



COMMIT
TO LIVE FIT

THE AGE-OLD SECRETS TO WEIGHT LOSS

THESE DAYS WE KNOW MORE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF DIET AND LIFESTYLE ON OUR HEALTH THAN WE EVER HAVE BEFORE; SO WHY IS IT THEN THAT OBESITY, DIABETES, HEART DISEASE AND CANCER ARE ALL ON THE RISE? THE ANSWERS MAY WELL LIE IN THE HABITS OF OUR STONEAGE ANCESTORS.

QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY

The modern Western diet has resulted in a strange phenomenon – people who are overweight yet nutrient deficient! Modern farming methods, which are focused on quantity rather than quality, have led to a decline in the nutrient content of food. Deficiencies in these essential nutrients can contribute to weight gain because a body starved of nutrients will keep eating in the hope of obtaining them.

Take action: Eat food from organic and biodynamic farms, or your own garden, which generally produce food with higher nutrient levels.

Fruit and vegetables versus sugars and grains

The diet of our ancestors was much higher in vegetation with the bulk of their carbohydrate intake coming from vegetables. Today, however, much of our carbohydrate comes in the form of processed grains and sugars, which are stripped of valuable nutrients, often contributing to weight gain and obesity in two ways: firstly, we tend to consume more calories because the fibre that has been removed during processing is what would have made us feel full and triggered us to stop eating. Secondly, processed foods tend to be highly glycaemic, meaning our blood sugar levels spike, and then drop dramatically, making us think we need to eat again.

Take action: Eat more vegetables, at least three cups a day, or more if possible. Cut out sugars and processed carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta, white rice, most breakfast cereals, cakes, biscuits, sweets and soft drinks.

Omega-3 versus omega-6

Back then, although fat intake was higher it was the 'good' fats that made up the majority of their intake. Wild game, seafood and vegetation featured largely on the menu, which contributed to a higher omega-3 and lower omega-6 intake. Today, our high consumption of vegetable oils elevates our omega-6 intake, which promotes inflammation; a driver for many of the modern day diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Take action: Increase your intake of omega-3 fatty acids, found in oily fish, nuts, seeds and game meat such as kangaroo. Just as important is to cut your omega-6 intake by avoiding vegetable oils such as canola, sunflower, soy and corn oils. Check labels; you will be surprised how much of these vegetable oils you are unknowingly consuming!

Active versus sedentary

When we ask ourselves what the main difference between modern and tribal living is, the answer is simple. When we lived in tribes we were much more active. Some tribes have been reported to travel 60km a day, on foot, just to collect food. The strength we built from carrying and preparing food and shelter, along with the full body movement patterns required to throw things like spears and boomerangs made us leaner, faster and a higher energy-burning species than we are today.

Take action: When exercising for weight loss, choose exercises that will improve strength through full body movements. Keep moving between pushing, pulling and squatting (a personal trainer can help come up with the right exercises for you). Exercising this way will keep your heart rate up, promote fat burning while training and enhance energy use for up to 24 hours after exercise. Remember, the higher the percentage of muscle in the body the more energy you use, even at rest. Be more active, get off the couch and get out of the office at lunchtime. Your results are often largely dependant on what you do in your spare time!

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If you like the concepts mentioned here, then *40 Days as a City Caveman* is a book you'll want to read. To win a copy email editor@fitnessfirst.com.au and in 50 words or less tell us why you think you should return to living like a caveman. Entries close 6 February 2009

