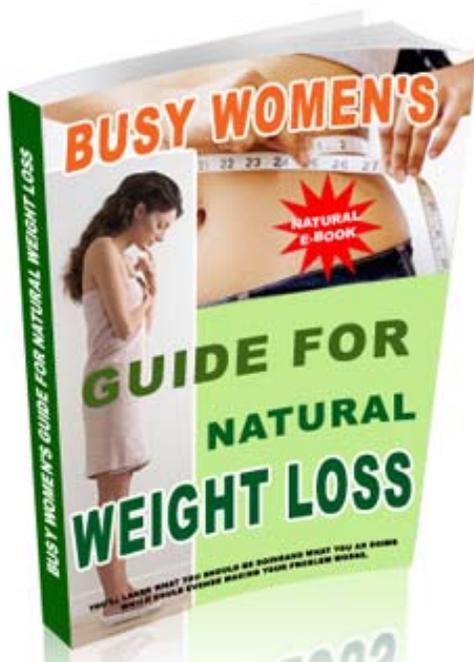


Busy Women's Guide for Natural Weight Loss



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I claim no ties to the medical profession, or even to the health and fitness profession. I'm not a doctor or even a health professional. I am merely someone who has endured the trials and tribulations of weight gain and weight loss for most of my life.

As such, any advice or information contained within these pages are solely my findings and experiences. Before you begin on any weight loss regime or routine, you are strongly urged to consult with your primary medical practitioner or care giver.

Forward

Weight loss. Hmm...that's a familiar theme. It doesn't seem to be something that many of us can avoid. Wherever we go, diets, foods, exercise, weight loss or weight gain seems to be in our faces. We just can't escape it.

Many of us have to deal with weight gain issues at some point in our lives or other. Even if it is only to lose a few pounds or inches off our waist lines, or even if it is only to become fit and healthy, we would have looked at our options for shedding excess weight.

Speaking for myself I can say that I have been on a diet or weight loss plan for most of my life. It has only been very recently that I have managed to contain my weight gain problem and also stop the constant yo-yo dieting which was a constant part of my life.

My secret was not really a secret per se. It is merely an idea which has been around almost since the dawn of time, and which most of us tend to ignore in favor of fad diets and fad gadgets which help us lose weight.

I finally wized up and realized that the only weight loss plan that would work for me would be the sensible, no-nonsense approach of having a well-balanced diet plan.

No cutting out carbs or eliminating them completely, no eating of only one type of food group to the detriment of other foods, and definitely no diet pills or anything along those lines. I plain and simply changed my lifestyle to become a healthier one.

It took time to do this however, it wasn't something that I managed to do overnight, that would have been an impossibility with the grueling schedule I had. I barely had time to eat a good meal let alone even *think* of having one.

But once I finally figured out for myself what I needed to do to lose the weight, what I needed to do to keep it off, and where I was going wrong all these years, it was simply a matter of implementing it into my life.

Or rather, once I realized all these things for myself, it was simply a matter of going about making small and gradual changes in my lifestyle to help me achieve my goals.

It took me well over a year to do this successfully, but then again, I did begin with a goal of nearly eighty pounds to lose.

To help me on my way, and to keep my spirits up through what I knew would be trying times, I went about changing things in a manner which would allow me to at least lose some weight to begin with, so that I would not become disheartened.

And this is really where my plans worked for me, because despite the fact that I had barely enough time for myself, I managed to change things around so that I was eventually the winner, and all without the normal discouraging lapses I suffered during my other attempts at weight loss.

Before we proceed any further though, I would just like to state that I am not a qualified practitioner of medicine, nor am I a dietician, a fitness coach or a nutritionist of trained, qualified or otherwise.

All the advice and information contained within the pages of this book are simply my own findings and experiences. They are not scientific evidence, nor are they exact guides to losing weight.

I strongly urge anyone who is seeking to lose weight, to consult with their doctor or other such person before proceeding on a weight loss course.

For the busy woman

You might be busy, and like me, have time enough for yourself only to sit down for a second or two to catch your breath. But if you are serious about losing weight, and since you are reading this book I will assume that you are, you need to look at how to go about changing things so that you can lose weight more easily.

There are one or two things that you will need to come to terms with before losing weight, and it is these things which will ultimately help you to lose the weight and keep it off.

I have gone through these in more detail throughout the book, and hopefully you will find these pointers to be of help to you in figuring out what you need to do to change your own lifestyle to lose weight.

Having said that I would just like to say here, that *you* will need to find the method and the combination of foods and exercise which will work for you. My own methods might not work for you, and it is always best to tailor these things to suit your own unique body and personality (not to mention your own unique hectic life!).

Weight loss and you

It's a good guess that at some point in your life, someone or other has told you that your struggle to lose weight is a struggle against yourself; or that you are simply not that interested in losing weight to begin with; or that you are not going about it the right way.

It is also probably a fact that this same person or persons, has loftily informed you that you will be able to lose weight without a problem, if only you put in the required amount of time and effort.

And it is probably at about this point in this very one-sided conversation that you find yourself smiling politely and wanting to tear your hair out – because this is surely not the first time you have heard this, nor will it be the last, and it certainly is not something that you don't already know.

The problem with all these theories and the good advice however, is that they fail to take into consideration one little fact, and that is that you are a busy woman for whom twenty-four hours in a day isn't nearly enough.

You need to juggle so many things, that sometimes it's all you can do to keep your head on straight and get through your day.

This applies to most women today, not just to those women who have a career to pursue, or for those women who have a household to run, or even for those women who juggle both at once.

If you're overweight, or you're simply not happy with your present weight (read into that the fact that you don't fit into your size ten jeans anymore), then you will more likely than not be looking at ways to lose that excess weight or tone and trim your body.

The fact of the matter is that this requires time and effort on your part which brings us full circle to where we started, with you wanting to scream in frustration and pull your hair out while someone prodded on at you about losing weight,

Ladies, tearing your hair out won't help you in any way to lose weight. Neither will ranting, raving, becoming depressed, or throwing a tantrum. The first thing that you need to do to even begin losing weight, is to tune these types of people out, and to get a good hard grip on the reality of your life.

You are a busy woman and you have many things to do in order to ensure that your life runs smoothly. You don't have the time to go around listening to everyone who tells you that you are not losing weight in the right manner, or by using the right methods.

There is no such thing as a "right" way. There are only guidelines which should be followed, and these for the most part are only common on a few points.

Everything else that you need to do to aid in weight loss is specific to each person, their health, and their lifestyle. And this holds true no matter what.

Take it slow - Don't expect miracles

This is one of the things that so many people do wrong when they begin on a course of weight loss. You expect to lose weight in a matter of days or weeks, rather than in a more realistic time frame.

Remember that it took time to put on the weight, so it will most definitely take time to lose it. It's not like in the movies, where the weight melts off in a matter of minutes or hours. In real life, you will need to work at it to lose the weight.

In fact, by thinking that you will be able to lose weight in no time at all, or that you will be able to lose the weight easily, you are setting yourself up for a fall.

It is all too easy to allow yourself to believe that you can lose the weight in no time; that you can change your life around and get on the right weight loss track without having to break a sweat even. This is simply not true.

Even before you begin to change your lifestyle around to try and lose weight, you should ideally get to grips with the fact that it will take time to do so. This is true even if you only have a few pounds to lose.

Unless you want only to lose a pound or two or three you won't be able to move the excess weight very fast, at least not in a truly healthy manner.

Since the ideal weight loss for a person is said to be about two pounds per week, you will need to calculate accordingly and come to terms with how much you should lose per week *healthily*.

There are also other methods of weight loss which you can use to lose weight faster but these options should be explored with due consideration. And if you are thinking about using any such method for weight loss, you should ideally consult with a doctor before you proceed too far along.

If you fall off – get back on!

This is something that you need to take seriously, because without a doubt you will fall off the diet wagon at some point or other. What matters at this point though is what you do with yourself after you fall off the diet wagon.

If you just sit back and moan and despair about the fact that you fell off the diet wagon, you will not accomplish anything much. It doesn't matter whether you just binged on your favorite junk foods for a week or a month or even two months.

What matters is that you stopped at some point and that you want to get back on the diet wagon again. With this type of positive thinking you will more than likely be able to get back onto your diet regime.

If you fall off, then get back on. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, take stock of where you are in your weight loss plan, and then continue forward. Whatever you do, just don't look back.

Talk with your doctor

I have been talking about this since almost the beginning of the book, and you will find that I keep mentioning it throughout the rest of the book as well.

And this is the fact that you should talk with your doctor, physician or primary caregiver about whatever course of action it is that you want to take to lose weight.

This is a very important facet of your weight loss plans and can even help you to fashion a better weight loss plan.

It is also a good idea to get proper advice from one of these qualified practitioners since it is also best to first rule out any underlying health conditions you might have which might affect you as you lose weight.

You might need to change accordingly some of your weight loss plans, but this can only help, and not hinder your attempts at losing weight.

Also, if you have any doubts whatsoever about whether the weight loss regime that you chose for yourself is right for you, you will be able to discuss and modify your weight loss plan.

Five things you should know

To help you in goal of losing weight, below I have listed a few things that you really should know about. These are things that most of us overlook when trying to losing weight, simply because we are unaware that these factors can affect weight gain or weight loss.

The truth is that most everything that effects our systems will have some type of impact or other on us, be it in the form of weight gain or loss, or

otherwise. Most times of course we won't put two and two together until it is pointed out to us.

My goal in listing these factors here in this book, is to make you aware of what they are. In this way you will be able to weed through some of these problematic areas and (hopefully!) conquer them.

The first thing that you need to understand however, is that the list of external factors which can effect your weight loss or weight gain, is far longer than what I have mentioned here.

I have merely given you a sampling of some of the most common factors which tends to affect us. When you take things on a personal level, you will find that there are also probably various other factors which you should take into account.

These are also factors which can affect you without your knowledge and therefore are more easily dismissed. Go through them, see if they have a place in your life, and then try to do something about it.

- Get the proper amount of sleep
- Ditch the stress
- Stay away from sugars
- Eat more fiber-enriched foods
- Do not starve yourself or otherwise skip meals

Get the proper amount of sleep

Alright, so if you only just had a baby, or have one- or two-year old baby then sleep is probably a luxury that you can only dream about. But for the rest of you who don't have a good excuse, there is simply no reason why you can't get a decent amount of sleep every night.

Sleep deprivation can lead some people to eat more than they normally would. Since I am not a doctor or anything else along those lines, I can

only speculate that this is because your body is crying out for some fuel to keep it awake!

Losing sleep once in a while is all well and good, but if it happens on a regular basis, there is a good chance that your body will react to this in some way or other. And this, is what could affect your weight, so get a good night's sleep, every night.

Ditch the stress

Stress is bad for you whatever way that you look at it, so it should really come as no surprise to find out that stress can also affect your weight, and how you gain or lose it.

I realize that you lead quite a busy life, but you should try and find time for yourself in the hectic rush for yourself to do what *you* want. You might even find that little ball of stress which you've been carrying around with you since forever, along with some stress-induced eating habits, melts away.

If however, finding some me-time is not possible in your schedule, and let's face facts, most of us don't have that luxury, you should really try to find some way or other of ditching the stress you are carrying around.

If all fails you might want to try relaxation tapes, or maybe even a bit of armchair meditation, to get your life back into balance and to lose the stress.

It should also be noted, (although you probably know this already), that stress can also lead to sleeping problems, which again can be an adverse factor for weight gain as I mentioned earlier.

Naturally sugary

For those of you who are hog-tied to your sweet tooth and its sugary ways, you will be glad to hear that there are some sugars which are actually good for you and which you don't need to cut out from your diet.

I should perhaps mention here that although these sugars are perfectly alright for you to have, too much of a good thing is definitely bad for you, so learn to moderate even with these types of sugars.

The sugars which I am talking about are those sugars which occur naturally in your food.

I'm not talking about the refined and over processed sugars which are to be found in most foods these days, but those sugars which can be found in the likes of fruits and even some vegetables.

These sugars are good for you, and as long as you don't overdo these as well, you will find that it is quite easy to mollify your sweet tooth to some degree.

So, alright, there is simply no proper substitute for a good bar of chocolate, but if you want to lose weight, then the very last thing that you want to do is to give in your sweet tooth and grab the nearest sugar-rich snack you can find.

You need to stay away from the added sugars in foods, especially the refined and processed varieties as far as possible. They are not good for you, and indeed they can be very bad for you if you don't watch what you are eating.

My solution to this problem then, of reaching for the nearest package of sugar-rich snack, is to reach for the nearest fresh fruit that I can find.

Speaking for myself this isn't such a hardship as I like fruits, but for those of you who can look at a fruit and only see it as part of a refined food, you might want to look at natural alternatives you can use such as fresh fruit juices instead.

Nutrition bars aren't necessarily your friend

Something that is very closely associated with your snacking tendencies or even your on-the-go "nutritious" meals consisting of nutrition bars, is the amount of sugar and fibers which are to be found in these.

For one thing, most nutrition bars are simply bad foods in disguise. They appeal to our sense of having to eat right, being able to eat when we are

constantly on the go, and our desires for eating something sweet which is also nutritious.

The problem with this, is that most of this is just marketing hype. Most of the nutrition bars are no more nutritious for you than eating a carrot fried in oil, coated in a thick layer of chocolate, then coated with a sprinkling of nuts, and then dusted with a light layer of icing sugar!

Where, in that rather disgusting-sounding¹ snack, do you think all the nutrition is? Sure you have a carrot as your base “good” food, but after you deep-fat fry it, then do all the other things to it, you can be assured that it is far worse for you, than you might think.

And this is exactly what I am talking about in relation to nutrition bars. You need only take a second or two to read the list of ingredients to see what I am talking about

You will find that sugar, in its many forms and variations, is more or less listed at the beginning of the ingredients list.

And for those of you who are unaware of this fact, (I know I was clueless about this for quite some time), ingredients are supposed to be listed in descending order, or in other words, the largest ingredient quantity used is listed first going down to the smallest ingredient quantity used.

So take note ladies, nutrition bars are not good for you, especially on a regular basis, and they are not a good meal substitute. There are better things you can eat than nutrition bars when you are rushed to have a good meal.

Eating more fiber

The problem of eating a well balanced meal when you are always on the go, or too busy to sit down and have a good meal, is the fact that you aren't always able to have a good meal.

¹ as far as I am aware this is not a real recipe, only something that came off the top of my head as an example

Sometimes eating any type of meal, let alone a well balanced meal, can be a luxury, and this can make for some bad times for your waste line if you're not careful.

However, there are ways for you to cut down and chop out some of the bad eating habits which you have accumulated throughout a lifetime, and one of these is to include lots of fiber into your meals.

Fiber-filled foods are known to be part of a well balanced meal, not to mention the fact that they also act more like a slow-release nutrition system than anything else.

If that confused you, don't worry. All it means is that fiber enriched foods help to make your blood sugar levels rise at a slower rate, which has the effect of constraining your food cravings.

Mostly, it is when your blood sugar levels drop that you find yourself reaching out for that bag of cookies you have stashed away.

To counteract this, if you have a fiber enriched meal such as oatmeal, lentils, or whole grain cereals, you will find that your cravings for snacks at odd hours between meals have lessened.

This is the best way I have found yet of beating hunger cravings, and is the reason why I sometimes eat oatmeal in the middle of the afternoon if I get snack cravings.

That's right, you can even use these types of fiber enriched foods to help you deal with food cravings.

Like I said earlier, not everyone has the time to eat a well balanced meal and at those times when you find yourself skipping a meal, you will probably get the urge to snack on something before you can get to your next meal.

This is a good way as any to deal with these cravings and if you can stomach the thought of something such as oatmeal for a mid-afternoon snack, you will find that you have the ability to survive until the next meal time.

And just to get you started on what I believe to be a very good method to curbing your cravings, I have listed below a few of the foods which you can have that are fiber filled.

There will be many more such fiber enriched foods which you can get your hands on, but these are good for you to get an idea of what you can look at introducing into your diet.

Just remember to make sure that it is something that you can eat or cook easily and that it is something which won't interfere or take you too out your normal routine.

- Pears
- Berries
- Lentils – such as lentil soup
- Whole grains
- Whole grain cereals – such as oatmeal, or muesli

Starvation is not the key

Most of us have probably at one time or other skipped a meal or two. It's when we do this on a regular basis however, that the problems can begin.

Before you go any further down the road to weight loss, you might want to take this into account along with the other four items which I have already mentioned.

Starvation, in any form or manner, be it for one meal everyday, or eating only enough to keep a grasshopper alive, is not the way for you to lose weight.

More than likely you will get side effects from your skipping or reduced meals, which you won't even notice until it's too late and you have unknowingly *gained* weight instead of losing it.

The way that I see it, since food, along with water are the two main things that are keeping us alive, our bodies have evolved over the centuries to accommodate this fact.

And this means that if you starve yourself or even regularly skip meals, your body might think that food is scarce, and start to store up fat reserves. You can see where this is all leading, right?

Where you might have thought that you were doing the right thing to lose weight, you were really aiding and abetting your body to shore upon its fat reserves.

And as I mention later on, the same thing applies to water as well. If you don't get enough water into your system, your body will retain water against a time that it will need it, which in turn will make you bloated.

If you simply don't have the time to eat a good hearty breakfast before you begin your day, you might want to look at substituting a nutritious energy drink, or even taking your breakfast along with you on your rounds.

The same applies to the other two main meals that you take throughout the day. If you don't have the time to sit down and eat in an orderly fashion, don't resort to a candy bar and a soda. Go with something healthier, like a fruit or a sandwich (hold the mayo).

As I keep saying, it is alright to miss one or two meals along the way, but to consistently miss out meals, or to constantly eat only enough to keep a grasshopper alive, is asking for trouble.

Breakfast is key

I know you have heard this before – probably many, many times – but I thought I might add to that number and tell you what you already know, but which you are probably too rushed to heed in the mornings. Breakfast is probably the most important meal of the day.

Without the energy giving food that you get in the morning, you will most definitely start to lag sooner or later. And for those of you who have gone without breakfast for most of their adult lives and see no adverse reactions to this particular habit, you probably just haven't noticed them.

As I mentioned, if you find yourself rushed for time there are still a number of methods which you can utilize to get a good breakfast into you before you start your day proper.

These along with a few good ideas on how you can easily and simply change your life around to encompass your new dietary habits can be found in the ending section of the book, "What you can do to begin with".

One of these ideas is for you to consider packing yourself a breakfast the night before. In this way you save yourself the time in the morning of preparing your breakfast, and if you really need to, you can take it on the road with you.

Regular exercise always helps

There is no substitute for a healthy diet and a good exercise regime. If you can find the time to do so, draw up a schedule so that you can fit in a regular course of exercise into your normally busy routine.

It doesn't even matter if this is the very first, or only, thing that you do to begin with to lose weight. Since we all need to start from somewhere, beginning with a regular exercise routine is as good a place as any.

Here again, although being ambitious in your goals is an admirable trait, remember to keep things small, simple and manageable. Don't go off the deep end and think up a really good exercise schedule which eats into all of your spare time and then some.

Start slowly, take things one at a time, and build up to that really good exercise routine. You need to have the time to make it a regular thing, and not a just one-off thing that you do for a few days and then ditch.

In this way, by taking things slowly, you will be able to incorporate regular exercise into your busy schedule over time. This in turn will ensure that you do actually stick to your schedule rather than not.

There are a number of things that you can do to begin an exercise routine, and I have to say that plain old walking is the best and easiest thing to begin with.

Or if you don't like that idea, you can always try other simple exercises such as ab-crunches, wall-push-ups, or you might even want to consider joining a yoga class.

You have a number of options open to you when looking at doing exercises, and you should choose the one that is best suited for you and or your lifestyle.

Walking is good

If you don't like the thought of regular exercise, you always have the option of going for a walk. Although this does get you moving and out and about, for some reason walking doesn't seem like exercise, which can make it easier for you to stick with it.

Find a time of day in which you would like to go for a walk, or simply take a walk around the block when you're feeling stressed or tired and clear your mind.

And if none of these are an option for you, you always have the option of making reasons for you to walk. For more on this subject go to the section entitled, "Walk", near the end of the book.

Set your goals

I have found this to be great incentive for just about everyone who is trying to lose weight. You need to first set yourself a goal, a weight loss target that you can easily meet.

So if you want to lose something like 15 pounds, or even 35 pounds, you should set this as your end target. To make it easier for you to lose weight, you should then create smaller goals which you can reach far more easily, and faster than your end goal.

In this way you give yourself less room to become sidetracked and disheartened about what might seem like your lack of progress in losing weight and attaining your end goal.

Make these smaller targets, ones which you can easily achieve, and which will confirm for you that you really are losing weight. You will find that in this way, by breaking up your larger end-weight loss target into smaller ones, it becomes easier for you to stay on track.

After all, it's much easier to lose two pounds than it is to lose ten pounds. So take things slowly and set goals and targets which you can achieve, and which will give you the confidence you need to forge ahead.

Give yourself a treat

Sometimes this is great incentive to help you lose weight. Giving yourself a treat or a reward for a job well done can be a great incentive to keep at it. The reward doesn't necessarily have to be anything large or expensive, it can be anything you want, as long as it truly is a treat for you.

Some women find that buying a new pair of jeans or that lovely little dress they have been eyeing for some time, is the way to go.

This is all well and good, but remember to buy something that you can wear or use now, and not something that has to be stored away until you lose weight. This just isn't going to work, and can even be counterproductive.

You should pick out a suitable treat for yourself, something that will give you the boost needed to keep losing weight. Remember, this is something that you are doing for yourself so that you will have more incentive to reach your next goal, and so on and so forth, until you reach your end goal.

Medical options

And lastly, for those of you wanting a quick fix to your weight loss problems, you will find that you also have the option of using such things as plastic surgery to get rid of those pounds quickly, or having something along the lines of gastric bypass (or any other such) surgery to help you lose weight.

These are all options that you can take, and if you are seriously considering any of them, your best option is to talk with your doctor to consider all the ramifications of going through with them.

And although I personally do not feel these options to be the right ones for me, there are many people out there who have gone through with them, and who have found that their lives have changed for the better because of them.

What you need to do if you're even thinking along these lines is to gather as much information as you can about these various procedures and methods and decide which is the right one for you.

One thing that you should be aware of, or rather take into consideration is what you will have to do, or go through, to maintain your weight loss after you go through with any of these procedures or treatment methods.

For myself at least, I feel that the risks far outweigh the benefits to be had, but then again, this is only my opinion, and everyone is entitled to have their own opinion.

In the end, it's what you do with your ideas and your opinions that count, and you can be sure that by simply weighing your options properly, that you will be able to make a better informed decision.

Self Assessment

Let's face it, weight loss is no easy thing for most people to accomplish. Most of us struggle with our weight unable to become fully motivated to either lose weight or even to stop gaining weight!

If you're really honest with yourself you will find that you have been promising yourself to do one or the other of these things for many years now, quite unsuccessfully in many cases (hence why you are now reading this book!).

The intentions are there but not the commitment. It is this lack of follow-through that really damages our chances at losing weight.

It's not the binge eating (although that does contribute!); it's not the anxiety induced or stress induced eating; nor is it giving in constantly to your cravings.

These things are all just a by product of the ultimate culprit for your non-existent weight loss: The lack of commitment.

It is this lack of commitment that is really to be blamed for the ballooning weight gain among us, not the refined foods or the fast foods that we consume on a daily basis. These just help to accelerate the weight gain process and to slow down the weight loss process!

This is really something that is very hard to face up to for many people. Most of us will prefer to blame our weight issues on anything and everything but our own lack of commitment.

We will point fingers at the fast food industry, at the carbonated beverages stocked in our fridge, at the refined foods that are all but rammed down our throats on a daily basis.

As I mentioned earlier the sad fact of the matter is that although these contribute to the problem of weight gain, they are not the entire reason we gain weight. That particular responsibility lies completely with us.

The reason that I have just gone through this little spiel is not to make you uncomfortable or defensive or even introspective.

If you want to lose weight, then the only way that you can really do so, is if you face up to your demons and try to figure out *why* you are not losing weight.

It is this self denial that leads many of us to yo-yo diet. We go on a diet, we successfully lose weight, then we go off the diet and try to resume a normal life of eating habits, and lo and behold in no time at all we have gained the weight we so painstakingly lost.

I should know about this. I have been yo-yo dieting almost since forever, and it was not until I was completely honest about my role in my weight gain that I saw where the problem lay.

So for those of you in denial at what I have just said, that's fine. It will take some time for you to come to grips with this truth if at all, and no one can do that for you, you need to do it for yourself.

This needs to be done for you to realize that unless you decide to take control of your life, you will consistently gain weight again once you go off any diet or exercise regime you decide to follow.

And for those of you ladies who are even now saying that your weight gain is due not to your lack of control and commitment, but to your lack of time to do anything more than wolf down a hamburger, fries and double chocolate muffin, you might want to think twice about that statement.

After all, in the time it takes for you to order your meal, stand around waiting for it and eat it, isn't entirely possible for you to have found a more nutritious meal?

It's the little things that count when trying to lose weight, and it's the little things that so many of us find so hard to keep doing day after day.

It's never easy to change the habits of a lifetime and changing your dietary habits to suit your new lifestyle is not going to be an easy task. In fact, for most us, it is going to be a decidedly uphill task, since we do tend to love our food!

This is the first thing you need to admit to yourself. Actually, it's the second thing, the first is to take responsibility for yourself, but that can even come later, once you have begun on your weight loss course.

The third thing is to decide on a course of action that will help you to lose weight, and the fourth thing is to follow through with it. The last thing that you need to do is to follow through and *finish* what you have started.

(I have gone through all of these in some detail in the section called, "My golden rules for successful weight loss".)

And if you were able to do all of that without a little help, you would already have done that already, right? That's where I come in.

Like I mentioned earlier, I am not a doctor or a medical practitioner of any sort. I am only one person who has lived most my life yo-yoing on the weight-loss-weight-gain scale.

I do, however, have the firsthand experience of going through dismal days of weight gain, as well as the firsthand experience of how best to lose weight.

Most of my suggestions which are peppered throughout this book you will find are more commonsense suggestions than anything else. (You might find the section at the end of this book, "What to do to begin with", to be helpful to you.)

I do not advocate any of the fad diets which are going around, nor do I advocate any of the extremist measures of losing weight. But that is only my own personal opinion.

As I said, the decision and the responsibility, for who you are and what you do, lies solely in your own hands.

If you feel, after reading this book, that the best course of action to suit you and to suit your lifestyle is to utilize some of what I have said, then please do so.

But if you feel that other methods will suit you better, and help you to achieve better weight loss, then by all means follow through on your instincts and your reasoning.

The only hard and fast thing that I will suggest you do, whichever course of action you decide to take, is to consult with a doctor or physician before embarking on any of these paths.

You will be able to receive necessary advice from these fully trained and qualified individuals, which in turn could add another factor or two to help you make the proper decision.

That said, if you do decide to go through with any of these, it is also best if you can remember at least what I have mentioned in this section alone.

The ability to lose the weight and to keep it off, will for the most part lie solely with you. Barring unforeseen health problems or medications which

you are taking which can be the cause for weight gain, the solution is in your hands.

And if that sounded too preachy I'm sorry. It's just so difficult to convey exactly what I'm trying to get at when I can only give you words on a page and not anything else.

Why am I pushing this entire in-your-hands and your-responsibility thing, so hard then?

It is true that I could alienate many of you, but the fact of the matter is that without your acknowledgement of this very small yet monumental fact, you will in all likelihood find yourself slipping back to your old ways and gaining weight once again, even after you have successfully lost the weight.

I want to help you to not only lose the weight, but also to help you to keep it off. And that sometimes becomes more of a hurdle to go over than the actual weight loss itself.

For one thing, if you are not fully committed to your goal of weight loss, you might lose the weight, but you will find it difficult to stop from going back to the old ways and habits which you have already spent a lifetime doing.

Be honest with yourself

The first thing that you need to do therefore is to be completely honest with yourself. Why do you overeat? Is it because you are still hungry, or is it because you are reacting to some external stimulus such as stress, or lack of sleep.

It could be lack of the necessary nutrition, or you could be eating simply in reaction to an emotional upheaval which you are facing. Or, you could even be over eating due to a chemical imbalance in your body, or due to a health problem which you are suffering from.

I was never a stress, or emotional eater. To begin with, I ate when I was bored, then it progressed to my eating because I had too much to do and not enough time to do it! Then of course, there was the requisite snacking

and junk food (not to mention chocolate) binges that I would frequently indulge myself in.

The list goes on and on, and is really quite endless, because as I know now, it was quite easy for me to fool myself into believing that I had myself under complete control, and that I could stop eating and binging whenever I wanted to. Does that sound all too familiar?

Any and all of these can contribute to your overeating habits, just as much as a busy and rushed lifestyle can contribute to you giving your dietary needs the lowest priority.

All of this needs to change if you are truly serious about losing weight, and the only way that you can do that is if you take a minute or two to sit down and think about what it is that makes, *drives* you to eat when you don't need to, when your stomach is already full.

Learn what these triggers are, and you will have made a great start on your weight loss course. How do you overcome these problems though if your main problem is lack of time?

That's simple really, and is very closely connected with what I was saying in the earlier section: You are in control of your life. No matter how out of control it might seem, you truly are the only one who can make a difference.

There are many little ways in which you can make a difference in your weight, without having to go out of your way and make your hectic life, even more hectic.

Although you will have noticed that I have included sections on exercise and proper diet in the pages of this book, they are only there if you wish to make use of them.

Otherwise, in reality although these methods can help you to lose weight at a faster rate, you don't really have to use them to lose weight. There are a number of small things which you can do daily to help you lose weight, and most of these are painless and won't infringe on your time.

The only thing that you really need if you want to go through with this option, is the strength of determination that you will continue through with these things until you have lost the weight you wanted.

Because, the problem with only doing the bare minimum of things to lose weight is that you will need to keep at it continually with only the occasional slip up or two. Otherwise you will find that for every three steps forward that you take, you are sliding two steps backwards.

A little bit like the first time I tried to do the breast-stroke if you must know. For every four to five strokes I made with my hands and feet, I managed to go forward only a few agonizing inches!

Those, I can tell you, were trying times, and you will sometimes find that losing weight in this method is also very trying.

But, whether you decide to do only the bare minimum, or whether you decide to go the whole hog and incorporate a proper diet and exercise regime into your busy schedule, you will find that you can and will lose weight, you just need to believe in yourself and have the commitment needed to take you through to the end with flying colors.

My golden rules for successful weight loss

I know I mentioned this in the earlier section as well, but here I have set down in more concise terms what I consider to be the golden rules of weight loss.

These are, in order,

- Acknowledge that you are responsible for yourself
- Realize that it's not going to be an easy road to follow
- Decide on a weight loss course suitable for yourself
- Follow through on this course

- And follow through on it to the conclusion

Acknowledge that you are responsible for yourself

Since I have already been through this section in quite some detail, I won't bore you by going through it again. If you skipped right ahead from the table of contents to this section, then the section to read about this is the one entitled, "Self Assessment".

For those of you, who have already gone through it, just keep in mind that although it helps if you can realize from the very beginning that you are responsible for yourself, it is not entirely necessary to do so.

You can begin, and continue to the end of your weight loss regime without once having to face up to this fact, that you are the one person who can change your life around.

But it is also true that acknowledging it will make your life easier especially when you begin the task of keeping the weight off, once you have lost it.

Realize that it's not going to be an easy road to follow

So, going with the theory that most people will take some time to realize the truth of the earlier golden rule, the first thing that you need to do then to begin your weight loss regime, is to realize that it is not going to be an easy road to walk down.

There will be many tempting cream cakes, full fat grandé coffees, cream cheese bagels and so on and so forth, littering your path. It is up to you to be waylaid only minimally by these.

I won't even attempt to pretend that we can pass these by without once being tempted, or without once giving into temptation. Now that, is self delusion on a grand scale, and since we are for the moment at least, all about self-honesty, let's acknowledge the fact that we will fall off the wagon.

But as I said earlier, what matters is not that you fell off the wagon in the first place, but what you do with yourself afterwards. Get up, dust off those cookie crumbs and get right back on the weight loss wagon. You can do it.

And this is really what you need to realize so early on, the fact that you will fall off the weight loss wagon, and the fact that your road will be literally paved with tempting morsel after tempting morsel.

Once you can realize and acknowledge this fact for yourself, you will find that you are better armed to deal with these.

You will also find that being prepared for these little wayside problems, makes it easier for you to tackle them head on, and in many cases, makes it easier for you to turn a blind eye to temptation (most of the time).

Decide on a weight loss course suitable for yourself

This is the next step that you need to take, and in case you haven't realized it, you have already taken this step by reading this book. You have decided that you want to lose weight and you are going about trying to find a way to make this a reality.

Now you need to take a few minutes away from your busy schedule to decide exactly what measures you can implement in your lifestyle to make it easier for you to lose weight, and also decide how much time you are willing to devote to doing this.

This might be more difficult for you than even you imagine, but the thing is for you not to become daunted at this very first stumbling block.

If you have only a very minimal time frame on your hands to devote to your goal of losing weight, there is no need to despair.

Since you have already begun the crucial process, you only need to follow through with it and implement a plan that will enable you to do so despite your busy schedule.

Take things one at a time and don't try to do everything at once. With a limited amount of time on your hands first concentrate on one aspect of your weight loss plan.

If you want to implement an exercise regime, then do so. Leave the diet plans for a later date when you are better able to deal with it, or when your exercise routine has become a set part of your life.

In this way, you will be able to gradually incorporate your entire weight loss plan into your life, without having to leave anything out, or without having to feel beleaguered.

The key factor when going through with this golden rule, is that you need to find the right balance of diet and/ or exercise for you, the one plan that will fit seamlessly into your lifestyle habits without taking you too out of your way.

Follow through on this course

If you went through the earlier golden rule, you know that the in choosing the best weight loss plan for you, you need to choose one that fits into your lifestyle.

The reason you are doing this, is to make this particular golden rule – the one about following through on your weight loss plan – a reality instead of a wish.

Many people, myself included, find it easiest to start something; it is the follow through that we find difficult, and because of this, we find it easy to let go of our ideas and plans when the going gets tough.

By choosing a weight loss plan that fits naturally into your lifestyle to begin with, you are making it that much easier for you to stay the course and to follow through on your weight loss plans.

If you look at it reasonably you will see that what I am saying makes sense. Think about it. If you have great ideas on how to lose weight and put them into action, you can be assured that for the first few days and weeks at least that you will go through with them.

But what happens when you have to break through your routine to attend to something else? Since life can never be planned out down to a T, you

can be assured of getting these interruptions, and frequently, if you lead a busy life.

Well, to begin with, you would try and keep as close to your plans as possible, but there may be one or two days when you need to abandon them altogether to accommodate outside influences.

When this happens, which weight loss plan do you think you are most likely to follow through on, once you get back to your normal routine?

The one which is great, but which takes you out of your normal routine and which requires you to push and prod yourself to get back into it?

Or the one which is maybe not as great as your original grand plan, but which runs more or less parallel to your normal routine, and which you can fall into more easily because it doesn't require you to go out of your way?

I know which one I would chose, but this is because I know myself. I know that if I had to go out of my way over and over again, if I had to push and prod myself to get into my weight loss routine every time life threw a curveball at me that I would not follow through with it.

In fact, my life to date is littered with many of these such grand weight loss plans and schemes, and for myself at least, I can attest that none of these worked the wonders that they should have. The plans were sound, it was the execution of them that left a lot to be desired!

It took a little bit more of down-to-earth thinking, and my realization of the golden rules for me to lose weight successfully and keep it off.

What you need to take away from this section, is the knowledge that sometimes life will throw a spanner in the works. You will find your weight loss plans going for a six, but that doesn't mean that you should quit.

Whether you have a "great" weight loss plan, or whether you have a not-so-great weight loss plan in the works, you need to follow through on your original plans and ideas and not give up.

It is at this point in your weight loss plans that it's going to be all too easy to give up and go back to your old ways. Don't.

If you think you might have trouble on the follow through, be prepared for this eventuality and plan for it accordingly.

Find a diet buddy

This is one of the best ways that you can stay the course. A diet buddy as I like to think of these staunch allies, are those people (or person) who will help you to get through the trying times of your weight loss regime.

They can help you through the rocky patches of hitting plateaus (see the section on "Peaks, Dips, and Plateaus" for more information), and they can help you through those times when food cravings seem to get the better of you.

You can find a diet buddy in anyone. It can be your life partner, or it can be a parent, more likely a friend who knows you like a sister, or even a close associate who knows exactly what you are going through.

You can even find a diet buddy in any of the exercise or aerobics classes which seem to abound these days.

A diet buddy can help you to attain your weight loss target more easily if you have a good support group and a diet buddy can definitely be an entire support group by themselves!

You need to find someone who is willing to be there for you , who will know when to drag you away from the muffin aisle and dump you in the fruits section instead when you are feeling pucky, and who will know when a large double-chocolate chip cookie and a large cappuccino is just what the doctor ordered.

These types of friends are very rare, and worth their weight in gold. And they are also the best type of friend a girl can have when she is trying her hardest to lose weight.

And follow through on it to the conclusion

The thing that will help you to lose the weight, and which will also help you to keep the weight off, is if you follow through to the very ending with your decision to lose weight.

In other words if you have set yourself a target weight (see the sub-section following this on “Your target weight”), then stick to it. Follow through to the ending, and don't give up.

If you have been reading through the earlier sections, or if you have gone down this route before, then you know how much easier it is to start yourself on a weight loss regime than it is to continue on with it.

And you will also probably know how much easier it is to follow through on such a course if you give yourself a little nudge, than it is to see it through to completion.

Many of us, even if we do manage to successfully drag ourselves through our weight loss routine day after day, will find that it is harder to stay on track as time goes by and your goal comes ever closer.

In my case most of the time, even when I followed through to nearly the end, I found myself losing the will to continue.

This was mainly due to the fact that I was not as committed in the beginning as I could have been, which in turn meant that I was only staying the course because I was forcing myself to do so, and not because I really wanted to.

And this meant that when the going got tough, I got going – in the opposite direction most times!

Since it was difficult enough to stay the course when things were happening normally in my life, it was near on impossible to stay the course when things went even slightly out of sync.

The end result? I would always, always find some way, some little loophole to exploit which would necessitate my going off my weight loss regime.

So to see you through to your weight loss target, you need to follow through, and make a conscious decision that you will see it through to the end. But you also need to have that commitment to yourself and to your goal that you will see it through to the end.

And really, it is only when you want to do this, when you have the commitment to stick with it come hell or high water, that you will find that you not only lose the weight, but you find that you also *keep it off*.

Your target weight

It is always best to set yourself a target weight *range*, instead of one particular target weight. In this way you are giving yourself the leeway to go down to about one to two pounds less or more than your ideal target weight.

For instance, if your ideal target weight is 120 pounds, then you are better off setting a weight loss range between 118-125 pounds.

In this way you can reach for your goal of 120 pounds, but you will also have leeway to account for the normal little fluctuations which we all experience in our weight on a regular basis.

After all, it's not entirely unnatural to find yourself weighing in about 2-3 pounds less on some days, and 2-3 pounds more on other days, even if you haven't been doing anything in particular to influence your weight gain or loss.

You will also find that it is more practical in your daily life to keep to a certain weight range, than to a particular set weight. This way also you are less likely to go into panic- or binge- or starvation-mode if you know that you have a little leeway.

However, this only works if you don't keep changing the leeway you have to accommodate any weight which you might have gained.

For instance, if we take the above case of an ideal weight range of 118-125 pounds, then the very last thing that you want to do if you one day find yourself weighing in at 135 pounds is to change your weight range to encompass this, like 132-138 pounds.

This can only lead to disaster as you will then find it easier and easier to accommodate your little lapses and to trick yourself into believing that you are still within your ideal weight range.

If you have a target weight range in mind when you first start your weight loss regime, then stick to it even after you have lost the weight. In this way you will find that even a busy woman like yourself can keep to the weight that you want.

The only exception to this rule is if you become pregnant in which case you need to gain weight not lose it! Or if some other factor necessitates that you gain weight *healthily*. In these cases you can always change your target weight range around to suit your circumstances at the time.

Food – the bane of your life?

Is food the bane of your life, or is it a matter of emotional eating, or do your eating habits stem from the fact that you have no time to sit down and have a proper meal?

Whatever it is, there is no doubt that in some way or other you need to control your eating habits, because ultimately this is what is leading to your weight gain issues.

If you have read through the book up to this point, you would have realized that there are a great many methods that you can employ to help you lose weight along with a number of factors which you must take into account, to help you lose weight.

Since this book is dedicated to those of you wishing to lose weight, I have given below a few more suggestions which should ultimately help you to attain your goals, but these have more to do with food than anything else.

A good diet is a must

Without one of these in your life you will find that it is actually more difficult to lose weight than not. Although exercise is good, exercise alone won't do you a bit of good if you are constantly breaking food barriers and snacking away contentedly whenever the mood strikes you.

At most you will keep yourself from gaining weight, when what you really wanted to do was to lose the weight. To lose weight therefore, you need a good diet.

I know that the word "diet" has many bad connotations for many people, but this is not to say that it can't be a good word. In this case, I am not talking about diets per se, but about your own personal diet.

In other words I am talking about the foods you eat on a normal basis. This is your "diet". You will find that throughout this book I have referred to your "diet". By this, I mean the foods which you eat on a daily basis and which comprises the bulk of your eating habits.

To that end, you need to reassess your daily eating habits and see where it is that you might be going wrong. Is it in the mornings? Or the afternoons? Or maybe it's those times in between when you have the urge to have a "small something"?

Whatever the case may be you need to find out what your weaknesses are when it comes to your daily eating habits, over and above those eating habits which you might have in response to certain triggers.

You don't need to get very specific about what you eat every single moment of the day especially if you don't have the time to do so, which I'm assuming you don't.

If you can take the time however, just jot down what you eat for about two or so weeks and you can more easily pinpoint your weak times. If you can't do this you can just as easily keep a loose track of what your daily eating habits are and make adjustments accordingly.

For instance, if you know that you skip breakfast at home and hit the baker's on your way to work, or if you regularly go out for lunch either with your friends or on your own during your lunch break, you will have a good idea of what your normal eating habits are.

The same applies even if you don't go out. By now you probably know what foods you will eat when you are eating from home. It won't be very often that you vary from these eating habits, and this is something which could help you in the long run as well.

What do I mean? Well, think about it. If you are a creature of habit in what you eat – and most of us are – then once you get into a food habit that you like and that suits your lifestyle, you are less likely to fall out of it, (which is actually your problem at the moment if you think about that!).

Well, to make long matters short, you need to successfully make the transition from bad eating and unhealthy eating habits to good eating habits. And you will more than likely find that it is easier to stick to these if they are easy to do and don't interfere with your busy lifestyle.

You therefore need to figure out what your weaknesses are when it comes to eating and where you might be potentially going wrong with your dietary habits.

You and supermarkets

This is something that is directly related to your eating habits, and which can help you to curb them as well. It is also a great way for the busy woman – that's you – to cut down on her food problems without having to resort to any drastic measures.

In this instance I am talking about your state of mind when you are doing your weekly or daily food shopping.

It has been proven time and again that if you go into a food laden supermarket while you are hungry you will come away with more than you intended to in the first place, most of it comprising of empty-calorie foods.

To avoid this problem, the best thing that you can do is to fill up on something just before you go shopping. And if you can't do this, or you have no wish to eat just before you go shopping, you might want to consider fortifying yourself with a cup of tea or coffee just before you go.

At the very least, try sticking a piece of gum in your mouth. All of these methods will help to send signals from your stomach to your brain telling it that you are full.

This can help greatly in your battle to fight off temptation when passing by those freshly baked doughnuts, the amazing looking fresh apple pie

(which isn't necessarily good for you even if it *is* made of apples!), or the sugar laden snack aisle.

Whatever you do, don't go into a supermarket for your weekly food shopping needs on an empty stomach. This can only lead to disaster.

Your will to resist temptation will be weakened and you will invariably find yourself reaching out for that packet of oversized muffins, or that lovely dessert or new pizza which you saw advertised just yesterday.

Supersize you...please don't

I consider this to be one of the worst ideas ever from a consumer standpoint of view. Supersizing any type of meal let alone one of the fast food meals, is spelling trouble for anyone.

In fact, the only time you should supersize your meal is if you are going to be sharing with someone else. At any other time it is reprehensible health-wise to supersize your meals.

For one thing, where are the calories and fats which you are so gleefully consuming, going to go? Straight to your hips, thighs, stomach, arms...need I go on?

And for another thing, is there any reason (besides the fact that it tastes good), that you want to fill your body up with what are essentially empty calories?

Although the fact that it tastes good might be an overwhelmingly good reason to go in for a burger, fries and a milk-based drink, there is no earthly reason why it is good for you to supersize your meal.

Stick to the normal portion fast food meal sizes if you must have your fast food fix, don't supersize it!

Better yet, if you can limit yourself, go with only a burger and a small drink, or something similar. Cut out the extras so that you end up with only small transgressions when you give in to the devil on your shoulder urging you to go by the drive-through window on your way home.

Don't take seconds (or thirds!)

No matter whether you are served your food portion on a plate or whether you can pick and choose exactly how much you eat, the one thing that you should never ever do when you are trying to lose weight, is to take second helpings, or even thirds.

This is a surefire way to lead to disaster and to make you tumble head first off the weight loss wagon.

And although you can get back on again, if you don't curb your desire to get more in at one meal, or even keep going back for seconds or thirds, then even the weight loss wagon becomes obsolete.

You need to stand strong and say "No!" to that obstinate desire to have a second helping of food. Instead move on to the next course, make small talk over the meal, or gulp down a gallon of water if you must.

As long as you can stay away from helping yourself to more, you will be able to better help yourself keep to your diet.

The trick is to take only the amount of food that will fill you up comfortably, and which will provide you with the most nourishment. In this way you will find it becomes easier to gradually stay away from eating additional helpings.

Of course there will be times when you are hungrier than normal, and at these times as well, remember to refrain from taking seconds. Instead add a little more food to your original helping than you normally would.

Don't make a heaped stack of food, but make it a hearty meal and you will find that you are filled up without having to go back for seconds.

Or if your favorite Aunt Dotty or your Grandma decides that you need fattening up and urge you to have seconds or thirds you might find yourself up against a rock and a hard place and unable to resist.

You still need to stand strong and resist all offers of temptation. Giving in once in a while is all well and good, but try and keep it to a minimum.

Or maybe your Uncle Joe has served you a heaping bowl of his famous clam chowder, or your Aunty Em has filled your plate to brimming the way she used to when you were growing up, and there is simply no way that you can refuse.

In this case, you obviously need to use the best judgment depending on the situation, but most times, you will find that you can gracefully get away from such situations by intimating that you are full, or (if you dare) that you are trying to lose weight.

You can even get away with things by complementing them on their great meal, telling them although the food tastes and looks really good you unfortunately only just had a meal with your friends as you just couldn't get out of it.

As you can see a little innovation and flattery can get you places if you don't wish to advertise to all and sundry that you are trying to lose weight.

Five ways to fool your stomach and your eyes

This is actually one of my favored methods of losing weight. Instead of using the oversized mugs and plates which are becoming standard these days, you can use smaller mugs and plates which will help you control your food portions.

By fooling your eyes into believing that you have more food on your plate than you really do, you can go a long way to helping yourself control your weight.

Although you know logically that you are fooling your stomach through your eyes, we have been so conditioned to these little signs and signals (such as stopping only when our plate is completely empty), throughout our lifetime, that we tend to respond to them automatically.

It is only a very few cases that you will find these little tricks do not work, and in these cases you will need to exert more control over yourself to stop from overeating, but you will still find that these little tricks can help you.

And all of the methods which I have mentioned below work along those lines, and are quite easy for you to incorporate into your busy lifestyle as the most effort you will need to put into it will be to get a few plates and mugs.

Use smaller plates and tall thin glasses

This is what I was talking about in the earlier section, and is very easy for you to implement into your lifestyle.

Using smaller plates, thinner glasses, and smaller mugs will also help you if you are used to clearing the food off your plate regularly.

And the best thing about this is the psychological impact that it has on you. Because you are still clearing the plate off of whatever food you are putting on it, you won't necessarily feel any difference in fullness, as most times an empty plate has become a signal to your stomach that it is full.

Using smaller plates and things, is also a great way to control your portion sizes, (which is the topic under discussion in the next section), as it helps you to control the sizes without your having to think too hard about it.

And while you are out and about getting your new plates etc., you might also want to take a good long hard look at the colors of these, since color has also been known to affect the way that you fill your plate.

For instance, darker colored plates and dishes can make it look like you don't have as much as you know you do, while lighter colored plates and things can make your portion sizes larger.

So if you are thinking about changing your plate sizes etc. to make them smaller, you might also want to get lighter colors to help you in your endeavors even more.

Portions count – get the correct portion size

Alright, so you read the earlier section on using smaller plates and mugs etc. to control your portion sizes, but maybe you don't want to go to the trouble of changing your plates and things, or maybe you just favor the oversized mugs.

It doesn't really matter whether you keep your old oversized plates and mugs or whether you exchange them for something smaller. All that really matters is that you keep your portion sizes under control.

And if you can't do that through tricking your eyes into fooling your stomach, then you will have to do that through normal means, and this will mean that you need to exert some will power.

The key to doing this properly though, is to know your portion sizes. If you don't know what size portion of pasta you can eat in one sitting, or how much butter you should *really* use at one time, or even how much a proper portion of cereal is, you will go over the limit – even with small plates and glasses.

On my part, I like to have my coffee out of oversized mugs so I have therefore learnt to take only half of the mug as my quota. This works for me, and fits in nicely with my portion sizing.

For things such as juice, which is good for you but which, in excess, can be bad for you, I have learned to take half of a small tumbler at one setting.

It was difficult at first, getting used to having only half of any liquid in my mug or glass at any one time, but it does work and you do get used to it.

To get correct portion sizes for foods and things, I consulted with my doctor to find out exactly what constituted as a portion for different foods, and was able to resolve that little matter as well.

Since food is the bane of my life, I stay away from large plates and dishes and instead use small, light colored plates. In this way, I can better stay on the portion sizes which I know are right for me.

But what about when you go out to a restaurant? What happens then? Do you just throw your portion resolutions out the window and settle in for a good chow-down?

Not really. You need to realize that you can't order a small portion of steak from a restaurant; instead you will need to take what comes and eat only the correct sized portion, leaving the rest.

If you want you can have it bagged to take home, or if it makes you feel better, share with your companion. As long as you stay away from stuffing yourself silly, you will find that even going to a restaurant is not a problem.

Eat slowly, chew your food properly

This is also a good way to fool your stomach into believing that you have had your fill of food.

In reality, because it takes time for the message to go from your stomach to your brain telling you that you have had enough to eat, eating your food slowly is a good way to stop yourself from overeating.

To do this, you have a choice of either chewing your food slowly, (which also has added benefits of making your food smaller and more easily digestible), or of prolonging your meal. Take the time to savor the food you are eating and to enjoy the company, or your surroundings.

This is also a great way to relax and to break through the stress you are most likely under.

So eat your food slowly, and take the time to chew through it properly. You will find a new appreciation for food not to mention the little fact that you are also taking the time out to relax.

If you can do this despite your busy schedule, you will find that you are better off for it.

Trim the excess fat

Trim the excess fat from your meals. This is a great way to get the nutrition you need without getting in all the fat you don't need.

However, since sometimes that fat which is found in naturally in some foods is the entire reason they taste good, you should look at trimming the excess fat after you have finished cooking.

For instance, if you're having chicken, trim the skin only after you've finished cooking it. In this way, you get the full taste of the chicken, the meat doesn't shrivel while you are cooking it, and you also stay away from the added fat calories found in the skin when you are eating it.

You can also switch pre-packaged foods like tuna in oil, for tuna in spring water. You get the same great taste of the tuna, but you lose out on the added and totally unnecessary fat from the oil.

Or maybe it's bacon you crave, in which case it can be difficult to leave out the fat, but this is more easily rectified when you do your weekly shopping rounds.

Instead of looking especially for the streaky, fat filled bacon, you might want to look at getting in some strips of lean bacon.

Then again, you can also cut out much excess fat in the cooking process itself. If you can just bring yourself to use only a very small amount of cooking oils for your dishes you will find that you have cut down on a significant number of calories from fat.

Then you have the option of using little to no butter or fat spreads on your breads. Olive oil is a healthy choice, as long as you use it moderation.

And these were only a few ideas on how you can cut excess fat from your foods. Think about what you can do if you took a really good long hard look at what you have been eating all these years – the amount of excess fat that you can trim off your normal foods is simply staggering!

Drink plenty of water

Another great way to help you lose weight is to drink plenty of water. Not only do you require plenty of water to keep you hydrated throughout the

day, but it can also give you that feeling of fullness which can help you to curb your snacking.

Or if you can't take the thought of drinking more water than you have to, you might want to consider topping up your water tank with natural juices, herbal teas, black teas, or black coffees.

These are all good alternatives to water as long as you keep the sugar to a minimum. For that matter, you might want to keep the juice to a minimum as well, since although it is good for you, fruits carry many natural sugars.

What you do want to do though is to stay hydrated at all times. It is not only good for you health-wise, but also good for you diet-wise, as you will then most likely not be as prone to snacking.

And a good way to do this is to keep a small bottle of water with you at all times. This way, you will be able to keep hydrated without even having to think about it.

Fight those food cravings

Most people will have a craving for certain type of food (or foods), at some point in their lives. However, probably because of the whole pregnancy food cravings issue, women are seen more to have these types of food cravings than men are.

Whether this is true or not, or whether it is merely because women tend to talk more (and act more) on their food cravings than do the vast majority of men, women are the ones who are more visibly affected by these cravings.

If you want to lose weight however, these food cravings must either be zapped dead, or controlled.

You cannot, no matter what you do allow your food cravings to run rampant in your life. It will destroy your healthy eating lifestyle and it will play havoc with any good that you have achieved.

So stay away from the food cravings! To be able to do this successfully however, is the part where most of us tend to get into hot water.

The first step therefore, even before you begin to control your food cravings and your urge to grab for the nearest available high calorie, high fat, high sugar food, is to take stock of the situation, and this is what we do in the following sections.

Why you have food cravings

You need to learn what triggers these types of food cravings and when. Is it because of something you did, something that happened to you, something you *didn't* do, or maybe you're just feeling overly stressed and need something to keep you going through the next few hours.

Whatever it is, you need to be aware first of all that you can (and most likely, will) have food cravings, even if it is for a delicious boiled-egg-with-honey-mustard-and-lettuce sandwich in the middle of the night!

This maybe-gross sounding example (for some people that is), which I gave you is exactly what I am munching on now since I woke up about half an hour ago (2 AM) to this insane desire to eat such a sandwich.

The point I was getting at with this, was that anyone can have cravings and at any time of day and night. It just depends on the when, the why, and the what.

Or in other words, if you get a food craving, it helps if you can go through these three questions in your head – and it won't take above two minutes to sort them out – before acting on your cravings.

When

Take note of *When* you got your cravings, was it mid morning, was it during your morning commute, or was it while you were making your kids' lunch?

This is important as it can give you a fair indication as to the state of your body and mind at the time. And this in turn can help you to learn about and fight the food cravings over time.

Why

The next thing you need to do is to figure out the *Why* of it all. Why are you getting food cravings? Is it because you skipped breakfast? Or maybe you did an extra bit of work today and your body needs to replenish its stores.

Knowledge is power, and in this case, knowing why you get your food cravings can help you to deal with them.

What

This last one – *What* – is actually divided into two, and the first part is all about what you got the craving for. Was it for chewy chocolate chip cookies, or was it for a BLT? Maybe it was for some sweet-and-sour pork from your favorite Chinese takeaway joint.

Whatever the case, along with the *When*, and the *Why*, you also need to figure out the *What* of your food cravings.

This could come in handy later on, but more importantly, your body could be trying to tell you (more likely it is screaming at you), something that you have overlooked in your daily meal.

The second part of the *What* comes from your decisions, or in other words, what you are going to do about your food cravings. In the end it's really about what you do with your food cravings and how you act on them that will make a difference to your losing or gaining weight.

A few reasons you get food cravings

All people are different, and when you narrow that down even further, it is very easy to say that all women are different. Every single one has a

unique body, and mind, and every single one has a unique perspective on life.

This is why, although overall many things are similar in women across the world, many, many things are also different. No two women will be exactly alike and this applies to their body structure as well.

This means that, ladies, when you get a food craving, it is all you. Nothing any book or magazine or talk show tells you will make it any different.

They can all highlight – just as I'm about to do – some of the reasons why you will get food cravings, but for some women, the reasons are so much simpler, and for some women, they are so much more complex.

So take any advice that you can find and then mold it to your own life and your own lifestyle.

- Stress
- Lack of an adequate amount of sleep
- Pregnancy
- Menstruation cycles
- Your daily eating plan is imbalanced and your body needs replenishing
- You suffer from a health condition which will affect the way that you eat
- Some medications have also been known to cause hunger attacks
- You are not getting the proper amounts of nourishment
- You skip meals -- this can lead to cravings, snacking and hunger pangs
- You have a naturally-born sweet tooth

And these are only a small sampling of the reasons why you might get food cravings and why you might suddenly find yourself snaking on an egg sandwich in the middle of the night!

An interesting example

And for all those women who refuse to acknowledge that “that time of month” can have something to do with food cravings, think again.

Your body is going through hormonal changes, and along with the mood swings you will also get “food swings”; you will crave some foods and dislike others, and you will do what you can to get your food when you want it!

Try mapping out your food habit for about three to four months, (or three to four ovulation cycles if you are not a monthly person) and see what you come up with.

A friend of mine did just that and she came up with many an explanation for her eating habits. And being the limelight hog that she is, Sara has kindly decided to let me use some of her findings in this book. (But only if I mentioned her name – Sara – which I have!)

How did it work then? Well, over the course of six months Sara found out that she went through about one and a half weeks of wanting totally salty foods. This was just before and during and after menstruation.

After that for about one week she would go completely off food altogether, and would only eat the bare minimum to keep her going.

And after this week had passed, she would go into her own personal danger zone where she would eat herself out of house and home for about three to four days.

This primary danger zone was followed by a secondary one, where she would then root around looking for anything and everything sweet that she could get her hands on. And this went on for about one week.

Needless to say, Sara was not a happy bunny during any of these times, except she tells me, when she lost all cravings and ate normally.

By going through this Sara was able to target her weak spots and deal with them. For the most part she is now more able to control her cravings and knows when and why they happen.

Foods to help you fight the cravings

Below, I have provided you with a small list of foods which have been known to help you fight food cravings and the urge to snack at odd hours of the day.

These don't work for everyone, as some people have vastly different dietary requirements. However, these are some of the most common foods that can help you fight food cravings and hunger pangs.

And if you only take the time to try these out, you will at least get a good idea of what type of foods you need to help you fight those food cravings.

- Apples -- they have been known to help you fight food cravings and to keep the hunger at bay (not to mention the doctor!)
- Pine nuts -- these are also generally known to be good fillers, and can stop some people from feeling hungry all the time. (Try the Basil and Pine Nut Pasta recipe I have given in the "Main dishes" section)
- Oatmeal -- is a great hunger buster as it is high in fiber, and it is my favorite weapon against the dreaded hunger pangs. This is also my preferred snack of choice when I crave something sweet -- the maple sugar does the job properly for me!
- Chew gum -- I used to do this a lot and found that since my jaw was so busy chewing away, I didn't have as many urges to snack as used to
- Cheese -- this dairy product can help you to fight salt-cravings. If you are one of those women who have cravings for salty foods at certain times, you might be surprised at what a small piece of cheese can do for you. (Of course, it works as long as you restrict yourself to one small piece and not the entire chunk!)

- Two other good foods for when you need something salty, is air-popped Popcorn, or Pretzels. If you don't load the popcorn with butter or too much salt, and if you get the reduced fat or light version of the pretzels, you have the perfect snack to help you fight food cravings and hunger pangs.
- If you like, homemade granola bars are one of the best ways to get the fiber and nutrition you want, as well as being able to satisfy your cravings.
- Stay away from the jelly doughnuts. Instead try spreading a small piece of bread with some real fruit jam. This is a great small snack that can tide you over till your next meal.
- Green tea, besides being shown to be good for you health-wise, is also a great way to fill you up.

Since you don't need milk or sugar to make this tea taste good, you have satisfactorily dealt with that problem, and you now have something that is not only good for you, but which also fills you up.

Fifteen quick recipes and meal ideas

Since this is not a recipe book I have not concentrated my efforts in that direction.

However, to get you started and to give you a good idea of how you can make some simple and easy meals, I have provided below a number of recipes which, I can personally attest, are tasty, and better yet, easy.

Another thing you might want to keep in mind when going through these recipes, and any other recipes that you can find, is that nothing is really set in stone.

If you like the look of a recipe but find that it takes too long to accomplish, or that it's not healthy enough for you, or maybe there might be some element which the kids don't like in it, you can always change things around to suit you.

Whatever the problem, just remember that you can always experiment or try different variations on the recipe to make it fit your schedule, culinary skills, or tastes.

If you find that you are not a culinary genius par excellence, or even if you simply hate cooking and everything that goes along with it, remember that to lose weight it is always best if you can control the ingredients which goes into your food and the best way to do this is by cooking your own meals.

With a little perseverance you will find yourself able to cook up simple meals to get you through the majority of the days with only a few days of takeaway and fast foods thrown in.

And in reality, you only need to learn a few of the very basic of cooking skills. If you hate to cook, or if you can't really cook anything edible, then cordon bleu cooking is not the way you want to go.

Throw the soufflés out the window (unless someone else made them of course!) and stick to some good hearty meals that will fill your belly and which won't eat into too much of your precious time.

Breakfast

As you might have read in my earlier section about skipping meals and breakfast in particular, I feel breakfast to be one of the most important meals of the day.

Sure you can get by adequately enough with nothing but a cup of coffee or tea in your stomach, but we were just not built to live that way.

By filling up on a good breakfast when you start your day, you are giving your body the much needed fuel to perform as it should, not as it can on a half empty tank.

To that end, as you might have noticed, this is the only sub section which focuses in on a particular meal. The other, following subsections have been categorized into the various *types* of dishes you can prepare.

And although there are less than a handful of recipe ideas for breakfast, my goal here was to show you what you can do without having to resort to sugary cereals and popular breakfast fast foods.

Hearty Omelet

Serves: 1 person

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: 2 eggs

1-2 slices ham

1 sprig coarsely chopped 1 spring onion (shallots will also do)

1 coarsely chopped tomato

Sprinkling of grated cheese of your choice

Cooking oil, or cooking spray

Pinch of cilantro

Pinch of basil or rosemary (depending on your taste-buds)

Pinch of chili powder or

Salt and pepper to taste

Method: Prepare the spring onion, ham, tomato and the cheese beforehand. Next, gently crack the two eggs into a small mixing dish.

You do not want to beat the eggs too hard, maybe only once or twice to get it mixed.

Next, take a large non-stick skillet and place it on a low heat. Spray with cooking spray, or drizzle a small amount (1 tsp is a good amount), of oil into the skillet.

I always like to sauté the ham, onions and tomatoes lightly, so throw these into the pan and sauté for about 2-3 minutes, until they only just begin to turn golden brown.

After these have been sautéed, add the lightly beaten eggs to the skillet.

It's time to get physical when you do this, so set aside your spatula for the moment and give the skillet a good shaking to settle in the eggs.

At this point it is best if you add the remainder of the ingredients to the egg so that everything has a chance to become incorporated into the omelet.

You can either cover the skillet and allow the egg to cook until it is firm yet not rubbery, or you can slightly tilt the skillet and allow the as-yet uncooked portions of the egg, to run to one side and very gently use the spatula to drag it back.

You only need to do this about two or three times before setting the skillet back on the stove.

I have found that this creates a different texture for the omelet than what you would normally get, and it only takes an additional minute or so of your time.

Cover with a lid, preferably a domed one if you have it (it allows the eggs to cook more evenly in my experience), and leave for about 3-4 minutes.

When the egg is cooked to your taste, either fold in half, or serve as is, with a piece of toast or two.

Fresh Fruit Salad

Serves: 1 person

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: 1 Apple of your choice

1 peeled and sectioned Orange

A handful of fresh Strawberries (if in season)

A handful of other berries if no Strawberries

1 medium sized Banana

A handful of raisins

A handful of grapes

Cantaloupe if in season, or Watermelon

4-6oz. Orange juice or other juice of your choice

Method: Start with the cantaloupe or watermelon and work your way upwards. (A melon baller comes in very handy if you like to have a morning fruit salad, and makes things look nice.)

Go on to the grapes, the unseeded variety is the best, proceed with the berry variety that you have and work your way to the orange.

From the orange, go next to the apple, and then the banana. All your fruits should be of bite sized and manageable portions. Add a drop of vanilla for a heavenly smell, along with the orange juice for added zest.

I have found this to create a very hearty breakfast all by itself, and the smell of the fruits is a wonderful way to greet the day with. A cup of coffee washes this lot down very nicely and you will find that a piece of toast never goes wrong either!

Maple syrup Oatmeal

Serves: 1 person

Preparation time: about 10 minutes

You will need: 1 part Oatmeal

2½ parts Water

Maple Syrup, to taste (generally 1-2 tbsp per person)

Salt to taste

Method: Measure out the oatmeal and set aside. Measure out the water into a pan and place only 2 parts of the water on the heat; then bring to a boil.

When the water is boiling, lower the heat to a gentle simmer and add the oatmeal, and salt to taste.

Simmer gently for about 4-5 minutes or until the oatmeal is well cooked, adding the remaining water as needed.

Turn off the heat and add the maple syrup. It is important to add the syrup only at the end of cooking the oatmeal as otherwise the taste comes out different.

Stir well, take off the stove and serve hot. Sprinkle with fresh fruits if you like.

One of the best things I like about this recipe is that it has no milk added to it. For those of you who prefer their oatmeal with milk, substitute the water with milk.

This is also a great snack, or mini-meal, to have when the hunger pangs strike at odd hours of the day. It is not only filling but tasty and will satisfy your desire for food.

Main dishes

These are only a few main dishes which you can combine with whatever takes your fancy, and if you don't feel the urge to go beyond this, you will also find that these dishes are fine as stand-alones.

Add a glass of fine wine and some bread soaked in virgin olive oil and you will find that you have a meal in and of itself.

Of course, if you are cooking for more than only yourself, you might want to spruce it up with a meat, chicken or seafood dish, this will only add more dimension to the meal as you will find out.

Pesto and Basil Nut Pasta

Serves: 1 person

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: ½ lb of your choice Pasta shells,
2-3 tsp readymade Pesto sauce (or the fresh stuff if available)
Sprinkling of fresh or dried Basil, and Rosemary
1 tbsp Olive Oil

Method: Cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packaging. Al dente is always the preferred method of serving pasta, but cook the pasta to your preferred firmness.

Drain and set aside for a few seconds. Take a large pan and heat it over a medium heat, adding the olive oil. Next add the pesto sauce, (feel free to add extra pesto if your taste buds can take it).

Almost immediately afterwards add the pasta to this mixture, taking off the heat after about 1 minute. Add a sprinkling of the Basil and/ or Rosemary, and serve.

This tastes great with a freshly toasted slice or two of baguette, and some red wine.

Although making my pesto from scratch would probably be the better option, I find that I am simply not willing to do that unless I have enough time on my hands to enjoy the process.

Otherwise the bottled variety tastes just as good and makes for a quick and easy meal.

For those of you wishing to take a break from the daily grind of life and who want to make a little magic, the recipe to make the pesto sauce from scratch is found below.

Pesto with Basil and Pine Nut sauce

This recipe will make more than one serving of pesto sauce. If you have any sauce left over, you can always store it in the refrigerator for a few days. Make sure to store it in an airtight container if you do.

If you do want store this mixture, it is also recommended that you add the parmesan cheese only when you are going to use it. This will extend the shelf life of the sauce than if you added the parmesan.

You will need: 1/3 cup Pine Nuts
2 cups of Basil leaves, firmly packed into the cup
1/2 cup of Olive Oil
1/3 cup of grated Parmesan cheese
3 cloves of Garlic

Method: You will need to grind all the ingredients in order to make this sauce. Start with the garlic first, adding in the basil leaves a little at a time.

Grind until you form a very rough mixture, then add in the pine nuts and the olive oil. Keep grinding until you get a textured, not smooth, mixture. The texture is what adds the charm to this sauce.

Next add the parmesan to the sauce, along with salt and pepper to your tastes.

Spinach Fettuccine

Serves: makes 4-5 servings

Preparation time: 15-20 minutes

You will need: 1 lb Fettuccine

- 1 lb fresh Spinach, (frozen can also be used)
- 4 cloves sautéed Garlic
- ½ cup of half-and-half
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan Cheese
- ¼ cup fresh Basil
- 1 tbsp Olive Oil
- Salt & Pepper to taste

Method: Prepare the fettuccine according to the instructions on the packaging. While this is cooking you can then set about preparing the remaining of the ingredients.

Place the remaining ingredients in a food processor, and chop coarsely. When the fettuccine is cooked, take this spinach mixture and combine with the fettuccine.

Season with salt and pepper, pine nuts and some chopped basil if you like before serving.

The “Bruschetta with Tomatoes” recipe I have provided later on, or even a simple baguette will go very well with this simple but satisfying dish.

This is one of my most favored dishes and since most of the ingredients are already at hand I have no trouble in whipping this up. This is also why I have specified that you can use frozen spinach instead of the fresh stuff if you want, since you might not always have the fresh variety available.

With some of the frozen spinach at hand along with a frozen baguette or herbed bread stick, you can be assured of having a meal ready in a matter of minutes even on the most tiring of days.

Additionally, because of the very simplicity of the preparation for this meal, you might find yourself able to unwind and relax as you are going about preparing it.

Oh, and a good glass of red wine followed by a cup of black coffee after the meal just rounds this out perfectly for me.

Warm Sun-Dried Tomato Couscous Salad

Serves: about 2-4 people

Preparation time: 15 minutes

You will need: 1 cup uncooked Couscous

1 clove minced Garlic

1 cup Vegetable Broth

½ a can of Chickpeas

¼ cup chopped Green Olives

¼ cup chopped Sun-Dried Tomatoes

2 tbsp Lemon Juice

2 tsp Olive Oil

A generous pinch each of dried basil and dried Parsley

Salt and Pepper to taste

Method: Combine the minced garlic, vegetable broth, and olive oil in a large saucepan and bring to the boil.

Next add the couscous to this mixture and remove from heat. Cover for 5 minutes and allow the couscous to cook. When the couscous has been cooked, fluff it with a fork to separate the grains.

You can then combine the remaining ingredients into the cooked and fluffed couscous and mix in well.

This dish is best served warm, so you can either time it to finish cooking just before sitting down for your meal, or leave it to heat in a warm – not hot – oven.

Veggies

I have to confess that although I spent the majority of my early life eating anything and everything that I could possibly lay my hands on – with the exception of vegetables – I have now done a complete about-face.

I now prefer to have mainly vegetable oriented meals and only concentrate on meats when I feel like it.

I know that it is hard for any meat loving person to even think of, but it is entirely possible to eat an entire meal consisting only of vegetables and grains. I have been doing it for some time, and I just love it.

I have to confess though, that in the beginning it was a little bit difficult not to have a piece of meat on the plate, something which I could chew thoughtfully throughout the entire meal!

If however, you find that you just cannot do without your meats, you might want to try these vegetable dishes as a tasty accompaniment to your meat dishes.

Sautéed Spinach

Serves: roughly about 4 helpings

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: 1lb fresh Spinach leaves, chopped very roughly
3-4 cloves crushed Garlic
1 large sliced Onion
A handful of unsalted Cashew nuts, or Peanuts

½ tsp Chili pieces (not powder)
¼ tsp Pepper
¼ tsp Mustard seeds
2 tsp Olive Oil, or cooking oil of your choice
Salt to taste

Method: Wash and drain the spinach leaves before chopping them. Prepare your ingredients, then take a skillet or wok and place on a medium high heat.

Drizzle the oil into the heated pan, and add the garlic first. Allow this to sauté until a very light golden brown. Next add the onion and the nuts.

Sauté for a further 2-3 minutes, before adding the remainder of the dry ingredients.

Sauté for a minute or two, before adding the spinach leaves. Do not lower the heat, it needs to be about medium-high.

You will only need to toss the spinach leaves until they become wilted. This should take about 4-6 minutes, no more. Your spinach should still retain its lovely green color while being cooked.

Serve hot, either over a bed of rice or as an accompaniment to mashed potatoes or a meat dish.

Tossed Salad

Serves: 3-4 people

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: 3-4 Lettuce Leaves

1 cup (packed firmly) Baby Spinach leaves
1 small Onion
½ tsp Olive Oil
½ a medium sized Cucumber
6-7 Cherry Tomatoes
A dash of Lemon

Salt and Pepper to taste

Method: Peel, wash and cut the onion into rings, or slice thinly if you can't make it into rings.

Add a dash of lemon, some salt and some pepper on to the onions. Mix well and leave to stand while you prepare the other ingredients.

Wash the lettuce and spinach leaves, along with the cherry tomatoes and cucumber. Shred the lettuce and the spinach leaves. Dice the cucumber, and halve the cherry tomatoes.

Add the lettuce and spinach leaves, along with the cucumber and cherry tomatoes to the onions and drizzle with the olive oil. Toss the salad together and serve.

Black Bean Chili

Serves: 4-6 servings

Preparation time: 5-7 minutes preparation + 3 hours cooking time

You will need: 2 cans of undrained Black Beans

- 6 cloves minced Garlic, or straight from the jar
- 4 diced Roma Tomatoes, or the canned variety
- 1 medium diced Onion
- 1 small can Tomato paste
- 1 tbsp Cumin powder

Method: Place all of the above ingredients into a crock pot over a low fire. When the pot starts to boil, reduce the heat to a simmer. Leave the chili on the stove for about 3 hours of cooking time.

When the chili is ready, you can serve it hot over a bed of rice, or better yet with a helping of mashed potatoes, or even with a piece of "Chicken Baked", the recipe for which, can be found in the next section.

Yes, this is a time consuming dish to make, but only if you're not able to stay at home for 3 hours. If you do have the time then this dish is ideal as the preparation takes so little time.

You can leave this dish to simmer away gently while you potter about the house, with no fuss involved.

Meats, Fish, Poultry

As you would have rightly concluded, this section holds a sampling of meat (in the guise of pork), fish (in the guise of salmon and tuna steaks), and the ever present chicken dish.

And, for your ease and convenience, each of these dishes is easy, convenient to make and tasty to boot (at least I think they are!). These are actually a sampling of my most favored dishes, so I hope you like them too.

If you don't, I have found that it's just as easy to change recipes around and tweak them to suit your palate and your ingredients, so feel free to do as you will with them.

As you might have guessed by now, the goal is for you to get a head start on cooking your own delicious, healthy and easy-to-make dishes without having to resort to the takeaway menu posted on your fridge door!

Chili Pork

Serves: 4 people

Preparation time: approximately 20 minutes

You will need: 3-4 steaks of lean Pork

- 1 large Onion, chopped
- 2 cloves crushed Garlic
- 2 tbsp dark Soy Sauce
- 1 tsp Pepper
- 1 Red Capsicum
- 1 tbsp Cooking Oil
- 1 tbsp Ketchup (tomato sauce)

½ cup Water
½ tsp Chili Powder
Salt to taste

Method: Wash and prepare the meat to begin with. The pork steaks should be cut into rough cubes about 1 inch in size. Marinade in the soy sauce and set aside for the moment.

Place a large skillet or wok on the fire and drizzle in some cooking oil. Add the chopped onion and garlic to the heated oil.

Next add the chili powder (lessen it slightly if you feel this is too hot for your tastes), and the ground pepper, along with the salt to taste. Sauté until the onions are a deep golden brown, try not to burn them!

Add the meat to the sauté and mix in well. Keep it on a high heat for about 5 minutes. Add the water and lower the heat to medium, mixing only occasionally.

10 minutes later, add about 2 tbsp of ketchup into the mix, along with a dash more of soy sauce if you wish. Keep on the fire for another 5-10 minutes or until the pork is done.

The pork should be served hot over a bed of rice. There should be little to no gravy, although the meat itself should be moist and tender.

This dish is not for the tender hearted as it can burn the roof of your mouth if you're not used to this chili let alone this much of it!

However, this is one of the easiest meat dishes to make and requires little to no attention, so feel free to change it as you see fit to suit your taste buds.

Baked Salmon

Serves: 4 people

Preparation time: 25-30 minutes

You will need: 4 steaks Wild Salmon
2 large Onions, sliced
4 cloves crushed Garlic
1 Lemon or Lime
Salt and Pepper to taste

Method: Preheat the oven to 250°F. Wash the salmon steaks and set aside to air dry. Slice the onions, and crush the garlic cloves.

Take a piece of foil for each salmon steak which is about three times the width of the salmon steak. Lay one steak per each foil sheet roughly in the middle.

Next, divide the onions and the garlic between the four salmon steaks, and season with salt and pepper.

Fold the foil over the salmon creating a foil pocket of sorts, bringing the edges together in the middle to create a small rolled up.

The salmon should now lie comfortably in the foil pocket. Place this in the oven for about 15-25 minutes, depending on the thickness of the salmon.

The thicker the steak, the longer you will have to allow it to cook in the oven. Generally speaking though, 20-25 minutes is perfectly enough to cook a salmon steak through.

Remove from the oven when the salmon is fully cooked and serve garnished with either lemon or lime, and a little bit of dill if you have any.

Grilled Tuna Steaks

Serves: 2 servings

Preparation time: 10 minutes

You will need: 12oz. Tuna cut into 2 steaks
2 tbsp freshly squeezed Lemon juice
3 tbsp minced Onion, scallion works best

1 tbsp freshly minced Ginger
2 tbsp Rice Wine
2 tbsp Soy Sauce
Salt & Pepper to taste

Method: Prepare both the ginger and the onions at this time and mince them. Take a large skillet or wok and heat for about 2 minutes.

While this is happening, prepare the tuna steaks by first rubbing the steaks with the lemon juice, then patting them with salt and pepper on both sides.

The skillet will now be hot enough for you to sear your tuna steaks on. Place the steaks on the skillet and cook for about 2-3 minutes on each side depending on the thickness of the steaks.

When they are cooked to your satisfaction, remove the tuna steaks from the skillet and place on a warmed plate. Keep the skillet on the heat.

Add the remaining ingredients in the order of rice wine first, soy sauce next, then ginger and lastly the onions into the skillet, and sauté for about 1 minute.

Season this with the pepper and salt, and pour the mixture over the tuna steaks. Serve hot. This dish goes well with the "Tossed Spinach" dish in the Veggies section.

Chicken Baked

Serves: 4 people

Preparation time: 60-70 minutes (most of which is in the oven)

You will need: 4 chicken legs, preferably with the skin

4 large potatoes with their jackets
1 large sliced onion
2-3 cloves crushed garlic
1 tsp Pepper
½ tsp chili powder

1-2 tbsp Vinegar
A handful of Bay leaves if you can find them
A sprinkling of Cloves and Cardamoms
Salt to taste

Method: If you have the time, marinate the chicken beforehand, but this recipe works just as well without being marinated. Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Next, prepare the chicken, separating the leg into two pieces if possible. Take a large bowl and add all the ingredients excepting the chicken and the potatoes.

Mix these well then add the chicken and thoroughly coat the pieces. Prick the chicken pieces with a fork, and set aside for a minute.

Lay a piece of foil over your baking sheet, then lay the chicken pieces on this sheet. Take care not to overlap the pieces as they will not cook as well.

Place this in the oven for approximately 35-40 minutes. At which point you can reduce the oven temperature to about 220-230°. Keep for a further 15 minutes and turn off the oven.

While the chicken is baking, halve and quarter the potatoes leaving the skin intact (scrub thoroughly first).

After the first 30 minutes has elapsed, carefully slide out the baking tray, turn the chicken pieces over and add the potatoes to it.

Slide the baking tray back inside the oven and leave until cooked according to the times given above.

When the chicken is cooked serve hot, and remember to remove the skin before eating as this will reduce a significant number of calories from the chicken.

At first glance although this dish might seem troublesome and time consuming, it really isn't. The main portion of the time is dedicated to leaving the chicken in the oven.

I find that I can quickly dash everything into the oven before I go to have a quick shower and when I come back my meal is all but ready!

Snacks and other Sundries

The best snack advice that I can give you should be, "Don't", but since we know this to be almost an impossibility, I will instead say that the best snacks that you could have are those which are healthy and good for you, and not those empty-calorie but oh-so-delicious chips, dips and sweets.

So, I would ideally like to suggest fruit for your enjoyment when in need of a quick pick-me-up. However, I know there are some of you out there who feel that fruit is only to be suffered when you don't have a choice.

Instead, may I suggest something along the lines of a quick sandwich with a cup of tea or coffee (hold the cream, if you can); or even a quick snack of homemade granola?

I also find that a quick one person serving of maple syrup oatmeal works wonders for me when I am craving something sweet to eat!

Sandwiches

Serves: 1 person

Preparation time: 5-7 minutes depending on your ingredients!

You will need: 2 slices whole wheat bread

1 tsp butter (if you must)

– or substitute that with –

1 tsp Virgin Olive Oil

Filling of your choice – I prefer cucumber, or ham, or even peanut butter

Method: If you're using butter, then spread the two slices sparingly with the stuff, making sure to take out only a teaspoonful of the butter before spreading.

It becomes all too easy to use more than you should, and this kind of defeats the purpose of having a low calorie, healthy snack!

If you are using olive oil, just drizzle a small amount onto the bread slices, or soak the bread in the oil in a separate dish.

Next add the filling of your choice and enjoy your sandwich. Again here, you need to make sure that you don't go overboard with the filling.

If you're using peanut butter, then take out only a tablespoon or so of it. A little goes a long way.

For a filling along the lines of cucumber, you can use more as it is not as calorie laden as peanut butter.

Bruschetta with Tomatoes

Serves: about 10-12 separate servings

Preparation time: 5-7 minutes

You will need: 2 seeded and chopped Tomatoes
8-10 fresh Basil leaves (or 1 tsp of the dried stuff)
1 tsp Balsamic Vinegar
½ tsp minced Garlic
Black Pepper to taste

1 baguette, French loaf or suitable Italian bread

Method: First preheat the oven to 375°. Take a mixing bowl and mix in all the ingredients, except the bread.

When this is done, slice the baguette into suitable sized pieces and spread the Bruschetta mixture over one side of each slice of bread.

Next, place the bread slices in the oven until the bread is crisp and a golden brown. Serve warm.

I have found that some people also like to drizzle a little bit of Olive Oil or even some extra Balsamic Vinegar over their Bruschetta, so remember to keep a small bottle or container of both if you are serving this to guests.

If you have the time to do so, or you are able to prepare the Bruschetta mixture beforehand, you can leave it to sit for a few hours. You will find that this vastly improves the taste of your Bruschetta.

Peaks, Dips and Plateaus

As you go down the weight loss highway, it is inevitable that you will hit a few peaks, dips and plateaus. These are all part and parcel of losing weight.

By being aware of this fact, you will then be better prepared to deal with them when you eventually come upon them.

Of all of these, the best news for you is to be found in the dips. These are the times when you are losing weight. Conversely then, the peaks are those times when you gain some weight.

However, if you are following a sensible eating and exercise plan, you will find that these peaks are contained and that they only go so far.

The trouble comes not with either the peaks or the dips, but with the plateaus. By its very definition, a plateau is a flat plain, and in the case of your diet, you will find that a plateau is the point at which you will neither gain, nor lose, any weight.

This might seem like a good thing right now (after all, if you aren't gaining any weight it can only be good, right?), but you will find that as time goes by, after you have hit a plateau, that you are getting more and more frustrated by your inability to *lose* weight.

A plateau is a very dangerous place to be for someone wanting to lose weight, and indeed, it is at this point that many people become discouraged to continue with their weight loss plans.

This becomes especially true if you have been yo-yo dieting for a long time, or if you have successfully managed to lose a substantial amount of weight already.

If this is the case, you will find that it becomes more and more difficult to motivate yourself to stay the difficult course you have set for yourself.

For the person who has already lost a substantial amount of weight, it becomes easier to stay at this new weight, and harder to motivate yourself to continue to losing weight.

Take a running leap off your plateau

There's only one way to get off your weight loss plateau and that is to take a running leap off it.

There are a few ways that you can accomplish this, but you will definitely have to get out of the dietary and exercise habits you have gotten into over the last few months.

The entire reason for you to have hit a plateau in the first place is because your body has become accustomed to the level of exercise that you are giving it as well as the amount of food you are eating.

The best way to shake yourself off this annoying plateau which you have come to, is to shake things up a little. To do this, the best way is for you to shake up your life a little bit as well.

I can hear the groans right now. You already went through this in the beginning when you first decided to lose weight, and now you have to go through it again?

Unfortunately yes, but only until you get off your plateau, and since you are already on the winning track to losing weight, the changes you implement this time around won't have to be drastic.

You just need to wake your body up from its complacency and get it to lose some more weight, until you have reached your target weight.

And as I said there are many ways for you to do this, and these can run the gamut from stuffing your face for an entire week with all the “bad” foods which you have been avoiding, to going on the cabbage soup diet for a week (if you can stomach it for that long!), to ramping up your exercise routine.

These will all be along the lines of a jolt of coffee to your complacent body, and you should be able to see results pretty soon.

If not, you have the option of continuing as you are for a few more days or weeks; or you can also change entirely the way that you are going about shaking up your body to begin losing weight again.

That said, I would just like to say that it is probably not a good idea for you to go on a fast food and takeaway binge to shake things up, at least not for longer than two to three days.

Any longer and you will find yourself going back to your old ways and all the good that you have accomplished up till this point will go down the drain.

So, the best advice I can give you would be to either ramp up your exercise routine for a week or two, and who knows you might even find that you like it!

Or your other option is to control your eating habits, again. By this I don't mean that you should go on a stringent diet, or on any of the popular diets doing the rounds at the moment.

Instead you might want to turn the tables so to speak and maybe tighten up your eating habits (which would have become slightly sloppy as time wore off and you found the right dietary needs to suit your body).

When it comes to food you also have the choice of just changing entirely your normal diet to something which is a radical change from the norm, like substituting Asian food for your normally non-spicy food regime, or maybe going vegetarian where you mainly prefer to be a meat eater!

As you can see you can become very creative when trying to vary your diet, and as long as you don't go back to the bad, empty-calorie foods which are the staple of many people today, you will find that you can get off your plateau.

Who knows, you might even find that you enjoy the food variation yourself. After all, the same old thing, even if it is cooked in many different ways can get a bit wearing on the palate.

Another great way to jump off your stagnating weight loss plateau, is to mix both the exercise and the foods you eat. In this way, your body won't know what hit it! And you will most likely see a change in your weight as well.

And before you say that you just don't have the time to go around messing with your busy schedule *again*, think about it for a second or two.

Since you have been warned beforehand about these annoying plateaus, isn't it entirely possible that you would just naturally incorporate these changes into your daily without too much hassle?

The whole problem with *beginning* to lose weight is the factor of time, of which you have precious little, and the fact that it takes a larger force of will to get yourself to begin dieting and exercising in the first place.

Once you are well on your way, only stumbling blocks such as plateaus and unfortunate (but sometimes very necessary eating binges) will get you to stop.

Knowing what to expect in advance can help you to control the situation and maybe turn it around to your own satisfaction.

Exercise – for the birds?

That's how I used to feel about exercise, and I can't lie, I still do to a certain extent. Only now, I have learnt that to get in my requisite exercise and movement of body to keep me healthy, I don't really have to exercise per se.

Instead, I can go dancing, which I love, attend Karate lessons, go for a game of tennis, have an invigorating swim, or merely go for a brisk walk around the block when the heebie-jeebies hit me.

So where does that leave me now that I have incorporated these things into my busy life? With little time on hands to do those things which I used to love doing best: lazing around with a book in my hands, watching the latest talk shows, and... well you get the idea right?

No matter how busy I was, I always found time to do these things which were most bad for me, and made enough excuses to not do those things which were good for me, and which I have to confess, I did like doing.

I was afflicted with a lack of motivation to lose weight, and a lack of commitment to keep going once I did start my weight loss routines.

The long and short of it, though is that although this might sound familiar to you, (substitute whatever bad habit you have, for my ones which I just mentioned), the spiel about never having the time to do the needful and go out and get in some exercise will also probably sound familiar.

The thing is, exercise isn't for the birds, or for those individuals who just can't seem to sit still. Anyone can do it, anytime, anywhere; you just need to have the right motivation and the *want* to do so.

You don't need to go to the gym to get in your daily bout of exercise and you don't need to lift weights, or run long distances, or even swim the pacific ocean to become fit.

All you need to do is to shake things up a bit. Do things that force you to move your limbs and which will help you to lose weight.

If you read on, you will see that I have introduced a variety of suggestions for you to incorporate into your daily life, and these, if done properly can help you to lose weight along with a proper diet.

For those of you who are social animals and like to have company while you are getting in your exercise, you might want to think about joining a fitness club, or a gym, or even taking salsa lessons if you like to dance.

These will not only give your body the necessary stimulus they will also give you the social stimulus you crave as well.

Exercise...without joining a gym

Is this even possible? Well of course it is! There is no hard and fast rule stating that you need to join a gym in order to get your exercise. In fact if you lead a busy life, then the last thing that you will have time for is to go to a gym.

So what do you do then to get your exercise? Many, many things, so many in fact, that even you will be surprised at what you can do in your normal daily life alone to help you lose weight and get fit into the bargain.

You can do any and all of these alone if you want, or if you have someone to share these times with, you can even do these with a friend. As long as you manage to fit at least one of them into your life somehow or other, you will be that much closer to losing weight.

However, even before you begin to do these relatively easy exercises, you should consult with your doctor or physician to rule out any health problems which might prevent you from exercising to your fullest potential.

Move around when you're watching TV

This one is really quite easy. If you think about the amount of time you spend in front of the TV doing nothing but sitting still, you will be surprised at just how much time you are losing out on something that you could be doing, such as exercising.

However, not to worry there are many different exercise you can do even when you are sitting in front of the TV, and most of these are easy ones that won't take too much of your attention away from your program.

So, if you find that you spend a lot of time in front of the TV, then why not think about moving around a little bit?

For a quick fix exercise, here is something that you can do which has been known to strengthen your knees and legs.

My dad was the first person I ever saw doing this while he was watching TV and when I asked and found out what he was doing, I must say that it made sense to me. I have been doing this ever since, and my knees don't creak anymore!

Anyway, it's simple really. All you need is to sit fairly upright in your chair – no slouching please as this is bad for your posture and can also weaken your tummy muscles. Take a cushion or even a pillow and balance it on your feet. Your legs should be outstretched.

Slowly raise your feet off the ground, bending your feet at the knees. The weight of the pillow will make for some light resistance training.

Bring your feet up so that your legs are now fully straightened. Hold this position for about ten seconds and then lower your feet gently back to the floor. Do this for about eight to ten times if you can, or even more if you can manage that.

Walk!

There really is no substitute for using your own two feet, although, with the advent of cars, bikes and other such things, most of us these days only use our feet to go from our homes to our cars and back again!

For the person looking to lose weight, it is a very easy thing to ditch their car at a suitable distance to where they really want to be, and to walk the remaining distance. In this way, you will find yourself getting in some much needed exercise.

This is not the only way to make full use of your feet. There are other ways which are just as easy and which are just as simple to do.

For instance, if you only want to run down to the grocer's for one or two items, you might think about walking down there instead of taking the car (that is, of course, if the grocer's is not situated two to three miles away from you!).

I remember that when I was a college bound student I had no car and would walk every weekend to the grocer's, where I would buy my week's worth of groceries and then haul it all back to my apartment still walking!

In those days I was reasonably fit for all that I was overweight, and this was due mainly to the fact that I used my feet a lot to get me from point A to point B. It was rarely indeed that I didn't walk where I had to go to.

The whole point of this reminiscing was to show you that you can be overweight and still be reasonably fit, *as long as you move your body around* a little bit.

To that end, if you are interested in using walking as your exercise of choice, you have the options of,

- Using the car only to get you a part of the way to your ultimate destination, like for instance, park your car about two to three blocks away from your office, the restaurant or the hairdresser's, and then walk the rest of the way.
- Or if you work from home, or you are at home most of time, take a walk around the block to clear your head and to get some fresh air along with some exercise.
- Walk to the grocer's and back if you can make it that far, with most of your shopping in your arms.
- Take a relaxing walk in the park with your friends, is you have the time.

These are only a few suggestions on how you can incorporate walking into your life and your schedule, and I'm sure that if you look hard enough you will find other ways to put your feet to good use.

Take the stairs

In this day and age of high-rises and skyscrapers, it shouldn't be too difficult to locate a set of stairs for you to climb. More often than not you should be able to find some in your office if you are a working woman, or in your apartment or home.

In fact, these days it is hard to get away from the ever present staircase, although we do seem to manage this feat quite nicely by taking the elevator if one is available, or if you're at home, by making as few trips up and down as possible!

Take the stairs whenever possible and your knees will thank you for it as you grow older. The more exercise you give your knees the better, and in this case, you are also giving your body some much needed exercise as well.

If you work or live in a multi-storied building take the stairs as far as possible, then take the elevator the rest of the way. Do this every day, using the stairs to go up only as far as you are comfortable, but always try to make it up one more flight of stairs than your comfort zone, this is what will get your blood pumping.

Do this until you are comfortable with your present level of stairs, and then up the ante and add an extra flight of stairs to your routine. In time you will find that you can easily climb the entire flight of stairs to your office without panting or even breaking a sweat.

This will be a winning point in your favor (especially if you have to climb up twenty-two flights of stairs!), and can be a great boost to your self esteem.

If you are mainly at home and you have a two or more storied home, you should find as many excuses as you can to go up and down the stairs as possible.

Of course, since this is not necessarily something that you will do, you should make reasons for you to trudge up the stairs. For instance, if your normal routine is to pile everything into one basket and then take it all up in go, change your routine.

Instead of doing this, try taking things up as they come to your hand, even hiding or giving away the basket if you have to, in order to force yourself to take the stairs as much as possible.

The long and short of it is that you should use the stairs wherever possible, thereby using your feet to move you around, and bypassing the need to use the stair machine at the gym!

Cycle

This is another fun option of exercising, and can be a great way to relax after a grueling day at home or in the office. Better yet, it can either be a solitary sport, or a fun-filled ride with friends or family.

That said, if you feel like being especially kind to not only yourself, but also to the environment, you might feel like cycling to many of the places which you would normally use your car for.

Obviously if you are trying to make a good first impression on a client or someone equally important, then you wouldn't necessarily want to ride up in front of them on your bike, but otherwise you will find that a bike is an indispensable and fun method of getting in the requisite exercise.

And if you are brave enough to do so, you might even want to bring back your weekly shopping strapped down on your bicycle!

What you can do to begin with

Below is a short list of what you can do to begin losing weight, without even resorting to a weight loss regime. These are simple things that you can easily incorporate into your busy lifestyle and things which can help you to lose weight to begin with.

And the best way not to become overwhelmed by everything, is *not to do everything at once*. Don't try to incorporate every single thing you find here or anywhere else for that matter, into your schedule. This is just setting yourself up for a fall.

Trying to do everything at once is one good way to make sure that you won't do any of these things. You can become overwhelmed by everything, and when this happens things will definitely go to pot!

Remember that this is only a very small list of the many things which you can do in your daily life to accomplish your desired weight loss.

The short list

There are many other things which you might want to consider, and some of which I have included in point form only and some of which I have already expanded on, to give you a good idea of what I am talking about.

- Walk, when you can and ditch the car.
- If you have a choice between the elevator, the escalator or the stairs, take the stairs wherever possible. You will be getting a free workout every time.
- Eat healthy foods, and try to keep the takeout to a minimum if at all.
- Learn to drink as much water as you can, and stay away from the sugar laden, caffeinated beverages as far as possible.
- Stick with portions sizes that you can eat, anything else will only be excess weight on you. (So don't supersize your food portions!)
- Substitute sugar with something that is more natural if you can, such as honey.
- If you know that you like to snack, make and take your own. Or, if you prefer, buy the ready-packaged portion sized snacks which are now readily available in most grocers and supermarkets.
- Try to stay away from food if you know that you are an emotion-eater, do something else while you are in this emotional state of flux.
- Try not to become depressed or downhearted when you fall off the weight loss wagon and go on a binge. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and get right back on.
- If you find that you can't stay away from the sugary bits and bites that are most people's downfall, then learn to eat only half, or a small, helping of whatever it is.

For instance a candy bar can always be divided into two, one half to be eaten now, and the other half to be eaten later.

- If you like sandwiches or you just like bread in any form or manner, stay away from the butter. Try something more natural such as olive oil, or better yet nothing at all if you can manage it.
- If you're a regular tea or coffee guzzler, try as far as possible to take it black without sugar, or if this is an impossibility, lessen the cream and sugar which you take.
- Or if you like those large cups of grandé cream-filled coffee's which you can buy at your nearest coffee shop, then make a compromise. Ask for the large cup, but ask for a small, or single, serving of whatever it is you want.
- If you find yourself regularly filling up your plate at meal times, then try switching plates – use smaller plates instead of large ones. This way you can fill up your plate but the damage will be considerably lessened.
- And the same applies to whatever it is that you are drinking. If you like to have a cup which is brimming full, then try using smaller cups or mugs instead of using the outsized ones.
- Learn to trim the fat off any foods you are eating, this can reduce a goodly number of calories from your diet.
- Remember to eat breakfast, even if it is only a dull old sandwich washed down by orange juice and a coffee. You need the fuel to keep going throughout the day.
- Eat small portions at any given meal, don't go overboard. If you know that you will become hungry later on, have another small meal instead of going in for an empty-calorie snack.
- And if you have the choice of whether you want a double-chocolate oversized muffin or an apple or a banana, take the healthier option, you'll feel better for it afterward, trust me.

- Where you can eat home-cooked meals, even if they do only consist of one or two dishes, do so. Leave the fast food and the takeout for a time when you want to reward yourself for being good.
- Learn to make the most of your time. If you have a few minutes of yourself between things, then do a few squats or lunges, or wall pushups. Do anything you want, just *move* yourself, and get in some exercise.
- A good meal should always be enjoyed, not wolfed down as if you haven't eaten in a while! Take the time to enjoy your meal, in this way you will begin to eat less as you will feel fuller before you begin to reach the end of your meal.
- If you're at home, then don't drink straight from the bottle or carton, or even eat straight from the tub or packet. Take what you want and put it into a glass, mug, dish or plate. This way you have control over the portions you eat, and you know exactly how much you have eaten.
- If you're very hungry when you are sitting down to a meal, you might want to think of having a starter or a type of filler, so that you don't fall on your main course like a starving wolf.
- Salad is a good filler, as are the light soups, (not the creamy variety). You might want to stay away from the bread as you as you will more than likely slather some butter over it to make it more palatable!
- And lastly, the one thing that could send you over the edge over when you are trying to lose weight: taking seconds. Don't. Take enough food in the first serving itself to fill – but not overfill – you, and stay away from second and third helpings altogether.