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## Could your “set-point” be preventing you from losing weight?

The body thinks that it should stay at the weight it is.

This is according to the “set-point” theory of weight loss, which says that the body has a control system that determines how much fat should be stored. Kind of like a thermostat for fat. Ageing, stress, pollution, lack of exercise, and over-eating all may have the unfortunate effect of increasing your set point.

“Once you raise your set point, it's difficult to lower it because the body has complex systems designed to defend that higher weight,” says George Blackburn, associate director of the division of nutrition at Harvard Medical School.

In his book *Break Through Your Set Point: How to Finally Lose the Weight You Want and Keep It Off*, he outlines his 10% rule for sustainable weight loss.

“Lower your body weight by 10%, and then stop losing for a while. Fight instead to keep off just that amount. Stay at that level for at least six months to give your body a chance to adjust to its new, lower set point.” (1)

Dr Blackburn stresses that regular exercise is essential for keeping weight off.

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## The “husband” factor in menopause

Menopausal symptoms are worse for some women than for others. The difference cannot be explained by hormones alone, because some **women with severe symptoms have better hormone profiles than women with no symptoms**. So what accounts for the difference?

According to new research, severe menopausal symptoms correlate with the following factors:

1. Abdominal obesity
2. Work and family stress
3. “The Male Factor” (2)

“The male factor” is defined as problems with the male partner. Such problems include male sexual dysfunction, depression, alcoholism and infidelity. When there is a lack of communication and affection in the relationship, a woman's health suffers. This is consistent with other research which links poor marital quality to a woman's risk for depression and heart disease. (3)

On the other hand, marital “satisfaction” is beneficial to the health of both genders.

## Every case of osteoporosis and infertility should be screened for gluten sensitivity

Wheat may be affecting your health in ways that you never imagined. In his 2004 article to the Medical Journal of Australia “*Coeliac disease: the great imitator*”, Australian Gastroenterologist Dr John Duggan reminds GPs that Coeliac disease is easy to pick up with blood test, and that it should be **screened for more regularly** (4). Gluten sensitivity causes symptoms as diverse as fatigue, anaemia, thyroid disorders, depression, reflux and fatty liver.

Other experts have called for **routine Coeliac screening** for every case of **osteoporosis** (5) and **unexplained infertility** (both male and female) (6).

*Comment: You may have gluten sensitivity even if you do not have digestive symptoms. Gluten sensitivity is a whole body condition. When gluten interacts with the immune system, it produces a damaging cascade of inflammation that affects many organs including brain, muscles, bone and the endocrine system.*

*Dr Duggan explains it well when he says “the response to an appropriate gluten-free diet is often life-transforming...”*

*From a Naturopathic “optimal health” perspective, even a “sub-clinical” cases of gluten sensitivity can be significant for health.*

## Strontium: a new prescription medication for osteoporosis

Australian doctors can say a permanent goodbye to toxic bisphosphonate osteoporosis drugs (e.g. Fosomax, Actonel, Didronel). In November 2007, a new medication, *strontium ranelate*, was listed under the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the treatment of osteoporosis in post menopausal women.

Not only is strontium ranelate much less toxic than other types of osteoporosis medication, but it is **more effective**. It has the unique benefit of both preventing bone resorption AND stimulating new bone growth.

*Comment: Don't tell your doctor, but this new "medication" is actually a nutritional supplement. Naturopaths in the US have been recommending strontium for osteoporosis for years. It is a trace mineral that is occurs naturally in food. Because it is structurally similar to calcium, strontium is taken up into bone, and stimulates new growth.*

*Pharmaceutical strontium ranelate is the exact same nutrient, but as a much higher dose. Like many things medical, "if it's worth doing, it's worth doing on a colossal scale". In fact, a high-dose approach may be unnecessary. Research shows that lower dose strontium is just as effective for bone density. (7) Maybe someday we'll have access to "nutritional" doses of strontium in Australia, but until then, just be glad that that your doctor will not feel the need to push bisphosphonates.*

**Don't neglect other aspects of bone health.** Most importantly, get checked for gluten sensitivity and vitamin D deficiency. Engage in regular weight-bearing exercise, and don't smoke. Another positive thing that you can do for your bones is to avoid stomach acid medication. (see next article)

## Doctor's warning about popular stomach medication

Certain stomach medications, called proton-pump inhibitors or PPIs (eg. Losec, Nexium) have the worrying tendency to cause new symptoms after they are stopped. Almost half of healthy people who take PPIs will experience heartburn and reflux for weeks after stopping them. (8) This is a problem because many doctors prescribe PPIs on a "trial basis" just to see if they help.

"We've been throwing around PPIs like they're going out of fashion," says Professor Anne Duggan, senior staff specialist at John Hunter Hospital in NSW. "We should only ever give medication to people who need it, and the first step in the management of reflux... is lifestyle modification." (9)

*Comment: PPIs turn off stomach acid. This is something that you definitely do not want to do. Stomach acid is necessary to kill bad bacteria, to digest protein, and to absorb minerals.*

*Research last year showed that long term use of PPIs can **cause osteoporosis**. (10)*

*So how should you treat reflux symptoms? One way is to avoid gluten, if you are sensitive to it. Another way is to lose weight, so that there is less pressure on the valve at the top of the stomach.*

*A healthy stomach contains a lot of acid, but it also has a thick mucus lining to protect it, and a valve that closes tightly at the end of the meal, so that the acid stays in the stomach.*

*Herbal remedies such as de-glycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL) work by healing the stomach lining, and by normalising the function of the LES valve (flap that separates stomach from oesophagus).*

## We need participants for a weight loss study

Sensible-Alternative Clinic has a supply of free weight loss supplements for patients that enroll in our 2 month study. Contact Reception for details. Phone: 02 9438 3448

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