

Rev up Your Metabolism!

By Kevin Coyle and Karen McCoy

Question: *Over the past few years, I've gained some weight and no matter what I do, I just can't seem to lose it. I guess my metabolism has slowed down with age. What can I do to lose the weight and rev up my metabolism again?*

Answer: This is a great question, and one that we see a lot in the fitness field. In order to look at all the facets of decreased metabolism and weight gain, we have to first debunk one overriding myth – that our metabolism suddenly and unexpectedly switches off as we age, leaving us at the mercy of such ‘unseen’ forces.

Our metabolism is not a single switch that suddenly ceases to work. In fact, what we see as lowered metabolism is really a slow accumulation of changed activity levels and nutritional habits that have finally caught up with us over the years. But in order to shift our metabolism, we need to look at a few key aspects of nutrition and lifestyle.

1) What are you eating? Believe it or not, we need to eat frequently to lose weight.

Many people eat once or twice a day, thinking this will help them lose weight, when in fact it is slowly grinding their metabolism to a halt. Try eating at least five times a day (3 meals, 2 snacks). Every meal should consist of lean protein, ‘live’ carbohydrates like fruits and veggies, and healthy fats like fish, flax or hemp.



2) Are you eating breakfast? People often say they are not hungry in the morning, but I guarantee that if they ate less in the evening (ie not eating 2 to 3 hours before bed), they would be hungry in the a.m. And don't forget to include protein with breakfast, to level out sugars and to end the insulin-fat storing ‘rollercoaster’ that many of us are on, which negatively impacts overall health and the ability to burn fat.

3) Are you including fiber at every meal? Fiber is key to losing weight and revving up your metabolism. Try adding ground flax seeds or hemp hearts to your foods, and eat whole foods with fibre intact. (Pass on the fruit juice and eat the whole fruit). And eat lots of fiber-filled veggies like broccoli, kale, spinach and beans.

4) How much protein are you eating? Most people shy away from protein, but it is the single most important component of your diet and the building block of most of the body's processes. This includes hormones and enzymes, aiding digestion, building and maintaining muscles, ligaments, bones etc. The list goes on. As we age, we quickly lose

muscle mass (sarcopenia) unless we regularly weight train. Without the lean mass, every process in the body slows down, including metabolism. We need to eat between 60 and 200 gms of protein a day depending on your activity levels, in order to maintain optimal health. A personal trainer can figure out your individual protein needs.

5) Are you still indulging in white, man-made products like bread, pasta, crackers, etc.? These types of carbohydrates, which are filled with sugars and artificial sweeteners, saturated and trans fats, are surely adding to your woes, and have been for years. You must adopt a whole, live foods diet to enhance cellular nutrition and function at every step, and at every age. And remember, if it has a label, it's not a whole food.



6) Are you weight training on a regular basis? Regular, scheduled weight training is extremely important for revving up your metabolism and burning fat, along with other obvious and important benefits. In fact, research shows that weight training is much more important than cardio because too much cardio in the absence of weight training will cause your body to chew up its muscle stores, hence lowering your metabolism. Remember, your muscles dictate your metabolism, because muscle burns fat. Adding just one

pound of muscle in a year allows you to burn 250 calories more a day at rest. Now that's a bonus!

7) And finally, know that there is a difference between physical activity and exercise. *Exercise* is structured, consistent workouts at the gym which hit specific muscles, and provides strength and power. *Physical activity* is an active lifestyle which includes hiking, biking, swimming etc. Physical activity should be a 'given', not the exception, and is outside of structured exercise. People whose metabolisms are intact know this vital fact, and adopt both into their daily life.

As you can see, fully-functioning metabolism is a multi-faceted affair. By adopting these tips, and by hiring a Personal Trainer who can guide you in your training and nutrition goals, you'll be well on your way to creating a lean, toned body for life!