Excess body fat is a serious concern for many people these days. For some, finding a way to burn fat often seems out of reach. These basic suggestions, well grounded in science, may provide guidance:

• **Strength train** Since muscle is a metabolic furnace, it makes sense that building and maintaining muscle is a way to keep the fires burning.

• **Move your body** It speeds up metabolism by increasing your body temperature. In fact, according to Drs. Roizen and Oz in *You On a Diet*, every increase in body temperature of one degree increases your metabolic rate by 14%.

• **Eat protein at regular intervals** Your body will require extra effort to break down the protein.

• **Don’t crash diet or deprive yourself of food** This is counter-productive since it reduces metabolism by causing your body to go into conservation mode.

• **Eat real, whole foods** Fake or processed foods don’t provide your body with the nutrients required to run your metabolism. Your liver, which does the lion’s share of metabolic work, has to focus on breaking down and eliminating these unnatural foods instead of burning calories for energy.

• **Eat breakfast every morning** You’ll boost your metabolism, allowing you to burn more calories all day.

• **Avoid Trans fats** They slow metabolism while healthy fats promote the burning of stored fat. Dr. Hyman in *UltraMetabolism* states that transplant fats speak directly to your DNA, turning on a gene that slows down your metabolism.

• **Use herbs and spices** A number of them can help stoke the metabolic furnace, including ginger, cayenne, mustard, and cinnamon.

• **Drink green tea** It’s reported to increase metabolism slightly.

• **Relax and manage stress** This is an important one to follow if you want to keep the metabolic fires burning. Stress hormones slow metabolism and promote fat storage. Regular periods of down time as well as eating more “slow” foods can speed it up. Cortisol, a stress hormone, will increase belly fat if not controlled.

• **Drink Water** A lack of sufficient water decreases metabolism by 3%.

• **Get plenty of restful sleep** Research shows that people who get less than 7 hours of sleep are more prone to weight gain. Lean muscle is regenerated in the final couple hours of sleep each night, which is why it is so important to strength train.

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**TIPS FOR BOOSTING YOUR METABOLISM**

**Donna Gleeson, MOEd, RD, LD,**

*The Elliot Center for Weight and Health*

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**STRENGTH EXERCISES**

- Do each exercise in good form at a level at which the muscle will tire in 8-15 repetitions (reps)
- Do 2-3 sets of the repetitions for all major muscle groups: arms, shoulders, back, chests, abs, gluts, quads, hamstrings, calves

**2-3 TIMES/WEEK (ALTERNATING DAYS)**

- push-ups
- squats
- toe raises, etc

**MOVE YOUR BODY**

- Take a 5-10 minute walk 2-3 times over the course of the day
- March or jog in place while watching TV
- Do little jobs around the house during ads on TV or do some push ups or crunches or gentle stretches (no bouncing) after a 5 minute stepping in place warm up
- Sit tall on the floor instead of reclining while watching TV
- Put on some music and dance (don’t forget to pull the curtains!)
- Use the stairs

**RELAXATION AND STRESS MANAGEMENT**

- Try some square breathing: breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, breathe out for a count of 4 and hold for a count of 4.
- Or breathe in deeply, slowly extending the belly as the air fills your lungs and then breathe out long and slowly.
- Repeat several times each day.
- Do these while sitting in traffic, before going to bed, etc.

To join fitness or stress management classes, call Elliot On-Call at 663-4567 or visit the Programs and Classes link at www.elliothospital.org.