

Losing weight is one of the most common resolutions, and for many of us this can be a real struggle! If you're having a hard time losing those extra pounds, it's tempting to put the blame on a sluggish metabolism. But, is your metabolism really the reason it's so hard to lose weight? And, more importantly, is there anything we can do about it?

Our nutrition expert, Anneke Vink, is here today to explore some of the facts and myths about metabolism and weight loss.

Q. What does it mean to have a slow metabolism - and is this really the reason it's so hard to lose weight?

A slower metabolism means that your body doesn't use energy as effectively, and will store calories instead of burning them. If you have a history of dieting, this can cause a sluggish metabolism and may be the reason it's so difficult for you to lose weight.

Q. Is there anything we can do about it?

The good news is, there *are* things you can do to help boost your body's calorie-burning power.

The most important thing is to EAT! This may sound crazy to those trying to lose weight through dieting, but the problem with this old school of thought, is that it actually slows metabolism.

Every cell of the body is like a flashlight bulb. When our bodies don't get enough food, or fuel, every cell burns less brightly.

Recent studies show that eating smaller meals every three to four hours aids metabolism and weight loss.

This is the number one thing that we, at Dani Health & Nutrition, encourage all of our clients to do. If you're not already doing so, one of the best single strategies to lose weight is to look at your day and see where you can schedule in regular meal and snack times.

Q. What about certain foods? Is it true that drinking green tea can help increase our metabolism?

Surprisingly yes! There are 15 super foods that can help increase metabolism. You touched on one very popular beverage, green tea, which is now being added to a host of products ranging from multivitamins to juices.

Grapefruit is another super food that boosts metabolism by lowering insulin levels in the body. The caffeine content in coffee increases metabolism but keep it to 2 or 3 cups a day – any more may cause dehydration, which will actually inhibit the body's ability to burn calories.

Other super foods to include in your diet include turkey, plain yogurt, almonds, apples, spinach, beans, broccoli, soymilk, and oatmeal.

Q: I've also seen some fat-burning products with certain herbs or spices added to them. For example, "The Beyonce Diet" is a shake that contains cayenne pepper. Should we also be using products like this one?

I don't recommend a liquid diet like the Beyonce Shake but it certainly wouldn't hurt to add some spice to your meals!

Hot foods and spices like cayenne pepper, jalapenos, & curry powder causes your body to burn extra calories for hours after you ingest them, speeding up both your heart rate and metabolism.

Now, if hot peppers or spicy foods are not a favorite, you may want to try cinnamon. Cinnamon is a fantastic spice – and a little bit can go a long way. Cinnamon helps your body metabolize sugars more effectively and maintain steadier blood sugar levels. It can also help lower your cholesterol. So, go ahead and add a sprinkle to your daily cup of coffee.

Q. It is important to remember that there is more to the metabolism than just eating these super foods! What else do you need to focus on to increase our metabolism?

1. **Stay well hydrated.** Staying well hydrated is essential to flushing the body of toxic byproducts that are released when fat is burned. Cold water may also give your metabolism at least a small boost because energy is required to heat the body.
2. **Avoid stress.** At all costs. Stress can actually cause weight gain, particularly around the tummy. Why? Because physical and emotional stress activates the release of cortisol, a steroid that slows metabolism.
3. **Sleep.** Research shows that people who don't sleep for seven to eight hours a night are more prone to weight gain. Additionally, we now know that lean muscle is regenerated in the final couple of hours of sleep each night.

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