

Shed 9 lbs every week

Kristina Weigel,
30, Massapequa
Park, NY

It worked for me!

"I learned my weight gain wasn't my fault"

"Limit your food intake to 500 calories a day." When Kristina Weigel heard that order from an endocrinologist, her heart sank. Just like all the other doctors she had seen, this one concluded that Kristina was doing something wrong. Still, she couldn't shake her fear that the problem wasn't simply what she ate...there was something deeper.



Kristina's symptoms had been stacking up. She would gain five pounds overnight, even though she restricted her calories and worked out three hours a day. She was also sick every few weeks. And favorite activities such as traveling, shopping and going out to restaurants no longer held any appeal. "I felt I couldn't do things," Kristina says. "But I also felt like I wasn't a credible person because nobody believed me."

**NOW:
PANT
SIZE 8**

***Kristina lost
113 lbs!***

Fast-forward to a visit to Dr. Eric Braverman's office. There, Kristina finally received proof that her suffering wasn't her fault. Rather, neurochemical deficiencies had been wreaking havoc on her system—a problem that dietary adjustments like increasing her protein and vegetable intake quickly remedied. Kristina lost 23 pounds in two months and her positive outlook on life returned. "I had more confidence to speak up," she says. "I knew I could be taken seriously."

Best of all, Kristina is out of her sick bed and has more energy than ever. Now when she's not traveling the world (she just got back from an activity-packed European vacation), she's traveling around the block with her little Maltese. She raves, "My dog loves running around with me again!"



Type 3: You lack GABA if you...

- Need a lot of food to feel full
- Prefer to eat the same things most of the time
- Frequently experience back pain or muscle tension
- Worry more than you used to
- Avoid confrontation
- Often feel nervous and jumpy
- Share too much personal information with others
- Embarrass easily

What this means for your health

“GABA is the brain’s natural calming agent,” explains Eric R. Braverman, M.D., author of *Younger (Thinner) You Diet* (Rodale, 2009). “It regulates the nervous system, ensuring brain signals travel from the brain throughout the body in a steady flow.” Low levels of GABA can cause feelings of nervousness, unease or

shakiness because electrical signals are being sent in short pulses rather than steady streams. “People without GABA are in a constant state of anxiety that increases the desire for food and can trigger bingeing,” says Dr. Braverman. “Plus, this condition can cause stress-related physical symptoms like headaches, irritable bowel syndrome and muscles aches.” What’s more, studies show that GABA shortfalls elevate levels of the stress hormone *cortisol*, which can contribute to the storage of fat in the belly.

Your Rx

To produce more GABA, simply enjoy at least two servings of complex carbohydrates like oatmeal, beans, brown rice and lentils per day, says Dr. Braverman. These foods provide the body with the amino acid *glutamine*,



which the body uses to synthesize GABA. According to a study published in the journal *Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism*, just one serving of whole grains can significantly diminish feelings of stress and anxiety within 14 days.

How GABA impacts personality

GABA is the primary neurotransmitter in the *temporal lobe*, the area of the brain that governs perception, attention, speech and emotions. Low levels of this chemical have been linked to psychological symptoms such as insecurity, anxiety, excessive worrying, fear of new experiences, poor concentration and lack of impulse control, explains Dr. Braverman. But as GABA shortfalls are corrected, women regain calmness, dependability and objectivity.

Type 4: You lack SEROTONIN if you...

- Crave carbohydrates and salt
- Aren’t ever very hungry but still tend to overeat
- Find it hard to stay asleep through the night
- Don’t do many activities you used to enjoy
- Drain yourself by giving too much to others
- Obsess over little things
- Feel like the world is passing you by
- Engage in daring activities like skydiving or motorcycle riding
- Feel emotions more deeply than others

What this means for your health

Serotonin, the brain’s natural antidepressant, regulates sleep patterns, mood and appetite. “When levels of this brain chemical are low, the body

never gets the signal that it needs to shut down and recharge for the next day,” notes Dr. Braverman. “This leaves the brain tired and triggers the release of *ghrelin*, a hormone that stimulates appetite, to increase energy levels. That’s why women with low levels of serotonin often experience intense carb and salt cravings that make it difficult to avoid the overeating that can cause weight gain.”

Your Rx

To produce more serotonin, aim to get at least two daily servings of lean protein like soybeans, poultry, tuna and shrimp per day, advises Dr. Braverman. Each serving of these foods provides the body with about 300 mg of *tryptophan*, the amino acid needed to produce serotonin. (Hint: For best results, eat one serving just before bed—the brain



converts tryptophan into serotonin during the sleep cycle.) Researchers at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom found that a daily dose of 500 mg boosted levels of serotonin within two weeks.

How SEROTONIN impacts personality

Primarily produced within the *occipital lobe*, the area of the brain that regulates sight, serotonin is associated with mood, ambition, decision making and the ability to experience pleasure. Research in the journal *Science* suggests that low levels of this brain chemical can cause psychological symptoms like depression, impulsivity, suspiciousness, shortsightedness or aggressiveness. Fortunately, increasing levels of serotonin quickly improves confidence, restores rationality and boosts feelings of happiness.

BREAKTHROUGH!

Type 1: You lack DOPAMINE if you...

- Crave sugar frequently
- Feel happier after consuming caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea or soda
- Gain weight in the belly
- Overeat when stressed
- Tend to do things differently than others
- Have little-to-no sex drive
- Procrastinate frequently
- Are very self-critical
- Feel fatigued all day, even after a full night's sleep

What this means for your health

Dopamine spurs cells to convert food and stored fat into usable fuel for the brain. "Low levels of this chemical sap energy and slow metabolism to a halt, causing women to gain a lot of weight

very quickly," notes Dr. Braverman. In fact, research in the journal *Synapse* suggests that women with this deficiency are on average at least 20 percent heavier than their high-dopamine counterparts.

Your Rx

To boost dopamine production, aim to include at least one serving of poultry or low-fat dairy at each meal. Proteins like turkey, chicken, cottage cheese and ricotta cheese are rich sources of *phenylalanine* and *tyrosine*, amino acids that act as building blocks for dopamine, Dr. Braverman explains. And science in the journal *Metabolism* and elsewhere shows that just three to four daily servings of these foods can decrease food intake by 11 percent,



plus improve mental and physical energy and spur the body to burn more fat.

How DOPAMINE impacts personality

Dopamine regulates activity in the *frontal lobe*, the area of the brain that governs communication, motivation and the ability to experience pleasure. Deficits of this chemical have been linked to psychological symptoms like social anxiety, self-criticism, procrastination or difficulty maintaining relationships, according to research at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands. But once deficiencies of this chemical are corrected, women often feel more energetic, sociable and confident.

Type 2: You lack ACETYLCHOLINE if you...

- Crave fatty foods, especially cheese or fries
- Need to write things down to avoid forgetting them
- Love to try new foods
- Have lost a lot of muscle tone over time
- Have a dry mouth or dry skin
- Prefer to be alone rather than in a large group
- Often feel agitated
- Can't get enough of new ideas or experiences

What this means for your health

Acetylcholine controls the brain's speed and mental processes, keeping memory sharp and physical movements quick and precise. For most women who are predisposed

to an acetylcholine deficiency, these symptoms set in with perimenopause. "Estrogen and testosterone stimulate the production of acetylcholine," explains Dr. Braverman. "As levels of those hormones decline, so does the manufacture of this brain chemical. This prompts symptoms like memory lapses, dry skin and weight gain."

Your Rx

To produce more acetylcholine, enjoy three servings of healthy fats from eggs, olive oil, avocados, fish or nuts each day, advises Dr. Braverman. These foods provide megadoses of the B vitamin *choline*, which is converted into acetylcholine. A study at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge shows that starting the day with choline-rich eggs



(one has 20 percent of the daily recommended amount) can reduce hunger, boost energy and spur the body to burn 83 percent more belly fat.

How ACETYLCHOLINE impacts personality

Acetylcholine influences activity in the *parietal lobe*, the area of the brain responsible for processing sensory information, learning, memory and awareness. Insufficient levels of this chemical can cause attributes like forgetfulness, difficulty prioritizing tasks and an inability to relate to others, notes Dr. Braverman. But as acetylcholine deficits are corrected, most women experience increased mental clarity, greater creativity, quicker thinking and improved empathy.

Not you? Turn for more brain-chemistry quizzes

BRAIN-CHEMISTRY

For 90 percent of women, a deficiency in one of four key brain chemicals is triggering weight gain, fatigue, stress and more

The key to slim doesn't lie in sweat and deprivation—it lies in balancing levels of four neurochemicals, says Eric R. Braverman, M.D., director of the PATH Medical Center in New York City, a research and treatment facility that focuses on how the brain affects health. *Dopamine* governs metabolism, *acetylcholine* regulates fat storage, *GABA* curbs emotional eating and *serotonin* influences appetite. "When these primary brain chemicals are balanced, the body is able to efficiently regulate weight."

Perfect for women with no time to diet!

The problem

Up to 90 percent of women are genetically predisposed to under-produce one brain chemical. In fact, a study at the National Human Genome Research Institute identified six new gene mutations that hinder brain-chemical production. While in the past many of us would have been able to maintain a healthy weight despite this, modern-day factors like stress and processed foods intensify underlying genetic glitches, increasing the risk of weight gain.

The solution

After analyzing thousands of test results at his lab, Dr. Braverman distilled the unique symptoms caused by each chemical shortage and turned those findings into four diagnostic mini quizzes. Once you ID your deficiency, Dr. Braverman says it's possible to retrain the brain to produce more of the lacking chemical (or chemicals, if there's a tie). The body uses nutrients to produce neurochemicals, so consuming the right foods can deliver a weight loss of nine pounds a week, plus sunnier moods and more energy.

Main photo: Jenny Acheson. Stills: HBB. Food stylists: Marianne Zanzarella and Shari Citron. Text: Jennifer Joseph.

*Here is How To Lose **100** Pounds! A Path Medical Testimonial*

I went to see Dr. Braverman for the first time, just over a year. I had spent the last decade trying to find someone to help with my metabolism problem. I knew something was something to help me with my metabolism. I knew something was wrong because no matter how much exercise I did, how little I ate, or what diet/ eating plan I followed, the result was the same: Little to no weight loss, or a small amount of weight loss initially, only to be followed by, regaining the weight and more while still following the meal plan. It seemed that no doctor could help me. Frustrated, I sought the help of “specialist.” I was told by multiple doctors “ You must eating hidden carbs,” “You need to eat less and exercise more.” One doctor told me “Eat 50 calories a day, because any more is apparently too much. ” Valuable time, money and energy was being expended to be told that ***I was*** the problem and that ***I was*** doing something which caused me to gain weight and not be able to lose weight. Every time I went to a new, I hoped and prayed that he/ she would find the answer, the missing piece of the puzzle. I tried everything and traveled to doctors and clinics around the United States. I knew that something had to be wrong with my metabolism. I was never hungry and I had spent years exercising for hours everyday, I was always sick to my stomach, and my immune system was not functioning well. It just didn’t add up, I was expending more calories than I was consuming and I still could not lose any weight. Many doctors tried to help me. They were able to figure out pieces of the puzzle, but would eventually explain: “ I have tried everything that I can do for you. I don’t know how to help you.” It was a complex problem and most doctors were only able to treat one piece of the puzzle at a time. The problem was, without the whole

system functioning correctly, that one piece they were fixing did not make a difference. On top of that, there was still the question of what is causing this inability to lose weight and unexplained weight gain? Dr. Braverman answered my question. After a full head to toe examination (literally) that included sonograms, scans, and other tests, Dr. Braverman determined that my metabolism had shut down. He explained that I could exercise all day and eat nothing and I would not lose weight because my metabolism shut down. I will never forget these words or the tears they brought to my eyes. My prayers had finally been answered. For the first time, a doctor provided me with a reason that didn't involve me doing something wrong. It was not a matter of eating less and exercising more, or eating no carbs, etc... it was a matter of correcting deficits in my body.

Dr. Braverman told me that I would 90 pounds in a year. I met that goal and surpassed it with a weight loss of about 100 pounds in 1 year. Dr. Braverman continually addressed and issues as they came up. He made adjustments to supplements as necessary. He responded quickly to problems that arose. He stood by me every step off the way to insure that I would successful. I followed his recommendations of the rainbow diet, which includes eating all colors of the rainbow at every meal, drinking green tea and various herbal teas (rainbow of colors) everyday, and using spices at every meal. (Tumeric, cinnamon, cilantro, paprika, oregano, basil, thyme, garlic, parsley, rosemary, etc...) I eat healthy meals everyday and never feel hungry, or deprived. Before Dr. Braverman, I was unable to eat much, because anything I ate resulted in weight gain. Over the past year, I was able to eat full meals, and lose weight. I never thought that would possible, ***BUT IT WAS, AND STILL IS.***

Dr. Braverman is a brilliant doctor, knowledgeable, intelligent, doctor who thinks “outside the box.” He finds the things NO OTHER doctor can find! I wish I had found him sooner. Without his determination, superior medical knowledge, guidance and support of his staff, I would not be where I am today. I love the new ME!