

6 Reasons Spring Is the Best Time of Year to Lose Weight

You're not as hungry, you burn more calories, and more.

BARBARA BRODY April 12, 2018

You've heard the expression *timing is everything*, right? That's never more true than when it comes to losing weight. And with spring underway and summer on the horizon, you're smack in the middle of the best time of the year to drop pounds.

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Challenges still exist (hello ice cream and backyard barbecues). But longer days and sunnier skies prompt changes to your brain and body that can make losing weight—and keeping it off—easier than usual. Take advantage of these 6 seasonal changes that are working in your favor right now.

You're less hungry as temps heat up

It's small but not insignificant: On average, people consume an 86 extra calories per day in the fall compared to the spring, according to research published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. And as spring turns into summer, that eat-less trend is likely to continue.

"Your appetite decreases in the summer because your body is trying to keep itself cool," explains Lyssie Lakatos, RDN, CDN, co-author of *The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure* and co-founder of the *21-Day Body Reboot* program. "Your bodily functions, including digestion, generate heat and you have to work to cool down. When it's hot outside, eating less is an attempt to reduce or lessen the body's workload."

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You burn more calories in warmer weather

Some people assume that if they sweat more they'll burn more calories, but that's not exactly right. Sweat itself is just water (along with some minerals), so perspiring more doesn't automatically translate to losing fat. That said, if you stay active year-round and don't scale back on intensity as it gets hotter out, you *will* burn more calories, says Lakatos. Again, it comes down to temperature regulation. "Your body has to work harder when it's hot, so it burns more calories in order to keep you cool," she says.

Your mood is brighter

Does your disposition get sunnier when it's sunnier outside? For many people, there's a direct correlation between mood and weather. In the most extreme cases, the dark, gloomy days of the winter can trigger a type of temporary depression called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). People with SAD might crave extra carbs and end up gaining weight.

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Even if you don't have SAD, being in better spirits in warm weather means you probably don't have crazy cravings for the heavy, fatty foods you crave hard in the winter, says Lakatos. (There's a reason they call them comfort foods!) Plus, when you're feeling positive, you might be more likely to talk yourself into a gym session—or talk yourself out of gorging on toppings during a fro-yo run.

The 'sunshine vitamin' might help

More research is needed, but there appears to be a connection between lack of vitamin D, insulin resistance, and obesity. In other words, people who are obese are more likely than their thinner peers to have low levels of vitamin D. And some studies, such as one from Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, have shown that certain people lose weight

when they add a vitamin D supplement to their routine, though this doesn't seem true for everyone.

While you may or may not need a supplement for a variety of reasons (check with your doctor), it's pretty easy to get more D this time of year: Your body naturally produces it when your skin is exposed to sunlight.

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It's easier to find—and enjoy—healthier food

Fall festivities often go hand-in-hand with roasts, creamy soups, and cheesy casseroles. Spring and summer gatherings, however, are more apt to feature cold salads, shrimp and chicken skewers, and lots of stone fruit, berries, and watermelon. Of course, it's still possible to overdo it on the cheeseburgers and ice cream. But with so many lighter choices available, it becomes much easier to pick healthy foods, says Lakatos.

Along the same lines, people tend to want more plant-based foods and less meat in warm weather, says Lakatos. "Pulses—which include chick peas, lentils, dried peas, and beans—are great salad toppings. They add protein and fiber, which makes the dish more satiating." Interestingly, research has shown that people who add pulses to their diet (3/4 cup per day) lose weight even when they *don't* restrict their calorie intake.

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You can sip your way to weight loss

There's no one pushing eggnog or double mocha hot chocolate this time of year. Just as the food gets lighter in the spring and summer, so do the drinks, and thanks to warmer temps, you're probably craving more hydration now than when it's cold out. If you're aiming to slim down, try making iced green tea your beverage of choice.

"The compound in green tea, EGCG, has been associated with increased fat burning, appetite control, and weight loss," says Lakatos. Just remember to hold the sugar; a little

fresh mint is a nice add-in if you're craving something extra. Smoothies can also be smart choices, provided they don't contain an entire day's worth of calories.