

## **Weight Loss: 25 simple things that make a massive difference** **Elle Bradshaw**

**Before we list the 25 simple things that can make a massive difference to how much weight you can lose, I'd like to talk to you about your "diet".**

**First of all, we don't "GO on a diet" we are already on a "diet".**

The food that we eat every day makes up our individual dietary requirements.

Therefore if we want to lose weight, we need to stop consuming those things that have allowed us to gain (or maintain) our current weight, to ones that allow us to lose weight. Now it may be as simple as portion control, because lets face it, we may be consuming "healthy" foods, but if we consume more than our bodies use as fuel we will gain weight. Therefore losing weight is a simple equation – consume less than your body needs to use as fuel and you will lose weight.

Myth number 2: When you lose weight you are not just losing "fat". Your body is made up of many things including hair, bones, tendons; muscles, organs, water and fat, and unfortunately we cannot decide where we are going to lose "weight" from – and it disappears. But we can do a number of things that means we are more likely to lose fat and not muscle tissue and water. Yes I did say muscle tissue. But read on to find out more.

The final point I would like to make before we get into the 25 simple things that make a massive difference to your weight loss is this:

Remember, it has taken you this long to get to the size and shape that you are. Do not expect to lose all your excess weight or size in a few days.

The choices that you make today, will impact on how you look tomorrow.

Are you making the right choices?



### **1. Breakfast:**

As it sounds after a period of 6-8 hours sleep you do need to “break your fast” and you do that by eating something. But don't go for the sugary cereals and full fat milk, why not try scrambled eggs and a piece of wholemeal toast with tomatoes. The protein helps to keep you full for longer, the wholemeal toast and the tomatoes gives fibre and a range of vitamins. And it doesn't take long – if you use a microwave and a toaster, a couple of minutes and you're done.

### **2. Water:**

Aim for 2-4 litres a day, especially if you sweat a lot, the weather is warm to hot, you do a lot of exercise and you drink alcohol. Water helps the body flush out the rubbish. And it doesn't have to be “plain” either. Think Soda Water – no calories, herbal teas (hot or cold), add a slice of lemon or other citrus, cucumber or mint to give it a different taste. And try drinking it ice cold – apparently the body has to burn calories to warm up the water to body temperature. It may not be a lot of calories, but every little does count. Why did I single out alcohol? Have you ever woken up with a hangover? Chances are good that if you did it is because you are dehydrated from the alcohol you consumed. A good rule of thumb is to drink as much water as you do alcohol. So between each alcoholic drink, drink water. Not only does this reduce the amount you can put in your system at any one time, you are re-hydrating your body and reducing the number of calories you are taking in too.

### **3. Vitamin D:**

If you spend most of your time indoors chances are going to be good you will be deficient in Vitamin D. Myriad pieces of research indicates that this fat soluble vitamin does more than prevent rickets, but can aid the body's ability to absorb calcium and according to some of the information I've read, may promote weight loss and prevent certain types of cancer. Now the jury is out on this one, but if it is as simple as adding another vitamin to your daily regime – then it is worth thinking about. On a personal level, I was advised to take double the amount of Vitamin D by my doctor to counter the number of sinus infections I was getting. Since taking the vitamin I've not had to go back to the doctors.

### **4. Vitamins and minerals:**

Remember to take a good multi-vitamin. We may think our diet is balanced and healthy, but there are a lot of trace minerals to consider – again it is a simple way to ensure we are getting everything we need.

### **5. Good fats:**

Think olive oil, nuts, seeds, fish and avocado. Limit (get rid of entirely) the trans fats – those things that create margarine, and are in most take away sandwiches you buy at the deli as well as most (if not all) the processed cakes, biscuits, pastries, potato chips (crisps) and everything else it seems. Getting rid of the trans fats can immediately see a reduction in calorie intake, and believe it or not, once you get through the craving phase (and yes it does happen, and yes they do go away after a very short while) you don't miss the foods or the taste. Having had a cheat day the other week and eaten a small portion of nacho chips with some chilli, I felt so awful I vowed I would never eat them again. Now I eat my chilli with avocado and a dollop of sour cream – and it tastes just wonderful (and I'm not sick).

### **6. Remove Processed foods:**

And talking of which, and you know what I am going to say here – don't eat these in any quantity if you want to lose weight. Our bodies are a finely tuned machine, so why would we want to give it inferior fuel? Think performance car and cheap engine oil – you would never do it, but we do it to our bodies ALL the time.



### **7. Avoid white:**

Think rice, bread, sugar, pasta and anything made with flour. All these do is spike your blood sugar, giving you an instant “hit” – the chemistry is interesting, but basically as the body takes in the white stuff, it has to produce insulin to process it ... once the body has processed it and stuffed it in your fat cells for later use when you need energy to outrun that sabre tooth tiger the body experiences a major slump and what happens then – you crave more “white stuff”. It takes a couple of days to stop thinking in terms of “white” but believe me this one trick can save you a whole chemistry lesson of trouble... think diabetes 2 prevention for starters. But if you can't bear the thought of not having your “white stuff” ensure you have some good quality protein with it to minimise the “damage”. And while we are on the subject – check the labels for things like corn sugar, corn syrup or High Fructose Corn Syrup as this has all but replaced “sugar” in processed foods and soft drinks – and avoid them too.

### **8. Halve it:**

Or better still opt for the entree size servings when you eat, especially if you go out to a restaurant to eat. Most people don't realise just how large restaurant portion sizes have become, but portion control is a major key in the weight loss puzzle. We feel we want “value for money” and that means having food and lots of it on our plate when it is served. Opting for the entree size servings not only saves us hundreds of calories per meal, it's cheaper too. Similarly when we are at home, make sure you don't over eat your portion sizes.

### **9. Halve it #2:**

If you have a lot of weight to lose it can seem too hard to eat the tiny portions stated on some “diets” – so in the beginning of your modified eating plan a good rule of thumb would be – whatever you were going to have, have half the amount. So if you were planning on eating 2 pizzas for dinner eat 1 and save the other one for tomorrow. If you normally ate a loaf of bread in one sitting, eat half. 3 chickens – eat 1 ½ and so on. As you begin to lose size you will be able to reduce your halves again. 1 pizza becomes half a pizza and so on.

### **10. Halve it #3:**

Desserts and other “sweet stuff” – the same rule applies to this section of foods. I no longer eat dessert or very much that could be labelled “sweet” – it has taken me years to wean myself of the stuff, but now I rarely even think about it. Occasionally I will have some yoghurt, but not very often as the “diet” stuff is full of aspartame, and that is one chemical I do not like to put into my body, and the flavoured stuff is full of sugar and fat... tastes great, but it is now something I keep for a treat. If you do want dessert, share it with someone else.

### **11. Chocolate:**

This one deserves a mention of its own. If you do eat chocolate, a good idea is to forget the milk version and the marketing miracle they call “white chocolate” which is just sugar, fats and a variety of chemicals mixed together to make it taste wonderful, and opt instead for the 70%+ cocoa version. It may take some getting used to, but break a tiny piece off and put it into the roof of your mouth and let it dissolve slowly. Believe me you get all the highs of chocolate without the calories.

### **12. Take it with you:**

What am I talking about? Lunches and snacks of course, especially for work. Prepare your “work” meals the night before and take them with you, that way you can't be tempted to run out and grab the first thing you think about when you get hungry. Not only saves calories, you can save hundreds of dollars a year too.



### **13. Don't take money with you:**

A good rule of thumb, don't carry money with you. This one works especially well at lunch times. If you don't have it with you, you can't spend it and more importantly you can't spend it on inferior calories.

### **14. Walk:**

Walking is a great way to move things along internally (if you get my meaning) – they didn't use to call it a constitutional for nothing you know. Set your alarm for 40 minutes earlier than your normal get up time, then get up and get walking. I have a range of circuits based on time. My 30 minute morning walk is a wonderful way of waking up the mind and of course the body. I tend to walk on an empty stomach, but that is a personal choice. If you find yourself getting light headed try eating a piece of fruit before you go out. And don't forget the water.

### **15. Rewards:**

Never reward yourself with food or alcohol. Weight loss should be a happy journey to the size and shape you've always wanted, so why ruin the process by eating something you know will de-rail your progress? Now some people may say that denying yourself everything is a bad thing – but given what goes into the "rewards" if you think about "sweets / fast food / take away" etc then surely it would make sense to reward yourself with something that is going to make you feel better? So what kind of rewards? Well a good idea is to have them set up ready for the milestones. Losing 5lbs you may want to treat yourself to a foot spa or massage. Losing 10lbs you may want to reward yourself with a new pair of trainers or pair of track pants. Losing 15lbs you may want to go through your wardrobe and donate all the clothes that are just too big for you these days ... what better reward than that – but I would recommend not re-stocking your wardrobe just yet if you have more weight to lose, better to buy one or two pieces in a smaller size and to keep pushing on.

### **16. Alcohol:**

As much as I hate to say this, but too much alcohol isn't good for you. What is too much – well that is not for me to say, but just looking at the calories is a great start. For example a bottle of wine on average is about 560 calories. Have you any idea how much time it takes to burn off those kinds of empty calories? Well a week or so ago I did a time trial on a static bike at the gym. It took me 44 mins of cycling on level 4 at an average speed of 107RPM to burn off just 300 calories. That's an awful lot of cycling (about 21km's actually).

### **17. Incidental exercise:**

I'm sure everyone has heard of use the stairs not the elevator. Well there is more to incidental exercise than stairs. Get off the bus I stop earlier and walk the rest of the way. Do your own housework and gardening. Clean the car. Walk the dog. Walk the neighbour's dog if you don't have one. Go dancing. Challenge the kids / grandkids / nephews / nieces to a game of twister. Play Frisbee. Re-decorate the house – believe me climbing up and down the step ladders is a wonderful way of burning calories and tightening the legs and butt. Get off your chair and walk to your colleagues desk to deliver a message rather than using the email. Hide the TV remote control so you have to get up and change the channel. Get frisky – not only does it burn calories, the natural high just makes you feel better. And before you tell me you don't have the time, all I am asking you to do is think about how you can get more exercise (incidental) into your day, sometimes you would be surprised at how easy it can be.

### **18. Do it anyway:**

There are times when even I don't want to exercise, I may not feel particularly "well". I may be feeling tired or stressed. When that happens I usually go anyway. I always keep a set of work out gear in the car and I like to get changed before I leave the office. I may only do half an hour on the static bike, but that half an hour can release those feel



good hormones we often hear about. “The runners high” is our reward for working out.

### **19. Get support:**

Weight loss may seem to be a lonely journey if you are doing it on your own. My gym started a 12 week weight loss program and even the boss is on the chart. My name is there along with his and 37 others. Seeing your name up there and to see the numbers come slowly down can and does give you the incentive to continue.

### **20. Do it for yourself:**

Don't lose weight because someone told you to (unless it's a doctor or health professional). Find your own reasons to lose weight, they will be unique to you. What do you want to look like? What do you want to wear? What size? Do you have a health reason? Do you want to lose weight and get fit for a specific reason eg., running a marathon? When you have your reasons lined up your daily actions should be easier.

### **21. Don't buy it:**

If you know you have a tendency to eat certain foods you know are absolutely no good for you – then don't buy it and don't keep stock piles of them in the cupboards, cars or other places just in case you “get hungry”. Limit your temptations to once in a blue moon and then only buy a very small portion of whatever it is you are craving. Chances are going to be good if you don't start eating / drinking “it” again your mind will eventually get over it.

### **22. Don't stress:**

For some reason we do seem to stress a lot. Some stress can be considered good for us, deadlines that we cannot get out do tend to focus the mind. It can also help us forget to eat. Too much stress however can cause a myriad of problems and our reaction may be to eat for comfort or drink to drown your sorrows. If this is you, it might be a good idea to deal with whatever is causing your stress and / or speak to someone who can help you.

### **23. Sleep:**

Sleep is essential we all know that. Too long without sleep and our body starts to go into stress mode, our cognitive functions are compromised and believe it or not it is harder to lose weight if we don't get enough sleep. Aim for 6-8 hours a night as this allows our body to repair itself. If like me you struggle to get enough sleep (insomnia) again you do need to work out what is causing you to lie awake, or wake repeatedly throughout the night. Several things to try:

- Try and go to bed at the same time each night
- Try having a bed time ritual – for example: turn off the computer and the television a good hour before going to bed, shower, clean your teeth and limit the caffeine and alcohol. Write your must do tomorrow list and forget about the tasks that you need to do. Set 2 alarms if necessary if you feel you may oversleep.
- Don't eat too late – your body may be processing foods and give you indigestion which may be the cause of your inability to sleep
- Listen to music – preferably something without lyrics, keep it low and drift off.
- Read – preferably not Stephen King who has a philosophy with his writing that says he wants you “to sleep with the lights on”.

### **24. Habits:**

We can all be guilty of bad habits we don't think we have. Make a study of your day, what do you do? When? Why? Are you in the habit of buying a cup of coffee on the way to work every morning? Does that coffee now come with a biscuit on the top and a muffin because you “forgot” or didn't have time to eat breakfast? Do you have a glass of wine after work while you cook and prepare dinner? Does that one glass



turn in to half a bottle before you stop?

**25. Maintain it:**

Finally - Remember you need to ensure that whatever you do, you can maintain. Start small, add a new suggestion to the ones you have adopted each week and see if you can maintain that before you try another one. We are after “over life success” not overnight success.

