

YOUR HEALTH



Manage Your Midsection by Managing Your Stress

By Oscar Allain
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It's inevitable, and we've all done it. It's always a part of every year's New Year's resolution and yet it never seems to stick. For those of us planning on being part of the battalion that will land on a gym as come January 1st, you are not alone. You will be lucky if your goal, to get "back into shape", lasts longer than 2 months.

Your Achilles heel: lack of time, lack of commitment, but most of all lack of immediate results. What we fail to realize is that the key to managing our weight lies on our ability to manage stress. According to Health expert David Zinczenko, "Our bodies simply aren't designed to handle the stress of modern life. See, when stress hits, one of the first things your body does is jack up its production of adrenaline. Adrenaline causes fat cells all over your body to squirt their stores of fatty acids into your bloodstream to be used as energy." This injection of adrenaline was actually useful back in the days when (men) as hunters our biggest stress factors involved a charging saber-toothed tiger or an attacking horde of barbarians. All you needed back then was to turn on your fight-or-flight mechanism to handle the job. Not a good idea in today's society, where the only tigers and barbarians are the same ones who sign your paycheck or, even worse, your clients. We don't run from a request, or punch our boss in the nose. We suck it up, get that report finished and munch our way through a midnight deadline. Meanwhile, our adrenal glands are producing yet another hormone to handle all that freshly released fat. It's called cortisol. We will call it: the belly-fat hormone.

According to a recent Yale study "researchers asked 42 overweight people to perform an hour of stressful tasks-math problems, puzzles, and speech making. All the while, their cortisol levels were measured. The subjects who carried their extra weight in their bellies were discovered to be secreting more cortisol while under pressure." And so the theory goes: Stress hits, adrenaline mobilizes fat from all over the body, and cortisol takes the unused portion and stashes it with extreme prejudice toward the abdominal region.

David Zinczenko's article provides some very useful tips on how to manage your stress (i.e. Skipping Letterman, Don't have that last drink), all of them alluding to the importance of taking control of your lives. The key take away: if you want to shed pounds and see the effects of that workout with the hot female Pilates instructor, start with your life. Get more organized, get better time management skills; live a more balanced life; and enjoy a good night's rest. Then make a plan and see how much easier it will be for you to stick to it.

Happy Holidays!
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