

Celebs wage war against weighty matters

Helen Grange finds out how some of our favourite South Africans get thin quickly

THERE is never more pressure on anyone to lose weight than on celebrities in the spotlight. Being in front of a camera, or doing your thing on stage, means every extra gram on your body is under the scrutiny of thousands, if not millions, of viewers.

So how do celebrities "get thin" quickly? Or, more realistically, trim down to an acceptable size in time for their new show?

The answer is, they go on a sensible diet - protein-rich with plenty of green veggies and lots of water - and take a small handful of supplements daily to help speed up the process.

A number of South African celebrities have made pharmacist Paula Galvao, from Eden Life Wellness Clinic in Sandton, their weight loss guru, because not only has she waged her own weight war, her diet plan is doable, and she tailor-prescribes weight loss supplements that evidently work.

When she was 25, Galvao tipped the scales at 113kg. She decided to tackle her weight herself, and developed her first weight-loss supplement after researching and mixing various ingredients and, after eight months, she lost 50kg.

Galvao's approach is that, aside from poor diet, most overweight people are afflicted by a biochemical imbalance, and she has developed supplements to counter this.

Hers are approved by the SA Medicines Control Council, and work to address weight loss factors such as insulin, adrenalin and leptin ("satiety hormone") resistance.

"Most overweight people are insulin resistant, which means insulin levels are increased every time we consume carbohydrate foods. This increased insulin lowers the levels of serotonin, the 'happy hormone', and you start to crave even more carbs. The herbal mix in the supplements enhances insulin

sensitivity, thus decreasing cravings," explains Galvao.

At the same time, the supplements enhance thermogenesis (the body's use of food energy), so the food eaten is burned up rather than stored as fat, while the body's metabolic rate is increased, which again stimulates fat breakdown.

The key supplement in Galvao's programme is T6, which contains among others, caffeine, capsicum extract, N-Methyltyramine (naturally occurring stimulant), Cranesbill extract, cocoa extract and acai berry extract.

One of the supplements she prescribes helps retain and build lean muscle mass. "The more muscle your body has, the faster you burn fat."

The real game changer, however, is the eating plan itself. There are various menus, depending on which plan has been prescribed, but a typical plan looks like: breakfast - one slice of toast with Marmite,



BEFORE

Nonto Mdhuli has lost 30kg since starting the Eden Life meal plan.



AFTER

half a grapefruit, tea/coffee; lunch - tomato and mushroom omelette; dinner - tuna salad or grilled steak with vegetables (mostly greens like cabbage, lettuce, celery, cucumber and beans).

"It's really about changing eating habits in a way that's

possible and sustainable, with a dietary plan that doesn't limit your lifestyle dramatically.

"You can still enjoy a slice of toast, and a glass of whisky here and there. The most important aspect is sustainability. Once the weight is off, it needs to stay off because of a new, healthier

relationship with food."

Singer PJ Powers was decidedly overweight in the late 1990s, and has since lost about 24kg by sticking to the Eden Life programme. I lost the bulk of it, about 13kg, over about 18 months, and I've managed to keep my weight steady since.

The maximum I've put on is 6kg."

She'd been on every diet imaginable, including the low-carb, moderate-protein and high-fat Noakes diet, as well as Dr Cohen's diet, a high-protein, low-carb diet, but this one "suited my lifestyle the best".

"I feel sluggish on a high-fat diet, and the Eden Life diet plan was easy to follow given that I travel as much as I do. There's a lot of 'free veggies and soups' (calorie-free options) on it but, for me, the most important part was breaking the unhealthy relationship I've had with food all my life. I learnt to not want to eat the entire pantry after one biscuit," she laughs.

The supplements, she says, did help to speed up the process - "you need to see a loss on the scale fairly soon, for motivation" - but they're not essential.

"My sister went on the eating plan without the supplements and lost weight just as efficiently," says Powers. "It comes down to having a healthy relationship with food."

Nonto Mdhuli, businesswoman and runner-up in Mrs South Africa 2016, has lost 30kg since starting the Eden Life pro-

gramme in 2010, and has been on it twice.

"The first time I lost 20kg over eight months, which I found easy. It was post-baby weight after having my second child." Between 2012 and last year, she put some of the weight back on, and decided to enter the Mrs South Africa pageant, so needed to lose it quickly.

"I went back on the programme, but the second time wasn't as easy because I was on the fast-track plan - I was taking four supplement capsules."

Mdhuli reached her goal and is maintaining her weight. "I find the diet easy because I like meat, especially chicken drumsticks. I eat a lot of those, along with fish. And I've got used to green instead of yellow veggies. The mornings are easy. I have a piece of toast with cheese or diabetic jam, and at 11am I may have a boiled egg."

The diet becomes a way of life, says Mdhuli, although on Sundays she "spoils" herself with whatever she likes, including cake. "Sure, I've fallen off the programme, but who doesn't? The point is, I get back on it, because it's a healthier way to live," she says.



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