

Shedding Pesky Pounds

Green tea enables you to burn more calories while your body is at rest.

Question: I'VE BEEN LOSING WEIGHT, but I'm having trouble shedding the last five to 10 pounds. Is there a natural product I can take that might reduce food cravings? Also, I've heard that drinking green tea can help burn calories. Is this true?

Answer: Food cravings are not a sign of weakness or lack of will power. The craving for carbohydrates and sugar is directly related to an imbalance of the serotonin chemical in the brain. As serotonin increases, appetite decreases.

A natural chemical compound called 5-HTP (5-Hydroxytryptophan) found in the griffonia plant can affect serotonin levels and suppress appetite. By taking 5-HTP in supplement form (according to package directions), you can control your food cravings and eat less.

Regarding green tea, what you heard is correct. Studies published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that green tea has thermogenic effects, which means it enables you to burn more calories while your body is at rest.

These thermogenic properties also promote fat oxidation, meaning that you burn more fat as well. Another chemical in green tea increases metabolism, so your body burns more food for fuel and stores less.

"Green tea appears to rev up the rate at which the liver breaks down fat, decrease fat absorption from the gut and

boost levels of the neurotransmitter norepinephrine, which plays a role in how the body burns calories,” says Timothy Birdsall, a naturopath at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Zion, Illinois.

Green tea is available in supplement form, so you can gain the benefits without having to drink huge quantities of tea daily. To lose weight and keep it off you must exercise and eat a healthy diet (low-fat with lots of fruits and vegetables and fiber). Also, to help in your weight-loss efforts I recommend that you look for a natural supplement that contains 5-HTP and green tea extract to help you achieve your goals.

Question: I KNOW I NEED SUNLIGHT for my body to make vitamin D. But how much sun is enough? I’m concerned about skin cancer and don’t want to get too much sun exposure.

Answer: Vitamin D is essential to the body for making proper use of calcium. It not only enhances the absorption of dietary calcium (and phosphorus) but it also helps stimulate the rebuilding of bone tissue.

You’re correct about our bodies needing some sunlight to manufacture vitamin D. Fortunately, it doesn’t take much. About 10 to 15 minutes of sun exposure twice a week to the face, arms, hands or back (without sunscreen) is usually enough. Sunscreens with a sun protection factor, or SPF, of 8 or greater will block ultraviolet rays that produce vitamin D.

If you plan to stay out in the sun longer, then practice sun safety by applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 or 30, wearing protective clothing (including a wide-brimmed hat) and avoiding the sun when it’s most intense (usually between 10

a.m. and 2 p.m.).

Although sunlight is a major source of vitamin D, it isn't the only source. Many foods such as fortified milk and cereals are supplemented with the vitamin. Other food sources include cold-water fish such as salmon, eggs and mushrooms. Most experts recommend 400 IU (International Units) of vitamin D daily, taken with calcium and other minerals such as magnesium and zinc.

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