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'Fat Genes' author urges good choices



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It's not my fault I'm overweight. It's in my genes.

Right?

Well, it's true that some people are predisposed to being more overweight than others, says Felicia Stoler, a registered dietitian, nutritionist and exercise physiologist.

"But it's not just about excess body fat," she writes in her new book, "Living Skinny in Fat Genes - The Healthy Way to Lose Weight and Feel Great."

And then she tells me, "Everything is about choices. Ultimately, when we eat we make a choice. I want to be healthy and live a long time, but that doesn't mean keeping the weight off is any easier for me than it is for you."

Q. You say good eating habits are paramount. But before you can have good eating habits to maintain your weight, you have to lose the

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weight, right?

A. Our body needs all types of foods. It needs carbohydrates. People will cycle on fad diets or eat unrealistically low calorie levels. You can't do this. It creates a yo-yo cycle.

Q. How much weight should I realistically lose a week on a diet if I want to lose it and keep it off?

A. Realistically, two pounds a week. If you are a 400-pound person, you might lose more to begin with. But no more than two pounds a week or the likelihood of having the weight go back on is really more certain.

Q. When we get older, it's

more difficult to lose weight. You talk about metabolism being the issue.

A. Maybe you can't move as much as you did when you were younger, but you must move. If you just sit around, your muscles will atrophy and your metabolism slows down even more. If you can't walk, swim. If you need to use a pedaling device for the upper and lower body, use it. Maintain the use of your muscles as long as possible.

Q. Let's get to the nut and bolts. There are what you call "super foods" like blueberries and nuts and beans. And peanut butter?

A. The only thing I dislike are artificial sweeteners.

People think fat "in" me equals fat "on" me. In fact, foods with good fats can be beneficial and help stave off hunger without clog-

ging your arteries. Fat helps your body absorb some nutrients and produce important hormones. Your body definitely needs fat.

New oils on the market provide nice alternatives to butter or even olive oil. For example, Malaysian red palm fruit oil contains both beta-carotene and vitamin E.

Q. So I can eat a dozen chicken wings fried in Malaysian palm oil?

A. I didn't mean that, but it's good to know there are oils that taste great and won't raise cholesterol.

Foods that lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise HDL (good) cholesterol include avocados, nuts and omega-3 fatty acids.

Q. You talk about cravings.

A. Feed your cravings, but not to excess. Find a way to have what you like to en-

joy in small amounts. You shouldn't deprive yourself. You can't take carbs completely out of your diet. Your body will always seek them and you will crave them. But when you add carbs, make it whole grain bread or Kellogg's All Bran fiber buds.

And I am not a fan of protein shakes, either. Excessive protein is not good. Better to have chocolate milk or a yogurt.

Look at food intelligently. A glass of apple or orange juice is about the equivalent of four pieces of fruit. When you drink your calories, you get more calories into you.

And, yes, there is a place for low-calorie frozen dinners for some people.

Those who don't like to cook. I encourage people to try to cook and separate meals into batches and

freeze them.

Q. You are a water fanatic.

A. We actually feel hungry when we are dehydrated. Water is the No. 1 thirst quencher and it helps you to flush your system.

Also, recent research shows green tea may be one of the most beneficial beverages you can drink. It's rich in antioxidants including EGCG, which reduces the risk factors for heart disease, supports weight management, reduces free radical damage to the skin and fights cancer. Plus the amino acid in green tea actually reduces stress, promotes relaxation and improves mental focus and clarity.

Ultimately, everything is about the choices we make.

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