

# What to Eat to Lose Fat and Boost Your Metabolism



CARRYING excess body fat is a major health risk, raising your chances of developing life-threatening conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and even cancer.

“Excess fat is particularly harmful around the waist. These excess fat cells, particularly visceral fat which is found in the liver and around our internal organs, actively secrete about 20 numerous hormones and other substances which can negatively impact your health,” says Dr Shanker Pasupathy, Senior Consultant and Director of the LIFE Centre at Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

To reduce your spare tyre and lose weight, the key is to consume fewer calories than you burn. However, some foods can help optimise the body's functioning and thus, your energy and metabolism:

**Water:** Water constitutes two-thirds of a person's body weight. Yet few think of water as an essential nutrient. Water is needed to maintain normal physiological functions, including respiration, circulation and excretion. Not consuming enough water leads to dehydration, which can slow down metabolism. A general rule of thumb is to drink water throughout the day, before feeling thirsty. (Thirst signals the onset of early dehydration.)

**Green tea:** Studies show that having some green tea may help to raise your metabolism and speed up fat oxidation. There are other powerful health benefits associated with drinking a cuppa, including protection from heart disease, cancer and stroke.

**Soup it up:** When having dishes like noodles, choose the soupy version over the dry one. Because of the high liquid content, soups typically fill you up with less calories. For example, prawn noodle (dry) contains 459 calories, while the soup version contains 293 calories.

**Grapefruit:** The unique chemical properties of this vitamin-C-packed citrus fruit aid in lowering insulin levels, promoting weight loss. Check with your doctor about any potential adverse drug interactions if you're on medication.

**Apples and pears:** Overweight women who ate the equivalent of three small apples or pears a day lost more weight on a low-calorie diet than women who didn't include fruit in their diet, according to a study conducted by the State University of Rio de Janeiro. The fruit eaters also consumed fewer calories overall. Next time you need to satisfy a sugar craving, reach for this low-calorie, high-fibre snack. You'll feel full longer and eat less.

**Broccoli:** Apart from providing nutrients such as vitamins A and C, calcium and folate, this superfood also boosts your metabolism, while cancer-fighting phytochemicals bolster your immunity system.

**Low-fat yoghurt:** Natural yoghurt contains probiotic cultures that are essential for a healthy digestive tract.

**Lean meat:** You can have your meat and eat it too, but go for lean cuts – sirloin steaks, turkey and chicken – which are rich in iron,

the mineral responsible for the production of haemoglobin, the carrier of oxygen in the body. Lean meat jumpstarts your metabolism and energy levels, while burning more calories than the digestion of other foods.

**Oats:** A good source of cholesterol-fighting, fat-soluble fibre, this heart-healthy favourite ranks high on the list of good carbs that keep you full and provide you with energy for your workouts.

**Chillies and spices:** Eating chilli peppers or any spicy food can increase your metabolism while dampening your appetite. Capsaicin, the antioxidant compound found in chillies and hot peppers, temporarily raises your body temperature, which pumps your metabolism and burns off more calories. Adding a dash of paprika, such as in spicy Malay and Indian dishes, is a simple and tasty way to boost your metabolism.

Need help adopting a better lifestyle? The LIFE Centre at Singapore General Hospital has a multidisciplinary team of experts who can provide you with guidance on weight management, exercise and diet.