

Report



THE UNEXPECTED HELPERS

Before you implement starvation rations, consider these unexpected additions to your diet. They may make small differences which yield big results:

Don't restrict yourself too much. At a time when your body's pretty much in survival mode, eating less may encourage it to put a brake on the processes that cause stored fat to be used as reserve energy. Instead of eating less, eat small, regular meals.

Consider coffee. Caffeine may boost your metabolism, helping to burn kilojoules, because it stimulates your central nervous system. There's a caveat, though: your caffeine should come from tea or coffee instead of sugary, fizzy drinks. Even then, it's best to use low-fat or skimmed milk, and curb the sugar.

Calcium and vitamin D: Your body needs calcium to burn kilojoules efficiently and vitamin D improves the absorption of calcium.

Limit alcohol: Yes, a glass of Merlot is an obvious accessory for your night on the couch – but Mngoma warns that excessive alcohol consumption prompts the body to use it as a fuel, instead of burning the kilojoules you've already stored.

Change your activity. Harris suggests playing board games or reading instead of eating for entertainment.

Turn white fat to brown fat. Galvao explains that while white fat stores energy, brown fat generates heat. If you lose even 1% of this precious store, you could gain as much as 15kg in 10 years, even if you don't change any other aspect of your lifestyle. How do we activate brown

fat? By consuming lots of fish oil, garlic, turmeric and red pepper, plus an apple a day (with the skin on).

Get your melatonin going. This hormone regulates appetite, but production can be disrupted in winter. Galvao observes that naturally occurring melatonin is more effective than artificial sources like supplements, so spend time in the noonday sunshine, cut out night-time exposure to light (screens are a big culprit) and eat melatonin-rich foods like coriander and cherries.

Stay hydrated. This is vital, as the neural pathways for hunger and thirst are very closely linked – so you often tuck into a meal when what you really need is a big glass of water.

SIMPLE SWITCHES

Seedat says that you don't have to go without comfort foods – just modify them so that you don't carry the evidence of winter-time snacking into summer.

- Instead of loading your hamburger with cheddar, use mozzarella.
- Switch sugary, commercial hot chocolate for homemade cocoa, spiced with cinnamon for extra flavour.
- Bake or grill your food instead of frying.
- Keep the skin on veggies. This way, even potato wedges get extra nutritional clout.
- Make your own soup instead of using packet varieties which are often full of additives. This allows you to bulk up on fresh veggies. **D**