly look at these measurements rather than BMI (Body-Mass Index) as a predictor of the long-term health of a client.

It is important to understand that a low weight does not always indicate healthy body composition. When trying to lose weight, it is important that your overall plan encourages weight loss while maintaining muscle and decreasing fat. Some diet plans, while providing weight loss, promote weight loss through loss of muscle. Quite often with these programs, fat is still retained. Remember, muscle weighs more than fat.

## Suggestions for Maintaining a Healthy Body Composition

### Sleep

Studies have shown that even with an excellent exercise and nutrition program, weight loss is not possible without a minimum of five hours of sleep each night. Seven to eight hours is suggested.

### Stress Reduction

In times of extreme stress, the body produces excess cortisol which triggers a decrease in the body's metabolism and the storage of fat. Yoga and meditation are two of the most effective ways to manage stress, however several vitamin and herbal supplements are also helpful. For more information, see our Adrenal Fatigue Handout on our website ([www.brantarts.ca](http://www.brantarts.ca)).

### Meal Plan/Food Choice

Ideally you should not go more than three hours without eating as the body interprets this as starvation and thus stores fat. Each meal/snack should include protein (which helps decrease fat storage) as well as low-glycemic index carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are composed of fruits, vegetables and grains. Low glycemic index (GI) carbohydrates produce only small fluctuations in our blood glucose and insulin levels. High insulin levels are produced in response to carbohydrates which are high in glucose and this promotes fat storage.

*the possibilities are endless...*

For example; sugar has a GI of 100, a white potato is 85 – compared to a sweet potato, which has a GI of 54. The key is to eat well-balanced small portions on a regular basis with a balance of protein, low GI carbohydrates and healthy fat. An example of a great breakfast is:

- Plain oatmeal (no sugar added)
- Low fat cottage cheese (protein)
- Blueberries (low GI carbohydrates)
- Glass of water (juice is very high in sugar and should be replaced with water with a slice of lemon or lime)

### Meal Replacement Bars and Shakes

As it can be difficult to prepare a well-balanced meal/snack 5-6 times daily (to maintain eating every 3 hours) meal replacement bars or shakes that contain a balance of low-GI carbs, protein, healthy fat and vitamins are a great option for the busy person. They increase metabolic rate and can be used to replace one or two meal/snacks per day. At Brant Arts, we carry the Metagenics line of UltraMeal Bars and Shakes which are well-researched for aiding weight loss and are considered a medical food.

### Exercise

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living recommends that you get in a total of 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day or almost every day. To lose weight, a combination of cardiovascular and strength training is recommended. As we gain muscle we automatically burn some fat.

### Hormone Balance

If you are experiencing unexplained weight gain with symptoms of: hair loss, brittle nails, fatigue and cold intolerance, it would be advisable to have your thyroid hormone levels assessed as these are all signs of hypothyroidism.

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