

2 THE HOLFORD LOW-GL DIET AND YOU

Each of us is unique, with different health issues and levels of motivation. Starting the Holford Low-GL Diet is like embarking on a personal journey to good health, so it can be helpful to take stock of your state of health before you begin, so that you can see clearly how well you are improving over the next three weeks.

INCREASED ENERGY STARTS HERE

If your blood sugar is out of balance or you have a history of eating 'bad fats' and drinking caffeine-loaded drinks, you probably suffer from low energy levels. From the moment you start following my low-GL diet you will become more alert and able to get through the day without any slump in energy levels and no sense of exhaustion. This is the effect of cutting right back on stimulants and sugar, and supplementing nutrients known to boost energy.

Take the energy test. Are you:

- 1 More than 7lb (3kg) over your ideal weight?
- 2 Tired most of the time?
- 3 Often feeling anxious or stressed?
- 4 Prone to indigestion or bloating after eating?
- 5 Suffering from poor memory and concentration?
- 6 Quite often low or depressed?
- 7 Plagued by dry skin?
- 8 Often constipated?
- 9 Suffering from dark circles or bags under your eyes?

Most people living a Western lifestyle will say 'yes' to an average of seven of these questions. Each is a symptom of being overweight and undernourished – and the reality is no joke. By following the low-GL guidelines, you can be completely free of these symptoms, as well losing 6lb (2–7kg) or more within the next 21 days.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Lasting weight-loss success is related partly to your understanding of food and what it does to your body, and partly to your mind and how you think. What kind of relationship do you have with food? Do you live to eat, or eat to live? Are you able to control your diet quite easily, or does food rule your life? Whether you are interested in low-GL as a way to improve your health, lose weight effectively, or both, my Holford Low-GL Diet will help you to listen to your body and to learn the difference between your true hunger signals and your cravings. Importantly, it will also reintroduce you to the taste and flavour of food.

Eating is essential for life and we crave food from the moment we are born. For most, the early months of feeding are connected to feelings of comfort and safety. However, as we get older, the message becomes more mixed. By the time we reach adolescence, most girls will associate being attractive with being thin, and most boys will have been told to 'eat up, if you want to become big and strong'. Sweets are usually given as rewards (or withheld as punishment) and are associated with pleasure and comfort. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you reach for chocolate or other high-fat foods when you are upset?
- Do you gain or lose weight when you are in love?
- Do you reward or punish yourself with food?
- Do you feel the need always to finish what is on your plate?
- Do you eat and drink more when you are out with friends?
- Do you eat more or less when you are under pressure?

A 'yes' to any of these questions means your emotions rather than your appetite sometimes drive your eating. In some people this can lead to eating disorders, compulsive and obsessive eating, and crash dieting. Healthy eating encourages healthy thinking. The following keys to positive thinking will help you to understand your relationship with food:

Self-awareness Understanding how, why and when: *how* you feel about food and weight-gain, *why* you feel guilty about certain eating habits and *when* food or eating is a problem for you.

Self-acceptance *Appreciation* of who you are, and *acceptance* of your needs, your wants and your problems.

Personal action A *commitment to change*. Choose just one situation where eating (or not eating) becomes your comfort trigger. Now think of an alternative, non-food way of coping with the situation. Write that down as your personal target for the week. By stopping each negative habit for a week you will see that you can *choose* your response to your emotions.

How you cope with your emotions does not have to involve food. That is why on the Holford Low-GL Diet you will not find sugary snacks and desserts associated with 'treats'. I believe in other ways to pamper yourself that are more enjoyable (such as treating yourself to a massage, new clothing, a haircut, or a night out with friends). High energy levels and 100 per cent health are the real benefits of balanced eating. The low-GL diet will help to keep you on track by banishing food cravings.

Convenience foods and eating 'on the run' mean it is easier than ever before to reach for unhealthy food, or to overeat. Take a look at the following scenarios and the low-GL way to keep out of trouble and keep your blood sugar on track.

Choose just one action point to change this week. Make a commitment to change one behaviour per week. You will see improvement in no time.