healthy weight loss

Stress and body fat

Turn on any television or radio these days and you are guaranteed to hear the latest news on war and terrorism. It’s no wonder that stress is on everybody’s mind these days—but what about their bodies? More and more research confirms how detrimental chronic stress can be to our health. But what you may not realize is that chronic stress often shows itself in weight gain—primarily around the midsection.

How stress contributes to weight gain
Statistics show that during wartime, the average person’s waistline expands almost as much as their stress levels. More of us are glued to the television, right alongside our trustworthy companions—potato chips, cakes, pies, ice cream, and whatever other food makes us feel safe and secure.

When serotonin levels are low, we invariably experience insatiable cravings for sweet and starchy foods. This is a form of self-medication in times of stress. Your brain realizes—even if you don’t—that the minute these high-glycemic foods hit your system, your pancreas will start producing gobs of its storage hormone, insulin. And insulin elevation almost always means a temporary boost in your feel-good serotonin levels.

The stress-bellyfat connection
Excess cortisol production—along with insulin—stimulates the activity of the most powerful fat storage enzyme in the body—lipoprotein lipase (LPL). LPL is so good at fat storage that it is deemed by obesity researchers as the gatekeeper of fat storage. Under excessive stress, LPL levels are concentrated around the abdominal region, which is one of the reasons our waistlines grow so easily when we are stressed out.

Physically managing stress

Herbs: St. John’s wort, skullcap, ginseng, valerian and borage juice all help the body deal more effectively with stress.

Nutrients: Supplement with a vitamin B complex, vitamin C, calcium and magnesium.

Homeopathic remedies: Try Gelsemium, Argentum nitricum, Ignatia, or Aconite.

Touch: Physical contact is a vital part of sustaining balance during stress. Consider more frequent touch with your children, your mate or your friends. Massage is another great stress reliever.

Exercise: Exercise reduces stress by invigorating the body and increasing circulation.

The take-home message here is: learn to approach everyday life with some degree of calm and realize the power of your perception on health, happiness and your waistline.

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