

good Health



Why you can't lose weight

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Image: Christopher Campbell-Unsplash

You've tried every trick in the book to lose weight but it all seems in vain. We often hear ..“Eat less and exercise more” or “Eat keto and do hot yoga to lose weight” but however hard we try the weight simply won't budge. Unfortunately, these stand- alone practices and many others won't provide you with the lasting impact of normalised weight.

Weight management and feeling well need to go hand in hand and requires an approach that is more balanced and wholistic.

To provide a lasting solution for your weight gain, include a more Mediterranean savoury eating plan, address sleep issues, review lifestyle imbalances creating excess stress responses, embrace a well thought out and age- appropriate exercise and strengthening programme and last but not least become familiar with what your hormones may be doing. This can easily be done using home testing saliva hormone kits for both women and men which provide easy to read results and ultimately, a pathway forward to achieving your ideal weight once and for all!

If you are a woman you are especially prone to be more vulnerable to slower metabolism, food cravings and hormonal changes throughout your life. So the journey through PMS to pregnancy, menopause and daily stress could take you thru a variety of ups and downs, courtesy of your hormones. We now know that appetite, weight loss, metabolism and female hormones interact with one another but our response to stress seems to dominate most of our metabolic functions. So let's take a closer look at some of the key hormones that may be interfering with your ability to reach your target weight.

Calories matter but hormones matter more.

The big one is **cortisol**. Ninety percent of the time, I find cortisol (a stress hormone) to be at the root cause of weight loss resistance as it also has a habit of disrupting all the other hormones. The body makes cortisol in response to stress so constantly being busy, running from here to there, meeting deadlines, juggling too many balls in the air and trying to cram too much into a day dysregulates cortisol, depleting your happy brain chemicals like serotonin, robbing you of quality sleep and making your body store fat especially around your belly. High cortisol is also linked to depression, food addiction, sugar cravings and insulin resistance.

Thyroid and adrenals work hand in hand. If the adrenals are overtaxed due to excess stress/illness it looks to the thyroid to take up some of its duties which it doesn't like to do so it resists and becomes sluggish. The most common symptoms could include sudden weight gain, fatigue, dry skin and constipation. The thyroid gland situated in the throat area is forever hungry for key minerals to make it work properly, especially zinc, iodine and selenium.

Insulin is next and is produced in the beta cells in the pancreas which is primarily responsible for the regulation of fat and carbohydrates in the body. Insulin allows the body to use glucose efficiently. Insulin resistance and its direct cousin diabetes type 2 can lead to high levels of circulating glucose in the blood creating weight gain. It can also be a factor in polycystic ovaries. Dietary management and exercise plus reduction in cortisol production are key in regulating insulin.

Estrogen or specifically estradiol is a key

female sex hormone (also found in men) and likes to control the deposition of fat around the torso and midriff in both women and men. Fat cells are also found to be another source of estrogen supply so the more weight you carry the more estrogen can be made in the fat cells creating more weight gain. Excess estrogen can be very "bloating" by virtue of its fluid retentive properties and for men it can mean development of breast tissue which is more obvious as men age and testosterone levels take a nosedive.

The level of the other major female hormone (also found in men) is **progesterone**. This hormone is like a body tonic to cells and will busily go about counter- balancing much of what estradiol and cortisol likes to do in the body. Women need to ovulate each month in order to produce a degree of progesterone and as this can be highly irregular throughout a woman's life she may find herself in estrogen dominance patterning which simply feeds back into the weight cycle. Please visit www.kimthenaturopath.com for more information on this important life changing hormone.

The male dominant hormone **testosterone** lowers as men and women age and can affect muscle mass which also affects metabolic rate, calorie usage and ageing. To slow down ageing, it's important to maintain or improve your lean body mass as ageing also begins in the muscles. For women with polycystic ovaries levels of testosterone are often much higher which will then interfere with the correct balance and response of the female hormones often adding to the weight gain situation.

Sometimes the efforts of diet and gym just don't pay off on the scales.

Leptin is an interesting hormone that works in conjunction with another hormone called grehlin which signals hunger. Together these are called the hunger hormones since they control how much and how often you eat. Leptin is secreted by fat cells. Researchers of leptin have now found that people with obesity had plenty of leptin but still gained weight because the body is overloaded with leptins dulling the correct signal pathways to stop eating. Conversely, as you lose weight and fat, leptin levels fall significantly



which can make those last few kgs a struggle to lose especially around the midriff because your brain interprets this as a starvation signal and slows many metabolic functions down. In order for leptin to work properly in the body you need plenty of high quality sleep, structured exercise programme and a lean healthy, low gi, savoury diet.

So what is the take-away message? The best way to get your hormones back on track and reinstate a healthy weight is to correct hormonal imbalances by changing the way you eat, move, think, sleep and supplement. For further information about in-home hormone saliva testing kits and personalised weight management strategies please visit www.kimthenaturopath.com.



Naturopath, Kim Piper N.D. (Hons) Speciality areas include hormones for men and women, diet and lifestyle rebalancing, gut function, children's ailments and daily wellness protocols. With 30 years experience she is also the author of a best-selling book 'Woman to Woman...managing your hormones safely and naturally'.

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