

Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions for Weight Loss

For many, weight loss is a long-standing item on our list of New Year's resolutions. We will try everything including home workout videos to cutting out entire food groups from our diet to get rid of extra pounds. But, what about metabolism? Could a "slow metabolism" be holding you back from reaching your goal? The short answer is it could be influencing your weight—along with many other important factors.

What is metabolism?

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), metabolism represents the chemical changes in the body that create the energy and substances you need to grow, move and stay healthy.

A "slow" or "low" metabolism indicates you are burning fewer calories to produce energy as compared to a normal functioning metabolism, which could make it harder to lose weight and keep it off. Your gender, body composition, age, daily activity and genetics can all play a role in how your metabolism functions. If you suspect you may have a slow metabolism, talk to your doctor. A health condition could be to blame.

Other Factors Impacting Your Weight

Many factors could contribute to weight gain or difficulty to lose weight, such as not getting enough sleep, eating too many calories, taking certain medications, little physical activity and, of course, genetics.

Here are other important health factors that could be impacting your weight. As always, talk to your doctor if you have any concerns.

- **Thyroid**—a butterfly-shaped organ in the middle of the neck, your thyroid produces thyroid hormones (T4 and T3) which play a significant role in metabolism and energy regulation in the body. If there are too many or too little thyroid hormones, the metabolism of your entire body is impacted. Abnormal levels of thyroid hormones could occur by autoimmune disease of the thyroid such as Hashimoto's or Graves diseases—which affect the entire thyroid gland or due to a thyroid nodule or tumor.

- **Adrenal Gland**—produces several hormones, one of them cortisol. If the adrenal gland starts producing high levels of cortisol for a long period of time it causes a rare disease called Cushing's. Some hallmark signs of Cushing's is central obesity, round face and purple stretch marks.
- **Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)**—set of symptoms due to elevated androgens in females. Signs include irregular periods and hirsutism (excess of facial or body hair). It is frequently seen in association with insulin resistance and obesity. PCOS can lead to an increased risk for diabetes and heart disease.
- **Metabolic Syndrome**—a clustering of abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, high blood sugar and high triglycerides. Metabolic syndrome is associated with cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Some statistical data indicates that up to 25% of the adult population may have it.
- **Insulin Resistance**—a pathological condition in which cells fail to respond normally to the hormone insulin. Insulin resistance is considered a component of metabolic syndrome. Risk factors include obesity and a family history of diabetes. Insulin resistance can be improved or reversed with lifestyle approaches, such as exercise and dietary changes.

Eating healthy foods can help maintain your weight, support heart health and prevent diabetes. Your diet should include:

- **Vegetables.** Leafy greens like spinach and non-starchy veggies like peppers are high in fiber and have very little effect on your blood sugar levels.
- **Nuts and seeds.** These promote weight loss and have anti-inflammatory effects that may prevent insulin resistance.
- **Beans.** Lentils, beans and other legumes are a great source for carbohydrates.
- **Fresh fruits.** Three servings a day of fresh fruit can decrease your risk of diabetes. In addition to being rich in fiber and antioxidants, fruit can help crush your cravings for sweets.

Meet Dr. Svetlana V. Shifrin-Douglas



Svetlana V. Shifrin-Douglas, MD, earned her medical degree from State Medical Institute of Khabarovsk in Russia. She completed her residency in internal medicine at Harrisburg Hospital in Harrisburg, PA, and a fellowship in endocrinology at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, PA. She is fluent in English and Russian.

Schedule an Appointment

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