

## Waist Management –

### The End of Diets

By Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S.

**T**here are hundreds of diets to go on, but only two ways to truly lose weight – a healthy way or the unhealthy way. How can one get beyond dieting to the resolution of a weight issue? One of the keys is to pay attention to body composition instead of the bathroom scale. Body composition is the standard for gauging your quality of weight loss, because losing fat and preserving lean muscle is actually the critical health issue. Many people diet and wind up losing lean muscle, which benefits only the diet industry's annual revenues of 33 billion dollars. Muscle loss negatively affects your health and metabolism. Conversely, the preservation of fat (especially around the abdominal area) can foster the production of inflammatory chemicals which have been linked to diabetes, heart disease and arthritis.

Muscle acts as a reservoir for the immune system, providing amino acids for the production of infection and tumor-fighting cells during times of physical stress, trauma and infection. It is vitally important to your health to target the loss of abdominal fat and avoid muscle loss, especially in the 30+ age group.

Many people slowly lose muscle and gain fat over the years. They make one of the most common mistakes, that of not eating often enough throughout the day and then overeating in the evening. This triggers the body during the day to use its amino acids (from muscle) in order to raise brain blood sugar levels to normal. Then, large meals at the end of a busy day cause the excess caloric intake to be converted into fat.

Fad diets and foods, books, and commercial weight loss programs work in the short-term, if at all. What is the healthiest approach to weight loss? The best starting point is to know your individual body composition. Bio-electrical impedance analysis (BIA) is a state-of-the-art body composition test, and it is an optimal guideline for embarking on a health program. From that test many things can be determined, including one's individual protein needs, basal metabolic rate (how many calories you burn at rest), and the proportions of fat, muscle and water in the body.

Exercising and eating foods in the right proportions and at the correct intervals for your unique metabolic needs is what works on a lifetime basis. An experienced nutritionist can provide you with insight into your medical history combined with your health goals, and can help you find ways to eat better throughout your busy day.

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