

Mary Weaver's  
**primefitness**  
for women

# 7 Secrets to Transform Your Over-40 Body



**By Mary C. Weaver, CSCS**



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## Thank you for making this investment in yourself!

In this no-BS report, developed especially for the woman over 40, I explain the key principles *you must understand* in order to lose weight and transform your body.

I'm well past 50, and I'm here to tell you that at any age, we can take charge of our health and make huge improvements in our fitness. Getting older does not have to mean giving up on looking and feeling great!

Everything I teach is based on my training as an NSCA Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist, years of study, and real-world practical experience. *I don't believe in quick fixes and fad diets: I care about facts and results.*

I'd love to share more info on healthy fat loss and body transformation with you! You can find tons of tips and tricks on my website at <http://primefitnessforwomen.com>.

### Ready to take it further and transform your life and your body?

Check out my *Take Off 20 Pounds* program—a steal at \$27:  
<http://takeoff20pounds.com>

Or join me in *Body-Transformation Bootcamp 2.0*, which begins on April 2, 2013. This in-depth six-week program can completely transform your life as you learn the best, most effective strategies for fat-loss nutrition and effective exercise.

During the program, my colleague Victoria Morrison teaches you how to achieve a complete “mindset reset”: everything you need in order to set fabulously motivating goals, eliminate negative self-talk, and reprogram your thinking.

Check it out at <http://bodytransformationbootcamp.com>!

All the best,

*Disclaimer: The information in this report is intended for educational and informative purposes only. It is not medical advice, and no health claims are made. See your doctor before beginning any diet or exercise program.*

# 7 Secrets to Transform Your Over-40 Body

By Mary C. Weaver, CSCS  
Owner, Prime Fitness LLC, and creator of the Body-Transformation Bootcamp

I'm grateful for the opportunity to share these seven super-effective body-transformation secrets with you!

I'm going to start by making a very bold claim: if you apply what I have to share with you in this e-report, what you learn can completely change the way you approach dieting and exercise.

As you read these pages, I believe you're going to learn more than you ever knew before about successful fat loss and body transformation.

In this report I've synthesized the most important and helpful concepts I've learned over the past several decades, and I'm confident that you'll find it helpful.

Along the way, there may be topics you'd like to dive into more deeply, and at the end of this report, I'll explain you how you can get more information and take action on those subjects.

## Why "over 40"?

Are you wondering why this report is geared toward women over 40?

Applying these principles will actually help anyone lose weight, reshape his or her body, and keep the weight off.

But women over 40 have some special challenges, and that's the population I most love working with.

So what's different about being over 40 and female?

Well, lots of things.

One is time—the fact that we have tremendous responsibilities and time challenges.

We're responsible for spouses or partners, children, and in some cases grandchildren and/or parents.

We have jobs that demand our time and our brainpower—and that can cause a lot of stress.

We don't have time for programs that require hours of exercise every day.

And we're at an age where our bodies are changing.

We begin to deposit fat in interesting new places as our hormones shift.

Most of us are not as fit as we were in our 20s, and we may have medical challenges we never used to have.

Like arthritis in a knee or hip. Or high blood pressure. Or diabetes.

But one of the most troublesome changes that affects just about every woman over 40 is this: her metabolism is slower, and she knows it.

In practical terms, that means it's easier to gain weight and harder to lose it—even if you're not eating any more than you used to.

Understanding metabolism is the No. 1 key to your body transformation—and it's one subject conventional diet plans rarely talk about.

In these pages I'm going to teach you why much of the diet advice you've been given actually damages a woman's metabolism—and I'm going to tell you what to do about it.

My job is to help women over 40 lose weight safely and permanently, speed up their metabolism, and take years off their body.

And it's not just about vanity, although let's face it, most of us are motivated by vanity, and that's OK.

It's also about reducing our risk of disease and disability as we get older.

It's about regaining the energy and confidence we used to have.

It's about feeling good in our own skin and yeah, feeling sexy and powerful.

So if those are things you want more of, stick with me because what I'm going to deliver will help you get there.

So let's get started.

To begin with, I want to tell you a little bit about how and why I created my body—transformation system for women.

I've been fascinated by health, nutrition, and weight loss ever since I was 14 years old. I began working out more than 30 years ago. And during my former career as a

professional journalist, I've researched and written hundreds of articles—many of them on health and fitness topics.

I've studied exercise physiology at the graduate level, and I've earned the National Strength and Conditioning Association's Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist credential. That qualifies me not only to train individuals but also to coach professional athletes and teams.

You might think that all this means I'm a size zero. Or that I don't know what it's like to be a regular person with a weight problem.

Not true!

Most of my adult life, yes, I have been lean and fit, with a regular exercise program. I knew a lot about nutrition but didn't have to worry too much about what I ate because most of the time my exercise program kept things in balance.

If I gained a few pounds, I could take them off pretty quickly.

But something happened to me in my mid-40s, about 10 years ago, and I'll bet you can identify.

When I was 44 I started a new job that I loved. Unfortunately, that job also brought huge amounts of stress and way too much overtime.

I didn't cope very well. I told myself I didn't have time to exercise, and I tried to relieve the stress with fast food. As if cheeseburgers and onion rings could really have any positive effect.

Before too long, as you can imagine, I found myself 35 pounds overweight—bigger than I'd ever been before and miserable about it.

Here's the crazy part. It took me almost three years to take the pounds off. Ridiculous, right?

I tried every diet strategy in the book that doesn't work very well. And finally I got smart, and did what I do best:

I stopped reading diet books and dove into the scientific research about fat loss. I learned everything I could about exactly why we put on weight and exactly how to take it off.

I took that new knowledge about fat loss and combined it with everything I'd learned about strength training and cardio and nutrition over the past several decades.

And I put together a truly effective system.

Finally, after almost three years of truly pitiful results, I took off the final 14 pounds of fat in 10 weeks, using the strategies I had learned and the system I had created.

Now I'm going to share seven secrets or principles with you that will give you a solid foundation in this system. If you're ready to start transforming yourself into a leaner, younger, more confident woman, you'll be able to start right away.

## The rude awakening

So let me ask you this: did you experience a rude awakening after you hit 40, like I did?

Maybe you're not as slim as you used to be, you're gaining fat in places where you never gained it before, and it's a lot harder to take off the pounds than it was when you were 25 or 30.

We're bombarded with information on how to lose weight—new books, articles, and websites come out every day—and it gets really confusing because everybody has a different magic bullet.

30 years ago the gurus told us not to eat fat . . . and then it was carbohydrates . . . and now, depending on whom you read, it's wheat or gluten or high-fructose corn syrup or fill in the blank.

We're swimming in a sea of conflicting information on how to lose weight, and in the meantime, fully 65 percent of women are overweight or obese.

Obviously, despite the huge amount of information we're getting, something is not working.

A friend and I had coffee a couple of weeks ago, and she was telling me about a women's magazine she enjoys reading.

In every single issue, she said, there is a diet to end all diets—one that supposedly blows everything else out of the water. But if each one of those diets is so fabulous, she said, how come there's a new one with every issue?

Bingo! Every week there's a new fast and easy miracle cure that doesn't really work. If it did, we'd all be lean.

We're talking about a \$30 billion a year weight-loss industry in the United States alone.

So a lot of people are getting rich by selling you information that obviously doesn't work.

You're led to believe that the next diet pill, "cleanse," shake, diet plan, prescription drug, or herbal supplement is the breakthrough that's suddenly going to solve the obesity crisis.

You're being sold magical thinking and quick fixes rather than being taught what really works. And you're not being taught the proven scientific principles behind safe and healthy permanent fat loss.

Once you grasp those principles, you're going to be well prepared to start a permanent weight-loss journey.

You're going to be protected against the people I call diet scammers. You'll never be tempted to fall for magical thinking again.

So without further ado, here are my seven secrets to transform your over-40 body—to lose fat, firm up your figure, speed up your metabolism, and take off years while you're doing it.

## **Secret No. 1: The number on the scale is not what really counts**

This is hugely important.

But the scale is what diets tell us to focus on, isn't it? You jump on the scale, and if you're down several pounds, you're happy. If your weight is up, you're upset.

So what in the world am I talking about?

Body composition. How much of you is lean and how much is fat.

When you say "I want to lose weight," what you really mean is "I want to lose fat." It's only by losing fat that you get the health and figure benefits you're looking for.

And the scale alone can't tell you whether you are accomplishing that.

When you lose pounds, you could be losing water, fat, or muscle—and on most diets, the "weight" you lose includes all three components. The worst diets cause the greatest loss of muscle tissue.

Now, you might think that doesn't matter as long as the scale goes down.

But here's what you must understand.

Muscle tissue is like gold.

If you want a younger, stronger, better-looking body that burns more calories all day long, you must start appreciating the value of your muscle.

Muscle is metabolically very active tissue. Having just a few pounds more muscle means burning more calories all day long—no matter what you're doing, whether it's sleeping, watching TV on the couch, or working out.

The heart of my approach is to preserve what muscle you have and restore what you've lost over the decades as you've gotten older. I will say a lot more about that in the rest of this report.

For now, I'll just say that if you lost five pounds and two or three pounds of it—or more—was muscle, you would actually be proportionally fatter than you were before. And you'd be burning fewer calories. That is, you'd have a slower metabolism.

But if you gained a few pounds of muscle, through intelligent exercise and nutrition, you'd be leaner than you were, even though the scale went up. You'd be burning more calories and have a faster metabolism.

And you'd also look smaller and more shapely because muscle is more compact than fat and a whole lot better looking.

So the scale does not tell the whole story.

When I work with clients, we don't just track pounds lost—we also track body composition, so we actually know from week to week whether we are on course or need to tweak something in order to lose more fat while holding on to lean muscle mass.

That's a key strategy in my body-transformation system.

I want to tell you a story that illustrates just how crucial it is to focus on body composition—not merely “weight loss.”

You've probably heard of the hCG diet—a truly horrible plan that involves near-starvation on 500 to 800 calories a day as well as drops or injections of the pregnancy hormone hCG.

Now, there is not one shred of scientific proof that this extremely damaging diet behaves any differently than any other near-starvation plan. In other words, the pregnancy hormones have no beneficial effect whatsoever.



hCG diet scammers will tell you that this plan will preserve your muscle mass, but that's a statement they simply can't back up.

I want to tell you about the experience of a personal trainer friend of mine. One of her clients wanted to go on the hCG diet, and she did, despite the trainer's warnings.

The client lost 10 pounds and considered the diet a great success.

As it happens, my trainer friend had measured this client's body composition before the diet, and she measured it again afterward.

Here's the tragic part. Yeah, the client lost 10 pounds: one pound of fat and nine pounds of muscle!

That's an absolute diet disaster. This lady was now significantly fatter than before and significantly less lean.

She will now burn approximately 90 calories per day (according to formulas that estimate calorie needs) less than she did before. That may not sound like much, but unless she reduces her caloric intake by that 90 calories, she's likely to gain more than nine pounds of fat in the next year.

That loss of muscle also has a negative effect on her strength—increasing her risk of frailty and negatively affecting her balance and mobility as she gets older.

And it affects her figure as well. She's not going to look as firm or as youthful without those nine pounds of lean mass.

Does this scenario sound familiar? Go on a diet, lose a few pounds, then regain them—probably adding even more weight along the way?

Each time, it's very likely you're losing muscle and replacing it with fat when you regain.

This is one of the worst side effects of bad diets—and my system is all about helping you stop that cycle forever.

The bottom line: what really counts is not the number on the scale. It's reducing your percentage of body fat while you maintain or gain muscle mass.

This is what I help my clients do—so they look and feel better and younger and burn more calories all day long.

## Secret No. 2: Extreme dieting damages your metabolism

What do I mean by that?

A quick definition of metabolism, as far as we're concerned, is simply the amount of energy—that is, calories—it takes to run all of your body processes every day. It takes energy for your body to breathe, digest food, pump blood, and so on—plus the calories burned through movement.

The sum of your resting metabolic rate—the calorie cost of all those bodily functions—plus calories burned from activity equals your total metabolic rate, or total daily calorie requirement.

Muscle is the most metabolically active tissue you have. As I explained above, if you put on 10 pounds of muscle, you will burn about 100 more calories throughout the day even when you're sleeping or vegging out on the couch because it takes extra energy to maintain that muscle.

And, as we've already seen, if you lose muscle, you reduce the number of calories you burn throughout the day.

But now we're going to look at a couple of other damaging effects that crash diets have on metabolism.

The diet scammers don't care about this because they're focused on keeping you happy in the short term. They know that most people will focus only on scale weight loss. And they're not going to be around when you regain the weight and then blame yourself, thinking you just didn't try hard enough.

You've been set up for failure, and you didn't even know it.

But research shows that extreme dieting tends to reduce your metabolic rate significantly more than can be explained by the loss of muscle tissue alone.

In 2012 a fascinating study was published involving people who had been contestants on the TV show *The Biggest Loser*.

One of the study's authors was Robert Huizenga, who is the physician for the U.S. version of *The Biggest Loser*.

If you've seen the show, you know it's a competition to lose massive amounts of weight as quickly as possible. The participants eat only about 1,000 calories a day, and they exercise for six to eight hours a day.

1,000 calories a day may not sound extreme to you, but keep in mind that the contestants are very overweight when they begin the show. The larger a person is, the more calories she requires.

For example, a 250-pound woman who is extremely active (and she would be, once she starts the show's exercise routine) needs more than 3600 calories per day to maintain her weight.

But if she's consuming 1,000 to 1,200 calories a day instead, that represents a huge caloric reduction of more than 66 percent.

One of the aspects of my system is teaching clients a healthy, safe percentage of caloric restriction, and I can tell you that 66 percent is absolutely insane.

The more calories you cut, the more you endanger your metabolism—and that's one of the reasons it's so vitally important to follow a safe, sensible program.

So what happened in Dr. Huizenga's study? He and the other researchers found that the dieters' metabolic rate declined—but not just the amount expected, given that they were losing muscle mass and fat.

By the way, as you lose weight, you do require fewer calories. It just takes less energy to move around a smaller body, so even if you do everything right, you will need fewer calories as you get smaller.

This is yet another reason why it's helpful to put on a few pounds of muscle: it compensates for the reduction in your energy needs as you lose weight. In other words, it allows you to eat more without gaining fat.

Well, after six weeks, the daily resting metabolism of participants in the study had gone down on average about 244 calories; after 30 weeks, their metabolic rates had decreased by an average of 500 calories a day.

This is resting metabolic rate we're talking about—so it has nothing to do with the amount of calories burned through exercise. It's just the amount of calories their bodies need to sustain life.

And the scientists who conducted the study have no idea whether this metabolic reduction will eventually correct itself.

If it does not—or until it does—those people will have to eat 500 calories a day less to avoid regaining the weight.

Can you imagine being on a seriously calorie-restricted diet for the rest of your life?

If that weren't bad enough, other recent research shows that people who lose weight with "very low calorie" diets—that is, diets that provide fewer than 600 calories per day—experience negative changes in their appetite-regulating hormones. And those changes persist as much as a year after dieting.

Let's look at just two important appetite-regulating hormones, leptin and ghrelin.

Leptin signals the brain that you have had enough food. It makes you feel satisfied.

Ghrelin stimulates hunger.

Well, guess what was going on with extreme dieters a year after their diets had ended?

Their levels of leptin were significantly lower than normal, meaning they weren't getting enough signals to the brain that made them want to stop eating.

And their levels of ghrelin were higher than normal, which stimulated their appetites. They reported that they felt a significant increase in their feelings of hunger.

That's a powerful double-whammy. And it helps explain why those who lose weight very quickly are more likely to regain it afterward.

The bottom line: Extreme dieting has a profoundly damaging effect on metabolism.

That's why in my programs I teach safe, healthy fat loss and also healthy eating habits that can be sustained for a lifetime.

### **Secret No. 3:**

## **Yes, your metabolism has gotten slower as you've gotten older—but you can speed it up again**

Around the time you hit 40, you probably noticed that your metabolism is slower than it used to be—and you might have thought there's nothing you can do about it—that you had to just accept it.

But since you've read this far, you now know that metabolism can be slowed down by crash dieting and sped up through preserving and building muscle.

You also know that muscle is metabolically active tissue that helps you burn more calories every day.

Well, guess what starts happening to women when they hit about age 35 to 40? Unless

they are actively involved in regular exercise—especially higher-intensity exercise (including strength training)—they start losing muscle mass.

This loss of muscle—mostly from sedentary lifestyle and from crash dieting—is the primary reason your metabolism has slowed down. Other factors can play a part too—but this is the No. 1 reason.

But a sedentary lifestyle doesn't just make you look flabby.

You want to hear a really scary term?

Try this: *sedentary death syndrome*.

Sedentary death syndrome refers to the fact that a lack of physical activity is in itself a major cause of chronic disease. As a Canadian scientific journal put it, "A [certain] subpopulation of genes . . . requires daily exercise to maintain long-term health and vitality."

This simply means that our bodies were designed for movement and that they can't possibly function normally and healthfully if we don't get it.

Another term for the results of inactivity is "sitting disease," and many research studies indicate that our risk of serious illnesses such as coronary artery disease, certain cancers, stroke, and diabetes is much higher when we're not active.

I don't say this to scare you but to offer further incentive to take action.

Some of us are highly motivated by vanity (I'm certainly one of those people), and others are motivated by health concerns. Both are compelling reasons to work out regularly.

But back to fat loss. Throughout the rest of this report, I'll mention muscle and metabolism many times.

This is probably the key factor that sets my programs apart from the typical diet advice. Most of the so-called gurus simply focus on weight loss. They don't distinguish between losing fat and losing muscle.

They don't even mention the dangers extreme dieting poses to your metabolism. And they rarely spend much time discussing maintaining your weight loss, which is a real disservice to you because the vast majority of dieters are not prepared for maintenance and end up regaining what they lost.

I don't want you to just "lose weight," without knowing whether that weight is fat or muscle.

I want you to burn fat, protect the muscle you've got, and add new muscle tissue so you'll be stronger, leaner, healthier, more energetic, better looking, more confident, and more likely to stay healthy and independent as you age.

And I want you to maintain your fat loss—and your metabolism—as the years go by.

The bottom line: If you think your metabolism has slowed down, you're probably right. But you can speed it up again through intelligent muscle-building exercise.

And look, I know you don't have all day to work out. That's why my approach focuses on time-saving exercise that gives you the biggest bang for your buck.

## **Secret No. 4: Yes, calories do count**

Diet gurus know that people hate the idea of counting calories. So they lie to you and tell you that “calories don't count.” Just eat according to their name-brand food plan, and the pounds will simply melt away without any boring calorie counting.

But believing that calories don't count is like thinking that “money doesn't count.”

You know that if you have a bank account and you add more money than you subtract, you end up with more money. A surplus.

If you spend more than you add, you end up overdrawn. You are in deficit.

This is exactly how your body works.

Add more energy—food—than you burn (spend), and you deposit fat.

Spend more energy than you take in, and your body has to get energy—that is, calories—from somewhere. The best energy bank to draw from is your fat stores.

There's a corollary to the principle that calories do count, and here it is:

There is no diet on the planet that will allow you to “eat all you want and still lose weight”—unless perhaps all you want to eat is water and iceberg lettuce.

These are the facts: Depending on your size, activity level, body composition, and various individual factors, you need a certain amount of energy—that is, a certain number of calories—per day to maintain your weight.

If you take in less energy than that maintenance level, you will lose fat. If you take in

more, you will gain fat.

Do some people burn more calories than others? Of course. But if you eat more or less than your individual maintenance level, you will gain or lose fat.

Diet scammers want to make weight loss seem mysterious because it helps them sell name-brand diets and pills and supplements.

But there is no real mystery about fat loss—just the laws of thermodynamics and the principle that energy is neither created nor destroyed. Your body needs a certain amount of energy, and it has to get it either through food or your stored fat.

No valid scientific study has ever shown anything other than this: fat loss is a matter of consuming fewer calories than you need.

So if a diet is helping you lose weight, it's because you're eating fewer calories, not because there's any magic in the food combinations you're eating, the carbs or fats or gluten you're cutting out, the grapefruit you're eating in the morning, and so on.

Of course, we care about more than simply cutting calories in order to lose fat. Our food plan also has to be good for us.

My recommendation is that you follow a reduced-calorie food plan that has four elements:

1. It is healthy, balanced, and nutritious, providing protein, carbs, and fats in reasonable quantities from normal, easily accessible food.
2. It provides enough calories and volume of food to prevent undue hunger and to prevent damage to your metabolism.
3. It provides enough protein to help protect your muscle tissue (and this is especially important when you're dieting).
4. It is sustainable. That means you can eat this way for the rest of your life—reducing calories when you need to lose fat, then eating according to the same principles but enjoying more calories when you're ready to maintain your desired weight.

This is exactly what my system teaches—how to plan healthy meals and snacks that are satisfying, nutritious, simple to prepare, and effective for fat loss.

One of my main concerns is reducing hunger. If you know which foods are the most satisfying, it really is possible to cut back on calories without feeling like you're starving. I don't know about you, but I appreciate food, and I really don't like going hungry.

I hope you noticed that in point No. 1 above, I mentioned eating balanced amounts of protein, carbs, and fats.

I'm not going to tell you that you have to give up bread or butter or potatoes or pasta or eggs or milk—or whatever food is currently being demonized by the diet gurus.

Right now it's popular to blame our obesity crisis on wheat or "white foods" or processed foods.

Back in the 1980s, it was fat. We were told that cutting out butter and egg yolks would make us skinny, and a whole industry of fat-free foods was created. Like Snackwells fat-free cookies, and it's obvious how skinny we've gotten eating them, right?

Has anyone here bought and eaten a whole package of Snackwells in one sitting? I confess—I have.

Today many of the so-called experts blame everything on carbohydrates. I talk to plenty of people who are passionately convinced that carbs are making us fat and if everyone would just cut carbs, we'd all be lean.

But as we just discussed, calories do count. So if I need 2,000 calories a day and consume 2,000 calories per day of pure fat or pure carbohydrate or turnips or tuna or chocolate fudge, I might feel terrible and be unhealthy, but I'm not going to gain weight.

My system is about eating appropriate amounts of normal foods while burning fat steadily and safely to preserve your muscle and protect your metabolism.

If you want to go heavier on carbs, you can do that. If you feel better when you cut back on them, you can do that too. If you're a vegetarian or a vegan, no problem. Ditto if you love meat.

As long as your basic nutritional needs are being met, there's enough flexibility in my system to accommodate your desires.

I teach people a flexible, sensible way of eating they can continue forever.

And before we leave this topic, I want to tell you about the simple, proven strategy that doubles your chances of weight-loss success.

Are you ready?

It's really simple: keep a food journal and write down everything you eat and drink on a daily basis.



Studies have shown that those who keep a food log are about twice as likely to succeed at weight loss.

The fact is, most of us eat more than we think we do. Tracking makes us focus on our eating behavior, and that alone makes it easier for us to modify what we're doing.

You can keep track online—using services like [tracker.dailyburn.com](http://tracker.dailyburn.com) (my favorite) or [myfitnesspal.com](http://myfitnesspal.com)—or with a small notebook you carry with you.

So if you're serious about getting leaner, start tracking your food consumption today.

This section's bottom line: If I consume excess calories of any kind—from fat, carbs, or protein—I will gain fat. And no diet on earth will truly allow me to “eat all I want” and still lose weight.

You don't necessarily have to count calories in order to lose weight—but you must cut calories.

## **Secret No. 5: Protein is one of a dieter's best weapons**

And no, I'm not talking about going on an Atkins-style low-carb diet. I'm talking about the fact that protein is an essential fat-burning nutrient, and most women don't consume nearly enough of it.

We love to eat pasta, pizza, bread, fruit, and all kinds of other delicious carbohydrates. And there's nothing wrong with that as long as our nutrition is balanced and our calories aren't out of control.

So why should you care about eating enough protein? Here are four good reasons:

1. It's the most satisfying nutrient. A healthy diet includes proper quantities of all three macronutrients: protein, carbohydrate, and fat. But protein has the highest satiety value—that is, the greatest ability to make us feel full.

High satiety = appetite control. That's why I recommend that every meal and snack you eat should contain some form of protein.

Studies back this up: people who eat a higher percentage of protein feel less hungry and are less likely to binge, especially late in the day.

2. Protein is a muscle builder. If you exercise, you need protein to supply the building blocks to repair your body after working out and to build new muscle.

3. Protein is a muscle protector. Remember that we've talked about the damage caused when dieters cut too many calories and lose muscle mass. Sufficient protein helps reduce the odds of that happening.

4. Protein actually "costs" calories to digest. I'm talking about what's called the "thermic effect of food"—the fact that your body burns calories digesting what you've eaten.

Protein has a much higher thermic effect than the other nutrients, and your body burns about 25 to 30 percent of the protein calories you eat just in the process of digestion.

Let me give you a dramatic example of what can happen when you don't get enough protein, even when you're getting plenty of calories.

In a recent study, three groups of people were overfed, to the tune of 1,000 extra calories a day.

One group's diet was 6 percent protein (probably not much different than what the average woman consumes), another's diet included 15 percent protein, and the third group consisted of 25 percent protein.

Well, as you might guess, all three groups of people gained weight because they were eating an extra 1000 calories a day.

But here's the shocker: the low-protein group actually lost muscle tissue while gaining fat!

Both of the higher protein groups gained both fat and muscle, and people in the 25 percent protein group increased their daily calorie burn (that is, their metabolic rate) by an average of 227 calories per day. And this was without any exercise at all.

Here's the important takeaway:

If people on a low-protein diet can lose muscle mass even when they're overeating significantly, how much more likely is it that eating too little protein can cause a loss of lean mass when dieting?

How much more likely when we're over-dieting and slashing calories too dramatically?

Bottom line: Make sure your protein consumption is adequate—especially when you're dieting. You'll feel much less hungry, and you'll protect your muscle mass and your metabolism while dieting.

## Secret No. 6: The zigzag method of calorie cycling

I'm going to tell you all about the zigzag method of calorie cycling in a minute. But first, let's take a quick look at human biology and history.

Our bodies are well designed to adapt to many kinds of conditions.

Before our food supply in the affluent parts of the world became so reliable, periodic famine was just part of the human experience. Sadly, it still is in many areas of the world.

If a human being is going to survive a possible future famine, she needs the ability to store excess calories as fat whenever extra food is available. So the ability to store fat isn't maladaptive at all—it's very smart from an evolutionary point of view.

The flip side of the coin is that we have also evolved ways to cope when starvation threatens. One of those ways is by slowing down the metabolic rate so we can live longer on short rations.

Remember the study we talked about in which extreme dieters needed 500 fewer calories a day after 30 weeks of dieting? That's a perfect example of what's popularly called the "starvation response."

A body that senses starvation is near is not going to let go of fat easily. Paradoxically, it would rather burn up its muscle tissue because fat is a much better storage medium when it comes to providing lots of energy.

So when we diet, we want to cut calories—but not so many or for so long that we provoke a starvation response.

So now let me tell you about the zigzag method of fat loss, which is also called calorie cycling. (I also want to give credit to Dr. Fred Hatfield and to fat-loss guru Tom Venuto. Dr. Hatfield may have been the first to teach the zigzag concept, and Tom has popularized it.)

The concept is quite simple but very effective. It discourages the body from going into starvation mode, and it also makes dieting psychologically easier.

Here's how it works.

First, you figure out your maintenance level of calories—how many calories you need each day, given your size and activity level—to maintain your weight.

Second, you determine which percentage of calories you will cut while dieting. Those who have a lot of fat to lose can be more aggressive; those who are leaner to start with have to be more conservative to protect their muscle tissue.

Third, once you have those numbers, you alternate between calorie-reduced days and maintenance days. A common cycle would be three days of calorie cutting, followed by one day at maintenance.

Then you repeat the cycle.

So here's what a typical zigzag might look like.

Let's say your maintenance level of calories is 2,000 calories a day. That's how much you will eat on "maintenance day."

You've decided to make 20 percent the amount of calories to cut on reduction days.

20 percent of 2000 is 400 calories—so on a calorie-cutting day, you would consume 2,000 calories minus 400, or 1,600 calories.

So if you begin the zigzag on a Monday, you will eat 1,600 calories per day Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

Thursday is maintenance day, so you can have 2,000 calories.

One of the great things about the zigzag is that you can organize social events according to your food schedule.

So if you know Thursday is maintenance day, that would be the day you choose to have lunch with your girlfriend. You get to be a little more relaxed at the restaurant because you have 400 more calories to play with.

Now, if you are anything like my clients, you're thinking, "why would I eat more every fourth day? I'll lose weight faster if I just cut calories every single day."

In fact, that's not true.

It can be very hard to persuade people to try the zigzag because they can't get their heads around the idea that they can actually eat more every few days and still lose fat.

But in my experience, once people try it, they're sold.

The zigzag has a lot of positive effects:

It provides psychological relief. At any time, you're only a few days away from knowing

you can eat a little more.

Maintenance day almost feels like a “cheat” day, but in fact, as long as you stick to the program, you never overeat.

Maintenance days give you more energy for exercise.

You avoid the metabolic slowdown of nonstop dieting.

And the zigzag makes social occasions easier when you can plan your diet to make maintenance day coincide with celebrations and restaurant meals.

The bottom line: You can lose fat more quickly, prevent the starvation response, and protect your muscle mass with the zigzag method. Once people try it, they love it.

## **Secret No. 7: For ideal results, you need both diet and exercise**

Let me start with one caveat: I know there are people with profound disabilities for whom exercise is impossible. I completely understand that. This section is for everyone else who does have the power of movement.

In fact, even if you have arthritis, other joint problems, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or any number of other conditions, there are ways you can safely exercise.

So let's keep going. Just understand that when I talk about an exercise program, I'm always talking about one that is appropriate for you and your current state of health.

I'm going to discuss several ways to burn more calories every day, and I'm going to focus on ways to do that without spending excessive amounts of time in the gym.

The first strategy I want to tell you about is called NEAT.

The acronym NEAT stands for non-exercise-activity thermogenesis. Basically that means activity like standing, fidgeting, walking around, doing the dishes, and so on that burns calories but is not considered exercise.

You might be surprised to learn that NEAT can actually burn hundreds of calories a day.

Some really fascinating studies by researchers at the Mayo Clinic have compared overweight and normal-weight subjects and discovered that the overweight people sat 2.5 hours a day more than lean people. As a result, they burned an average of 350 calories less per day.

I want to share three tips with you so you can start harnessing the power of NEAT:

1. Start following that advice you're always reading to take the stairs not the elevator and to park on the far side of the parking lot so you have to walk farther.
2. If you have a sedentary job, set a timer on your phone or computer to go off every 30 to 60 minutes. Every time it goes off, stand up, stretch, and walk around for a minute or two. This has the added benefit of stimulating your brain and your creativity as well.
3. If you're watching TV, get up and move around during the commercial breaks. Walk to the kitchen for a glass of water. Or even do a few jumping jacks.

I know these tips may sound incredibly simple and obvious—but taking advantage of NEAT will make a 200 to 300 calorie a day difference in your life.

Most adults are gaining an average of at least 1 to 2 pounds of fat every year. It doesn't sound like much, but every decade that's 10 to 20 pounds.

Even if all you did for your health was follow the NEAT strategies I just shared, that alone could help you lose as much as 20 pounds in a year.

So small changes really can add up.

Now I want to address deliberate exercise and talk about the crucial role it plays in a weight-loss and body-transformation program.

When I say "exercise," I know that some of you immediately think of hours and hours of cardio. But that's not necessary—and it's not really the best way to burn fat.

Cardio is great and should be part of everyone's lifestyle for the health benefits alone. But it is not the only game in town. And doing too much cardio—especially if your diet is too low in calories—can actually endanger your muscles.

Who remembers hearing the idea that you should exercise in the so-called fat-burning zone? That used to be a very popular concept, and even though it's wrong, it still hasn't gone away.

The idea was that during low-intensity cardio, you burn proportionately more fat than carbohydrate, therefore lots and lots of low-intensity cardio is the best way to get lean.

But here again, what counts is calories burned. It doesn't really matter which energy source you tap during the exercise, whether it's fat or blood glucose—what counts is the total calorie burn.

And in 30 minutes of higher-intensity exercise, you can burn more calories than you can

in an hour of low-intensity steady-state cardio—and get out of the gym and on with your life.

So one of the secrets to making the most out of your exercise time is shorter, more effective workouts. In my programs with clients, I explain exactly how to design those workout sessions.

Here's another huge advantage of doing shorter, somewhat more intense workouts—whether we're talking cardio or strength training:

It's called EPOC, which stands for excess post-exercise oxygen consumption. It's also called simply "the afterburn."

EPOC refers to an increased rate of calorie burn that can go on for as much as 24 hours after the exercise session has ended. Low-intensity workouts are certainly good for your health and for fat loss—but they don't provide much of an afterburn.

It's a double benefit that shorter workouts can actually torch more calories both during and after the session.

Here's yet another primary benefit of adding exercise to your body-transformation plan: it protects your muscle mass.

Remember that earlier we talked about how dieting can endanger muscle mass.

If you lose muscle, you reduce your metabolic rate. If you gain muscle, you improve your metabolism.

So the best body-transformation results come from a combination of intelligent dieting and intelligent exercise.

And of course, your goal is not just to become smaller—it's also to be firmer and more shapely, right?

Exercise—especially strength training—is the closest thing we have to a fountain of youth. It's the factor that gives you a younger-looking, more energetic body.

I recently read a study indicating that only 17 percent of people who are dieting are also exercising for health and fat loss.

But without exercise, those people have the odds stacked against them.

The bottom line: if you want to lose weight safely—without damaging your metabolism and losing muscle—you need an effective, time-efficient exercise program. Not to mention the huge role exercise plays in maintaining weight loss for a lifetime.

## Now it's time to take the next step

If you're ready to begin your body transformation for permanent weight control—so you never have to suffer through yo-yo dieting again—let me offer you some help.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, you can find loads of articles on nutrition, exercise, and fitness on my website at <http://primefitnessforwomen.com>.

If you're ready to take the next step—to make a firm commitment to losing weight for good, stick to your exercise program, and create the body of your dreams, check out Body-Transformation Bootcamp 2.0.

You'll find all the details here—along with testimonials from women who went through the original program and loved it: <http://bodytransformationbootcamp.com>

BTB 2.0 begins on April 2, and I would love to have you join us!

To your health and success!

Mary C. Weaver, CSCS