

“How I kept the weight off”

Losing weight is tough, but keeping it off can be even tougher. Statistics show 43 per cent of dieters find themselves dieting between two and five times, while 12 per cent have tried to lose weight six or more times. Often the kilos shed creep back on within the first year.

So is it possible to get yourself slim, fit and healthy and stay that way? Here we reveal the secrets of three women who have all shed their excess weight and kept it off for at least three years, and are confident of staying in shape for the rest of their lives. By Beverley Hadgraft

LOUISE O'CONNOR, 48

Fitness trainer and author of *The Lights Aren't On, But Someone's Home*

HEIGHT: 173cm
BEFORE: 90kg size 16
NOW: 68kg size 12

Why did you put on weight?

I've had weight issues for years. I either overate or didn't eat enough – in my 20s I was anorexic. My metabolism was completely stuffed.

Then five years ago, I was put on a psychotropic drug because I was suffering from bipolar. It made me put on 22kg and also caused my hair to fall out. I tried to ignore it for the first year because I was addressing a bigger issue but it got so overwhelming, I decided: "I need something else. This is making my depression worse!"

Slim secret

I eat leafy greens every day



LENGTH
OF TIME SLIM:

2
years



Before

Louise (right) with her daughter Cassie

How did you lose the weight? I changed my medication, changed my exercise routine and, then, because my main focus was still to help with the depression, I researched foods that were good for lifting moods. To my delight they were all healthy – even better, they were all foods that I enjoyed.

The main food groups that were recommended had to be high in zinc, vitamins B6 and B12, vitamin E, essential fatty acids, omega-3s and complex carbohydrates.

A typical day's diet began with high-fibre cereal and included two pieces of fruit, lots of green leafy vegetables, a handful of almonds, lean meats, grains and pulses.

It was also best if I avoided alcohol and drank lots of water.

Louise's best tips



I STOPPED WEIGHING MYSELF.

It was the most liberating thing I've ever done because I was obsessed with the scales. Instead I try on my non-forgiving jeans once a month and, if they're tight, I increase my exercise and cut back on bread.



I LIVE BY THE 80:20 PER CENT RULE

which means that 80 per cent of the time, I'm switched on to my program and 20 per cent I have a splurge. Otherwise, we set ourselves up to feel failure and guilt, which only makes things worse.



I'M SENSIBLE ABOUT NEVER SKIPPING MEALS,

always having breakfast and exercising four times a week (a mix of cardio, weights and yoga). If I'm going away for three days or more, I take my trainers. I try to find hotels with a gym or I walk then do squats. ▶

SALLY SYMONDS, 37

Healthy life mentor and author of *50 Steps to Lose 50kg... And Keep It Off*

HEIGHT: 162.5cm
BEFORE: 106.5kg size 24
NOW: 54kg size 6

Why did you put on weight?

I worked as a speech and drama teacher, was very career-driven, loathed exercise and ate badly – lots of takeaways, no breakfast and chocolate to ease stress.

A few small things happened to make me think I should lose weight but the real epiphany was being turned down for a promotion at work.

I thought: "I shouldn't be this devastated – it isn't my life, it's only a job." But then I realised: "Hang on, this is my life. All I do is work."

It made me think I should live a more balanced, enjoyable life but I knew I couldn't do that unless I had more energy.

How did you lose the weight?

I started walking for 10 minutes a day and then joined a gym and got a personal trainer. I knew that if I'd paid, I'd turn up.

I ate more fruit and vegies, switched to low-fat dairy, educated myself about food and nutrition, and learnt how to read labels. I got lots of advice from health magazines as they were a good way to educate myself without being overwhelmed. As I got fitter, I took up Latin dancing and boxing, which I loved, and also started running.

Before



Sally (right) with student Joanna

Slim secret
To stop myself eating while cooking, I wear a sports mouthguard.

Sally's best tips



I HAVE A HAPPY WEIGHT OF 53 TO 54KG and a warning weight which is 57kg. Once I reach that weight, I start keeping a food diary, watch what I'm eating and cut down on chocolate.



I'M A CREATIVE PERSON AND ENJOY THE GYM MORE WHEN I'M CREATIVE. I follow basic rules but I don't count sets – I train to music. And I set myself little challenges.



I REMIND MYSELF ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF LOSING WEIGHT is financial. In the US for every percentage point your BMI is over your weight range, it costs \$120 a year in medical expenses.



LENGTH OF TIME SLIM:

8
years

PHOTOGRAPHY JASMINE POOLE • STYLING OLIVIA WAUGH • HAIR & MAKE-UP RACHAEL BROOKLYN • LISA RIX WEARS COCCO & ROGERS' DRESS (WORN AS TOP), WWW.COCCOANDROGERS.COM; SEED FEWAVE SKIRT, 1800.006.655; PEEPS TOE-HEELS, (021) 3838 0030



Lisa (left) with her sister Rebecca

Before

LISA RIX, 28

Change and process manager, banking industry

HEIGHT: 160cm

BEFORE: 79kg size 14-16

NOW: 68kg size 8-10

Why did you put on weight?

At school I was really sporty. I played netball, soccer, touch footie, did 'rep' aerobics – I was in every team they had. But then I left and travelled overseas and got into the drinking and bumming around lifestyle and when I was 22, I got married. My ex-husband wasn't interested in fitness and I got into the comfort zone of staying home, sitting and watching TV and pigging out.

How did you lose the weight?

The marriage wasn't going very well and I got to the stage where I decided to stop worrying about my hubby and the house and look after myself.

I started going to Curves (a gym which focusses on cardio and hydraulic weights) and walking 5km a day to work and back. I stopped eating potatoes, rice or pasta with every meal and instead ate heaps of vegies and low-fat, high-protein options such as tuna or chicken.

Within nine months I was a size eight and had lost 17kg. I discovered the best way to keep my metabolism high and the weight off was to build muscle, so as well as my walks and four mornings at Curves, I did three sessions with a personal trainer every week. I didn't lose any more weight after that, in fact I gained a bit because of the muscle, but I lost a lot of centimetres and toned up all over.

LENGTH OF TIME SLIM:
4
years



Slim secret
I don't believe in diets. I think it's important to eat well consistently.

Lisa's best tips



I LET MYSELF HAVE TREATS. One day a week. I have one meal where I can eat whatever I want – so if I fancy pancakes for breakfast, I have pancakes.



I DETOX FOR ONE MONTH TWICE A YEAR. I eliminate yeast, sugar, alcohol and dairy foods to give my body a break



I GO FOR QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY. So instead of wolfing down a Mars Bar, I have a couple of squares of good dark chocolate. ☺