

So what are we measuring when we hop on those scales? Our willpower or our stupidity?



The scales of injustice

The weighing scales are your enemy and a weight-loss package is not necessarily your friend, writes Jacquie Dale.



Scales are no woman's friend. Take the focus off weight and judge success by how you feel about yourself.

■ Is your goal weight too extreme? Many height/weight tables are based on old weights that are far too low and unachievable. Having goals is important for weight-loss success but the goal should be to make sustainable behaviour changes. Weight loss is always a side-effect of finding out what behaviour led to the weight gain in the first place and setting daily goals to change those behaviours. Take the focus off your weight and start judging your success by how you feel about yourself.

■ Use the scales as an indicator every two weeks or even monthly. Your bust, waist and hip measurements will be a more accurate guide.

■ Try not to be persuaded by clever marketing of diets that offer quick-fix programmes and fast weight loss. The best plan of action is to work out why you are overweight in the first place and slowly work on eliminating unhealthy habits.

■ Jacquie Dale at www.realnutrition.co.nz

DESPITE THE millions of dollars spent on weight-loss worldwide, most of these efforts are ineffective. The unfortunate reality is that most dieters regain all the weight they lose within five years of a weight-loss diet. Many women undergo repeated cycles of weight loss and weight gain. If you've been losing and gaining the same 10kg of fat for years then these simple concepts may change your life.

■ Checking your weight on the scales every morning could be the single most fattening thing you do. Most women weigh themselves in the hope they are controlling their weight, but the numbers on the scales usually only end up controlling their self-esteem. One of my clients would get on her scales every day – even in the evening – and if the number hadn't gone down she felt like a complete

failure and would spend the rest of the week overeating and depressed.

So what are we measuring when we hop on those scales? Our willpower or our stupidity? I've had clients who take off every scrap of jewellery or restrict meals in anticipation of a weigh-in. The whole process can lead to failure as the number on the scales has little to do with tracking success in the short term.

■ Fat is one of the lightest tissues you are weighing. You will also have large fluctuations of your weight over the day caused through fluid changes, hormonal changes or just related to the types of food you've been eating. It's not uncommon for many of my clients to gain 1-3kg on the scales before menstruation or during ovulation – the weight gain is caused by hormonal water retention, not fat.

■ Fat goes on slow and comes off slow. The only way to permanently lose fat is slowly – never expect more than a kilo per week, a realistic goal would be between half a percent to one percent of your weight a week. If you weigh 75kg this would be a loss of 350g-750g of fat per week. Tracking a loss of 350g of fat on the scales daily is impossible when you take into account the weight fluctuations that occur due to fluid changes.

■ You can lose up to 5kg of fat without a change on the scales. It is not unusual for many of my older clients to lose 5kg of fat or 6% of body fat without a reduction in their weight. You see women typically lose up to 500g of muscle mass a year through lack of activity or yo-yo dieting. When they start getting nutrition on track and losing fat, their muscle mass weight increases as as they become slimmer.

The only way to permanently lose fat is slowly.

ASK THE DOCTOR

Each week, Dunedin doctor Paul Trotman answers your health questions.

Q. Do polystyrene meat trays leach phthalates or bisphenol A into the meat? These trays have a strong smell of plastic akin to heavy-duty sellotape. Even organic butchers use these trays, which in my view, appears a contradiction.

A. Phthalates are noxious chemicals used to make plastics flexible. They get used in shower curtains and



plastic flooring but are not allowed in plastics used for packaging food. The reason people think they are in food packaging is that plastic drinks bottles are made from polyethylene terephthalate (or PET). This must be one of the marketing own goals of the century because although they have similar names, PET plastics contain no orthophthalates. Bisphenol is used in food packaging, and it does leach (in tiny amounts) into food, and is absorbed (in even tinier amounts) into our bodies. Bisphenol can act in a similar way to some human hormones. Some studies in animals suggest that bisphenol may affect the reproductive system. However, it is quickly inactivated and then excreted.

Q. I'm in my 49th year, walk daily and am reasonably fit. The last few years I seemed to have picked up at least twice a year a really bad case of some type of flu/virus that is hard to shake. Can you recommend something to build up my immune system?

A. As you get older your immune system does slowly wind down. Things start to go downhill from (roughly) your 40s, until by the age of 65 more than one in five people can have a serious infection without even getting a fever. It's mostly to do with hormones and the immune system. Vitamin and dietary supplements seem to help even if you're not nutritionally deficient. Some say maintaining an active social life and being treated for any depression also help. Get the flu vaccine, as flu epidemics hit older people harder and account for four of every five deaths.

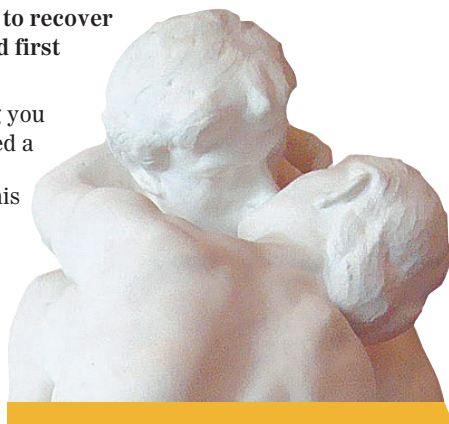
■ Do you have a question for Doctor Paul? Email escape@star-times.co.nz with "Doctor" in the subject line.



Sealed with a kiss

Q. Is it possible to recover from a really bad first kiss?

A. I'm assuming you mean you received a first kiss that wasn't great. If this is the case, it depends on your interest in the other party. Do you want to invest some of your expertise into helping him/her kiss better? That could be a lot of fun – in the process you could take the lead and he/she could respond to your "tutelage". The other person can then take the initiative



having learnt some of your techniques. However, if nothing changes in their kissing techniques then I guess you have to make the call to stay or go!

Q. I live in the country and struggle to meet people; do you have any suggestions for meeting a nice girl?

A. I speak and work with many people in your position and it can be a challenge, but the trick is getting proactive and creative about how and where you can meet people. Start with your local community – consider all the events and activities that happen near you. You can become actively involved in those networks and from that group of people there may be someone of interest. Then consider your own friends, colleagues, family and their friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Seek out



opportunities through them to socialise or ask them to keep their eye out for a girl that might be suitable for you.

Consider other interests that you have or where your ideal girl might be hanging out and join in those activities. Alternatively, you could look at internet dating or depending on where you live, you could see if there are nearby introduction or events agencies. One new option for you is LaunchDate – check out details for this on www.datingadvice.co.nz.

■ Email your questions to escape@star-times.co.nz with "dating" in the subject line. www.datingadvice.co.nz

Each week, dating coach Denise Corlett answers your match-making questions.