

Developing Healthy Habits

A newsletter with your health in mind

The Battle with Middle Aged Spread

By Linda Page, Ph.D., Traditional Naturopath



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Nearly everyone faces a disconcerting body thickening and slow rise in weight in their 40s, even people who have always been slim, who eat a healthy diet, and who exercise regularly. In fact, body fat typically doubles between the ages of 20 and 50. Sometimes diet and exercise really isn't enough!

What's Happening to Our Bodies?

For women, a major calorie-burning process grinds to a halt after menopause. The metabolic rise in the last two weeks of the menstrual cycle accounts for 15,000–20,000 calories per year. Those calories really start to add up when the menstrual cycle stops. Further, women tend to develop more abdominal fat as estrogen levels are reduced. For men, lower testosterone levels caused by andropause leads to a decrease in muscle mass and an increase in fat storage. Research shows that with age, men burn less fat during exercise, so older men actually need to work out longer to lose weight!

Healthy lifestyle changes are critical to achieve long-term weight loss goals, but it often takes more at mid life. Whole herbs are an ideal choice for weight loss after 40. They are not habit forming like stimulant anti-obesity drugs, and they support natural weight loss processes, like thermogenesis.

Thermogenesis' Role in Weight Loss Over 40

Thermogenesis is all about fat burning. About 75% of the calories you eat work to keep you alive and support your resting metabolic rate. The balance of calories are stored as white fat,

or burned up by brown adipose tissue (brown fat), your body's premier fat burning factory. The more active your brown fat is, the more efficient your thermogenesis is, and the easier it is to maintain an optimum weight. Differences in brown fat activity explain why some people can overeat and stay slim, while others put on the pounds even though their diet and exercise plan is sound.

Starting in our early 40s, a genetic timer begins to slow down the thermogenic mechanism. Instead of calories being burned off, more of them get stored as white fat, leading to weight gain, especially around the middle. In addition, some people are simply not born with enough brown fat. These people gain more weight at middle age because the little brown fat they do have is reduced even further. Nature in her wisdom provides a solution. You can reactivate your brown fat activity after 40, and using thermogenic herbs is a key.

Fat Burning Herbs - Good News/Bad News

Most of us have heard of the herb, ephedra as a thermogenic aid to stimulate weight loss. Unfortunately, misuse and abuse of ephedra in highly concentrated, chemical ephedrine products has led to cardiovascular side effects and health risks for consumers. Today, ephedra is banned from use in dietary supplements in the U.S. But, ephedra is not the only herb that stimulates brown fat activity. Green tea, mustard seed, cinnamon and ginger are a few other thermogenic herbs that you can use without the side effects or health risks.

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As a traditional herbalist, I only formulate with whole herbs, because they are much less likely to produce side effects or interactions than standardized herbs or highly concentrated herbs. Further, whole herbs in combination offer the advantage of addressing multiple body systems and needs. For "after 40" weight loss concerns, I combine thermogenic whole herbs with herbs that control appetite and sugar cravings, and herbs that relieve bloating. Whole herbs support the whole person.

More Calcium = Weight Loss Over 40

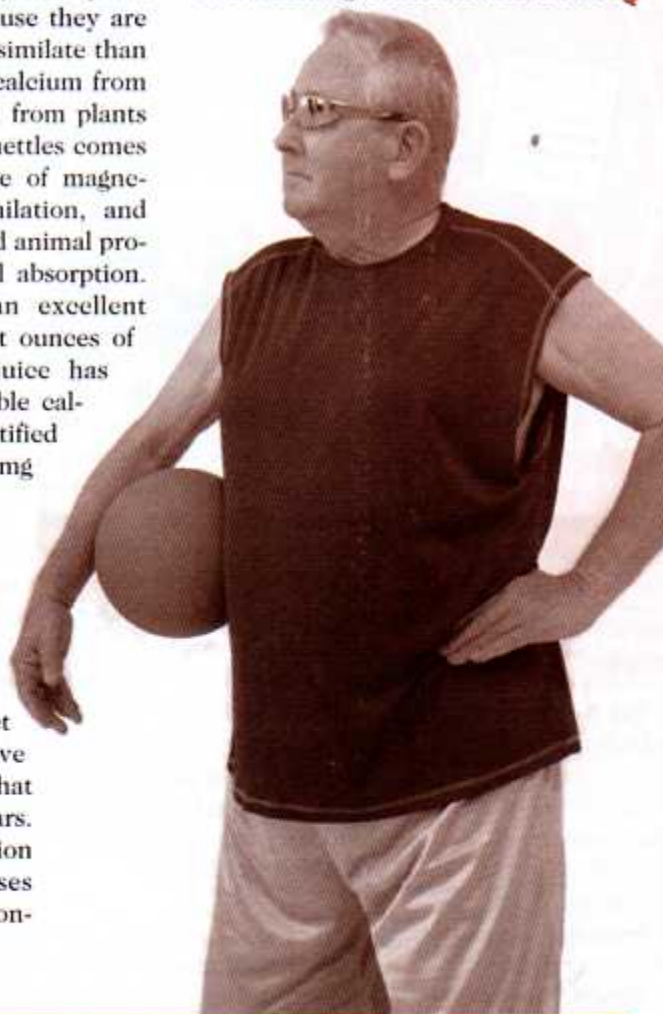
Recent research has revealed a new diet fact: calcium can help you lose weight as you grow older. People who are 40 or older on weight control diets lose weight if they have enough calcium, but don't lose weight if calcium levels are low. I prefer plant sources of calcium because they are easier for the body to assimilate than oyster shell calcium or calcium from dairy products. Calcium from plants like kelp, oatstraw and nettles comes with the proper balance of magnesium needed for assimilation, and without the concentrated animal protein that offsets mineral absorption. Carrot juice is also an excellent source of calcium. Eight ounces of fresh, organic carrot juice has 300-400mg of bioavailable calcium. Eight ounces of fortified milk only has about 250mg — with low assimilation.

A Hot Seaweed Bath Raises Metabolism and Releases Trapped Fats

Taking a hot seaweed bath is another easy yet surprisingly effective weight loss technique that I've been using for years. The electromagnetic action of the seaweed releases water retention from con-

gested cells, and dissolves fatty wastes through the skin, replacing them with important minerals like potassium and iodine through osmosis. Iodine boosts thyroid activity, so food fuels can be used before they turn into fatty deposits. Taking a hot seaweed bath once or twice a week stimulates lymphatic drainage and fat burning so you can keep off excess weight, reduce cellulite and rid your body of toxins. Try it for yourself. It really works!

Losing weight at mid life does present new challenges, but I've found that once the body adjusts to its new hormone levels, weight gain stabilizes, and becomes more manageable. Whole herbs can help you get over an "after 40" weight loss plateau, and have the added benefits of improving body chemistry and reestablishing better metabolic rates.



Bio:

Dr. Page is an adjunct professor at Clayton College of Natural Health. She is a member of The American Naturopathic Medical Association, The American Botanical Council, The Herb Research Foundation and The Natural Products Association.

The Best Protection Under the Sun



By: Kimberly Day

Ah, June...the days of summer brides, trips to the zoo, lazy afternoons, and eating ice cream on your front porch. For many people, June also signals the beginning of the tanning season—or the burning season for some people.

This year, make a point to enjoy the health benefits of the sun safely, while also avoiding the hidden dangers of sunscreen itself. Let's first take a look at the how-to's of choosing external sunscreen, as well as the best way to protect yourself from the inside too.

Optimal External Coverage

When choosing a sunscreen, the first things you should look for is the skin protection factor (SPF), as well as the spectrum of coverage that the product offers. The SPF indicates how long the product will protect you from getting sunburned. To determine this, you first need to know how quickly you burn if your skin is not protected. For argument's sake, let's say you burn within five minutes of being in the sun. If you use a sunscreen with an SPF of 20, multiply your five minutes by the SPF of 20 for a value of 100. That means that you can use that sunscreen and stay in the sun for 100 minutes (one hour and 40 minutes) before you burn.

When talking about the spectrum of coverage, you want to know if the sunscreen absorbs/blocks UVA or UVB rays. UVA rays are more likely to lead to premature aging of your skin, while UVB rays are more likely to cause sunburn. For this reason, your best sunscreen option is to find a product that offers "full spectrum" protection from both UVA and UVB rays.

Sun-Scare Ingredients

You should also take care to avoid any potentially harmful ingredients that may be great at protecting you against damage

Bio:

Kimberly Day has written for several health newsletters and magazines, and is currently working with Dr. Susan Lark on a series of books on women's health. Additionally, she is working on a sugar-free ice cream cookbook, and pens a free food eLetter entitled *Food for Thought: Quaffs and Cuisine for Decadent Health*. If you have any questions or would like to be added to her eLetter list, email her at writing4days@yahoo.com

from the sun, but are causing damage internally. There are several questionable ingredients, but the five worst offenders are para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA), including octyl-dimethyl PABA; benzophenones, (especially benzophenone-3); cinnamates, (namely octyl-methoxycinnamate or OMC); homosalate; and 4-methylbenzylidene camphor (4-MBC).

PABA is one of the most common ingredients in sunscreen, but can cause an itchy rash for many people. If you have sensitive skin or if you get a rash after applying some skin products, avoid any product containing PABA.

The next four ingredients (benzophenone-3, OMC, homosalate, and 4-MBC) have all been found to contain estrogenic properties when absorbed through the skin. This means that they not only disrupt hormone production, they can also affect brain development and reproductive function.

Internal Sun Protection

While protecting yourself on the outside, you should also take care to support your skin from the inside with antioxidants such as vitamins C, E, and vitamin A (as beta-carotene). Research studies have shown that these antioxidants will provide you with added protection to prevent UV-light induced inflammation, dryness, and damage to your skin.

Most experts agree that taking 1,000-3,000 mg of vitamin C a day, in divided dosages, 1,000-2,000 IU of vitamin E daily, and 15,000-25,000 IU of beta-carotene per day will not only support healthy sun protection, but will improve the overall health of your skin.

When it comes to sun protection, you cannot be too cautious. By implementing these suggestions, you'll be well-prepared for the beautiful summer months ahead! ☺

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