

# **Is Stress Making You Fat?**

**A Free Report**

**from**

**Shining  Light**

**Tel: 0117 957 1845**

**Email: [enquiries@shining-light.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@shining-light.co.uk)**

**[www.shining-light.co.uk](http://www.shining-light.co.uk)**

## Is Stress Making You Fat?

**Do you experience:**

- **Stress at work?**
- **Stress in your relationships?**
- **Stress about your financial situation?**
- **Stress because you have too much to do in too little time?**
- **Stress because you worry about everything?**
- **Stress about your appearance, weight or health?**

Recent EU statistics published in the Eurostat Yearbook reveal that British people are the most overweight in Europe and the second fattest in the developed world, trailing only behind the USA. 22% of UK men and 23% of UK women are now classified as obese and studies have shown that the rate of child obesity has trebled in the last 20 years, with 10% of 6 year olds and 17 % of 15 year olds now obese.

There is growing concern that the health issues linked with obesity – heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer will become more prevalent. Obese individuals have a 59 – 100% increased risk of early death compared to those of normal weight, and the risks increase substantially when a person is more than 30 lbs (approximately 14 kg) overweight.

An increasing number of studies have shown that Stress is a major factor in weight gain and obesity, and that the serious health issues linked with severe chronic stress are identical to those linked with obesity.

### Scientific Studies Linking Stress to Weight Gain

- Research at the University College London reported that a study of 10,000 civil servants found a link between work stress and metabolic syndrome, a condition where elevated levels of cortisol can cause insulin resistance and weight gain. The excess release of cortisol caused by chronic stress gives the body the message to store fat in the abdomen. The study showed that the more stress someone suffered, the more likely they were to develop the syndrome.

- Studies conducted at the University of Leeds investigated the relationship between stress and eating behaviour and found that stress disrupts people's normal eating habits. The stress was caused by minor work and non-work events, such as having an argument with a colleague or friend, losing keys, missing a deadline or having to give a presentation. Stress causes people to opt for unhealthy high fat and high sugar snacks in preference to healthier food choices. They also eat less than usual at their main meals, but consume significantly more between meal snacks. This was accompanied by a reduction in the consumption of vegetables. The study also found that mental stress was more likely to cause people to eat than physical stress and that emotional eaters tend to turn to food to avoid dealing with negative feelings. Women are more prone to 'stress eating' than men.
- A similar study is currently being conducted on over 4,000 London school children. The research conducted by University College London has found that children who were more stressed had a higher food intake and were more into snacking, especially foods with a high fat content, whilst their fruit and vegetable intake reduced.
- A study conducted by scientists from the University of Tromsø in Norway found that 'night eating syndrome' was linked to stress and raised cortisol levels. The women with the syndrome ate at least half of their daily food intake after 8 p.m. and snacked at least once during the night.

### Why Does Stress Cause Weight Gain?

Whenever we are stressed the brain instantly sets up a chain of events that turns our body chemistry upside down. This is a primitive response known as the 'fight or flight' response and it is there to protect us in dangerous situations; it helps us cope with challenging circumstances by placing us in the most advantageous physical condition to deal with them. In the developed world we rarely need this defence to protect us from attack by wild animals etc. and today the main source of stress comes from every day events. The 'fight or flight' response is triggered whenever we are challenged by almost anything that happens to us, from getting out of bed in the morning, driving the car, dealing with a difficult situation at work or coping with an unexpected traumatic event.

Stress triggers an **adrenalin** rush throughout the bloodstream. The mind becomes alert, the bronchial tubes open for deeper breathing. The heart beats faster and contracts more strongly. Blood pressure rises and sugar pours into the system for more energy. The digestive system shuts down and the skin turns pale as blood is directed to the vital organs and muscles. The eyes dilate so that we can see more clearly. Most of the stress we experience on a daily basis

does not involve physical exertion which burns calories; however we still experience the need to 'do something'. For many people 'doing something' is eating, even when they are not hungry. It helps to make us feel better, immediately reducing the level of stress, and this becomes a habit or learned response to stress.

The action of adrenaline is balanced by the release of **cortisol** which triggers the feeling of hunger following the stress response, and for primitive man this was essential for replenishing nutritional stores following physical exertion. We may experience the same hunger without having moved a muscle! **Cortisol** also readies the immune system to handle any threat such as injury or germs and keeps the immune system in check, as it prevents inflammation from spreading throughout the body where there is a local infection.

Experiencing stress regularly throughout the day means that **adrenalin** is continually released into the blood, with the effect that blood sugar levels remain elevated. To counteract this we release **insulin** to carry the sugar into the cells for energy. Too much **insulin** damages the cells making them resistant to it and too much sugar remains in the blood which is then converted to fat, increasing harmful cholesterol levels, raising blood pressure and encouraging the storage of fat, especially in the abdomen. The result is heart disease, strokes and weight gain.

Continually raised insulin levels can generate cravings for sugar and other refined carbohydrates, as well as suppressing the immune system, which makes us vulnerable to colds, viruses, infections or even cancer.

Chronic stress has been linked with low levels of important hormones and can result in a variety of symptoms including increased appetite, insomnia, depression, anxiety, migraines, PMS, obsessive/compulsive behaviour, obesity and addiction, as well as feelings of exhaustion, fatigue, lethargy and that life is generally devoid of pleasure. Scientists continue to discover hormones that play an important role in weight regulation and how imbalances contribute to weight gain.

Experiencing stress on a daily basis can become chronic, initially producing minor symptoms that vary from person to person. The most common ones are listed below:

**Sleep disturbance**

**Headaches**

**Indigestion**

**Muscle tension**

**Skin problems**

**Abnormal heartbeat**

**Feeling lethargic**

**Feelings of depression**

**Anxiety**

**Mood swings**

**Poor concentration**

**Poor memory**

**Irritable bowel/diarrhea**

**Changes in eating patterns**

**Weight gain**

**Odd aches and pains,  
particularly in the chest,  
shoulders, neck, and back.**

**Low self esteem**

**Food cravings**

**Feeling run down or  
susceptible to colds,  
viruses and other  
infections.**

### **How many of these symptoms have you experienced recently?**

Prolonged or chronic stress results in exhaustion of the adrenal glands and places tremendous strain on other organs in the body. The risk of serious disease (angina, asthma, auto-immune diseases, cancer, cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, depression, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis etc.) also greatly increases and will tend to present itself first in organs that are inherently weak.

When you feel physically exhausted as a result of chronic stress, you may feel too tired to prepare healthy meals, and exercise is the last thing you want to do. Sitting watching the television eating a takeaway meal or a ready prepared micro waved meal is much more appealing, and we all know that a sedentary lifestyle causes weight gain.

### **Dieting and Stress**

We have established that stress causes weight gain. You are stressed and overweight, which makes you even more stressed, so what do you do? You embark on a weight loss diet – again!

Let us now consider the scientific studies that have examined the link between dieting and stress.

- A study conducted on one hundred and sixteen undergraduate UCLA women asked them to fill out a questionnaire to assess the effect of dieting and chronic stress. Results showed that knowing whether a person was dieting at one point was a reliable predictor of whether the person would perceive chronic stress nine weeks later. The implication is that dieting is a chronic stressor.

- Other research has provided good insight into the consequences of food restriction. An experiment was conducted on young healthy males without a history of weight problems. The men ate normally for the first three months while their eating patterns and personalities were studied. For the next three months they were put on strict diets where their normal food intake was halved and for the final three months they were re-introduced to eating normal amounts of food. **The results had far reaching effects.** Food became the main topic of conversation, reading and daydreaming for nearly all of the men. Men fascinated those who had no previous interest in food and cooking and a large percentage expressed an interest in taking up cooking as a career half-way through the period of food restriction. Many of the men found it impossible to stick to the diet, suffering feelings of guilt because they ate secretly on impulse. They reported feeling anxious and depressed and had trouble concentrating. They became withdrawn and less sociable. Two men suffered emotional breakdowns and one even cut off the end of his finger in the hope that this would allow him to leave the study! The experiment showed that dieting also changes body image. Men who were previously unconcerned about their weight and appearance started to complain about feeling overweight and became critical of their body shape and size even though they had actually lost weight.

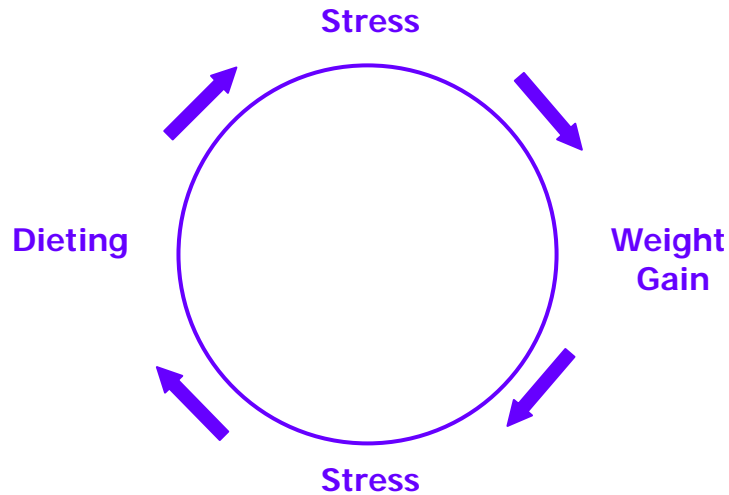
During the final three month period of normal eating their personalities reverted to normal but many continued to have problems with eating. They could not stop eating when they felt full and generally ate more than they wanted. The preoccupation with food continued with some reporting a worsening of cravings, particularly for sweets, nuts and dairy products. Snacking between meals became common, even for those who did not 'snack' before the experiment. After four weeks 2/3s of the men who remained in contact with the researchers became so concerned about their weight that they put themselves on another diet. For eight months following the diet, food continued to be a major concern for more than 60% of the men.

- In another study a group of dieters and a group of non-dieters were invited to eat as much ice cream as they liked after being given three different 'pre-loads' - one glass of milk shake, two milk shakes or nothing at all. The non-dieters ate less ice cream after one milk shake and even less ice cream after two. The dieters ate most ice cream after drinking two milk shakes. The study showed that the milkshake undermined the dieter's willpower. Once they had broken their diets they felt themselves to be failures and made the most of the situation. They took the view that they could eat as much as they liked and would resume their diets again the next day.

These findings show that dieting induces a change in our relationship with food and it distorts body image. It may include powerful urges to eat, cravings, excessive preoccupation with food

and a general feeling of being out of control around food. Dieting is extremely stressful as a result of the internal conflict it induces and we stop listening to our internal cues of hunger and appetite. It is hardly surprising that serious eating disorders are often preceded with a history of dieting and that dieting itself contributes to the cause of obesity.

So the evidence all points to the conclusion that stress causes weight gain, which causes more stress, and then dieting to lose the excess weight stresses you even further. It's a vicious circle!



**This is why it is so difficult to lose weight and keep it off for any length of time.**

The dieting industry is full of unfounded optimism despite poor success rates. It has been estimated that less than 5% of those who lose weight actually keep it off for more than one year, and only one in twenty people who join weight-loss programmes reaches their target weight. Half of all dieters end up heavier than before the diet.

- How many times have you started a weight-loss diet for it only to last a few days or weeks?
- How many times have you regained all the weight you lost - plus a bit extra?
- How much money have you wasted on slimming books, magazines, slimming clubs, meal replacements, low calorie, low/high fat, low sugar food and drinks?
- How much time have you wasted thinking about what you can eat - counting calories, points, carbohydrates etc.?
- How has dieting (and not succeeding) made you feel about yourself and your possibilities for managing your weight in the future?

- How much stress does it impose on you?

Attending a slimming club can help to reduce the stress of dieting by providing a support structure; however the weight loss diets they promote creates immense stress, which is why people return time and time again to try to lose the weight they have regained. Slimming Clubs are simply not equipped to give specialist advice on how to manage stress, combat cravings, emotional eating, low self esteem and poor self image, and unfortunately they merely touch the surface of these fundamental issues.

### The Shining Light Weight Management Programme

If you are overweight or concerned about weight gain, the **Shining Light Weight Management Programme** adopts a very different approach with the aim of breaking the **stress - weight gain – stress - dieting** 'vicious circle' by teaching you how to minimise stress in every area of your life, and how to **manage your weight without dieting or using meal replacements**.

The focus of the Programme is to improve awareness of physical, mental and emotional issues that create stress and cause weight gain, and it is very different to any slimming club or weight management Programme that you may have tried in the past!

Presented in **10 Modules**, it helps you to:

- Understand why dieting is stressful and why it causes cravings and weight gain.
- Identify emotions, situations, attitudes and habits that encourage weight gain and poor self image.
- Become aware of self induced stress.
- Learn to minimise stress and manage your weight without dieting.
- Acquire willpower and self discipline.
- Build confidence and self acceptance.
- Create a happy and healthy life.

This life changing Programme is a personal journey of learning and self discovery and will help you to ease gently into a **Lighter Body and Brighter Life**.

As you progress through each module and adopt a relaxed, healthy lifestyle by **gradually** implementing measures to minimise stress, you will find that they become automatic patterns of thinking and behaving, and you will have the confidence to make further changes.

When you are working with all the concepts you will be challenged and motivated to achieve your full potential. You may be surprised how quickly things change. You will feel in control of your thoughts, emotions and eating patterns, as cravings, obsessive thoughts about food and excess weight diminish.

**On completing all ten modules** you will have acquired a degree of self understanding that most people can only dream about. You will have all the knowledge and motivation you need to free yourself from the past and to manage your weight for the rest of your life!

People who have completed the Programme report that their weight no longer dominates their lives, giving them the energy and the freedom to enjoy life to the full. We have worked with people who have 'tried everything' and just like them, you could grow into a happy, confident person with a great self image. The Programme really is very different, addressing the underlying causes of weight gain which most other weight management programmes ignore.

**Telephone or email support is available from a Shining Light Coach if you require it.**

**Shining Light Weight Management Programme Coaches** are available to help you at every stage. They are fully trained and qualified to support, guide and motivate you through the Programme.

### **How to Purchase the Programme**

Whatever your budget or location, the Programme is available for you to purchase in PDF format from our website:

**[www.shining-light.uk.com](http://www.shining-light.uk.com)**

You cannot buy it in the shops and you do not have to wait for it to arrive in the post. As we have no printing or postage and packing costs, we can bring this Programme to you at the lowest price possible. We have also made it affordable for anyone to purchase the Programme and you can pay by credit card.

The Programme is structured so that over 10 Modules you will be introduced to, and begin implementing the concepts. Module 1 includes an Introduction and Instructions for Working with the Programme. If you wish to work through the Programme at your own pace you can choose whether to order one module at a time, or the complete the Programme.

You can purchase the **complete Programme (10 Modules) for only £19.99!**

or

Order the Programme **one Module at a time** as and when you wish. Each Module costs **£2.99** if ordered individually, and to get you started:

**Order Module 1 and we will also send you  
Module 2 completely FREE**

If you think that stress may be the cause of your weight gain, take the first step into a **Lighter Body and Brighter Life** and find out more information about how the **Shining Light Weight Management Programme** could help you. Please visit our website:

**[www.shining-light.uk.com](http://www.shining-light.uk.com)**

**Email: [enquiries@shining-light.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@shining-light.co.uk)**

**©Shining Light (Life Management) Limited 2006**

**Registered in England No. 05287563**

**Registered Office: 571 Fishponds Road, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 3AF**