

Slim down at any age

Whether you're out every night or juggling family, it's possible to stop the kilo creep – and keep it off. Here's how to overhaul your diet and exercise in every decade.

It doesn't matter if you're 25 and debating whether to buy that second Mojito after work, or 55 and dealing with menopause – there are always going to be roadblocks standing between you and a healthier life. The good news? With just a few easy adjustments, you can not only achieve balance, but also pave the way for shedding unwanted kilos for good. "It's possible to get fit and lose weight whatever your age," says fitness editor, Martha Lourey-Bird. "If you're armed with the right knowledge, you can keep the weight off whether you're in your 20s or your 60s." Read on to learn how.

The 20s

The challenge: *Fitting healthy habits into a packed social calendar*

Your 20s are usually a whirlwind of socialising, making new friends and

living away from home for the first time, all of which are new and exciting. But a busy social life often includes eating and drinking out, which can easily play havoc with your weight.

Nutrition advice: *Adopt a slimmer eating mindset that lasts for life*

Start making smarter choices in your 20s. "Alcohol is packed full of calories," says accredited practising dietitian Alison Miles. "Choose lower-calorie options, such as vodka and fresh lime and soda instead of beer, and have water between each drink so you're consuming less." If you're eating lots of takeaway food, try and reduce your calorie intake by choosing healthier options. "If you're eating pizza, ditch the fatty meats and go for the veggie option," advises Miles. Although it can be difficult to maintain your motivation when you're strapped for both time and money, remember that the eating precedent you set in your 20s can last for the rest of your life.

Exercise advice: *Push your fitness limits*

Getting fit in your 20s is about pushing your limits, says Lourey-Bird. "This is the age when you can be as extreme as you like," she adds. "Try surfing, touch football, dancing or rock climbing – all great fun and very physical activities. You can enjoy them as social activities with friends and still burn calories."

REAL-LIFE READ: *"I lost 8 kilos – and saved money – by cooking more"*

Teacher Vicky Walker, 28, put on almost 10 kilos at the start of her 20s. "I was partying a lot and never cooked," she recalls. Unhappy with her weight gain, she cut down on alcohol and started making batches of veggie curry and bolognise on the weekends to freeze, then eat during the week. "I lost 8 kilos – and saved a lot of money, too!"



The 30s

The challenge: *Juggling work and family with healthy eating and exercise*

With work commitments, a partner, kids and still trying to make time for yourself a priority during your 30s, many women find it all too easy to let their health take a backseat. And the result can often be unintended kilos.

Nutrition advice: *Plan ahead, stay satisfied*

“The key to juggling a busy life with eating a good, healthy diet is being organised,” says Miles. “Always keep

healthy food at work to avoid buying greasy takeout for lunch. Vegetable soup and wholegrain bread is a great option. Eat regular small portions to keep your metabolism going. Keep nuts or dried fruit in your desk drawer so you’re not tempted by the vending machine.” Lourey-Bird suggests staying accountable by keeping an exercise and food diary. “Write down what you’re planning to eat and how you’re planning to include movement in your day,” she suggests. “When it’s written down as part of your daily to-do list, you’re more likely to complete it.”

Exercise advice: *Embrace interval training*

Interval training is fantastic for people who struggle to schedule in exercise. In

fact, women who do interval training for 20 minutes lose three times as much weight as those who exercise at a regular pace for 40 minutes, according to a University of New South Wales study. For a fast and effective interval workout, Lourey-Bird suggests running for one minute, then walking for four minutes, over a thirty minute period.

REAL-LIFE READ: *“Boot camp brought balance to my life”*

Communications manager Jane McMillan, 36, admits to rarely exercising while working in a demanding job. “It was easy to make excuses to skip the gym. Work always came first.” After acknowledging that she needed to increase her fitness, McMillan signed up for weekly boot camp. “Because I’d paid for it, I was committed. Exercise makes me feel I have balance in my life.”

Spread the word *Sharing your intention with friends and family to live a healthier life can improve your chances of success by 33 per cent, according to study by the Dominican University of California.*

The 40s

The challenge: *Overcoming a sluggish metabolism for good*

As your metabolism naturally begins to slow down in your 40s, it's more important than ever to adopt healthy eating and exercise routines. And there's no reason why you can't look and feel better at this time of life.

Nutrition advice: *Rethink snacking habits*

In your 40s, you burn around 100 fewer calories a day than you did in your 20s, which means re-thinking the way you eat. "Keep calories and weight down by choosing foods high in water, such as vegetables, salads and soups," advises Miles. Psychologist Sally-Anne McCormack also stresses the importance of not resorting to comfort or stress eating during your 40s, when your body is less capable of bouncing back from eating binges. She suggests, "Fight stress by making sure you grab 20 minutes every day to do something you love, whether that's taking a walk, having a bath or doing the crossword. Time out each day can dramatically de-stress you," says McCormack.

Exercise advice: *Boost lean muscle mass*

"Your muscle mass declines in your 40s, making it harder to maintain the same speed of metabolism," says Lourey-Bird. "Resistance work, such as lifting light weights, boosts muscle mass and keeps you burning calories. Pump classes are a great way to do this. Remember, you can also use your own body for resistance training; doing push-ups, lunges or sit-ups at home in the lounge room is a great start."

Kilo creep

The average Australian woman gains between 0.5 kilos and 1 kilo a year between her 20th and 40th birthday, according to data from the Australian National Health Survey. This is caused by an energy imbalance of just 100 calories a day.

REAL-LIFE READ: *"I finally put myself first and shed over 25 kilos!"*

"In the past, I was so concerned with my family being happy and healthy, I forgot about myself," says Narelle Dove, a 40-year-old doctor and mum of three. "As a result, I put on 25 kilos. When I joined Weight Watchers, I learnt I could put myself first. I started eating better and exercising and lost the 25 kilos for good. These days, I'm slimmer, healthier and happier, and this has made me a much better mum and wife."

The 50s

The challenge: *Countering the effects of shifting hormones*

If you're experiencing weight gain in your 50s, there's a good chance the culprit comes down to your hormones. "Your body produces less oestrogen, which allows more fat to be laid down," explains Dr Cate Lombard, director of the healthy lifestyle program at Melbourne's Jean Hailes Foundation.

Nutrition advice: *Eat oestrogen-rich foods*

Although Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can help fight the side effects of changing hormones and menopause, including sweating, hot and cold flashes and mood swings, plant oestrogens are also believed to replace some of the oestrogens your body is no longer producing. "Your body can get these plant oestrogens by eating soy products, olive oil and





cashew nuts,” says Miles. “Try a stir-fry with tofu, vegies and some nuts thrown in at the end.” Need more motivation to eat well? “Think about the menopause symptoms this sort of diet could help to ease, such as hot flushes and weight gain,” says Miles. “When you notice a difference in your body, that becomes the biggest motivator possible.”

Exercise advice:
Fight osteoporosis with weekly resistance training

“Exercise is one of the best things you can do to counteract menopause symptoms,” advises Lourey-Bird. “Weight-bearing exercise at this age will also help to protect against osteoporosis and a decrease in bone density. Do a mix of walking, jogging or dancing for best results. You’ll feel fitter, happier and more energetic.”

Don’t forget Want another reason to keep weight off once you hit your 40s? Avoiding obesity in middle age results in a lower risk of Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia, according to a recent Swedish study.

REAL-LIFE READ:
“I gave my body the kickstart it needed”

Six years ago, when business owner Susie Baalele hit 50, she was forced to admit that the kilos had crept on. “I had never worried about my weight before,” she says. “But suddenly my body was changing. I started to exercise with my husband, running and doing push-ups on the beach. It was just what I needed and I lost 8 kilos.”

The 60s

The challenge:
Taking control of future health

Women over the age of 65 are more likely to develop high blood pressure than men, according to recent research from the Queensland University of Technology. But it’s possible to prevent high blood pressure, as well as that other precursor to heart disease – high cholesterol – with diet and exercise.

Nutrition advice:
Eat more heart-smart foods

“Avoid foods high in saturated and trans fats, such as butter, chips and cakes,” says Miles. These foods are major contributors to weight gain, and, in turn, to causing lifestyle diseases. “Instead, eat foods high in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated

fat, such as oily fish, oats and nuts. Wholegrains and beans can also reduce cholesterol. To reduce your blood pressure, avoid too much salt and alcohol,” advises Miles. Keep your health in focus by reminding yourself that this isn’t just about improving your diet, but also your quality of life.

Exercise advice:
Get active, feel stronger

“As you get older, it’s even more vital to include regular exercise in your life to keep weight down and your health in check. Do physical activity that you enjoy and gets you out of breath, such as tai chi, ballroom dancing and vigorous housework,” suggests Lourey-Bird. “Doing these at least three times a week will help you stay strong, active and healthy into your 60s and beyond.”

REAL-LIFE READ:
“A health crisis helped me start regular exercise”

Retired teacher Janet Barnes, 62, had always felt relatively healthy, so was shocked when her GP told her she had high cholesterol and high blood pressure. “He suggested trying to lower them naturally before going on medication,” she recalls. Although exercise had never been part of her life, Janet started to be more active. “I discovered I really enjoyed swimming,” she says. “Then I started going to yoga with a friend. I enjoyed these so much they didn’t feel like exercise, and I started to lose weight without even realising. In two months I’d lost 4 kilos. I went back to the doctor and both my blood pressure and cholesterol were back at a healthy level.” WWW