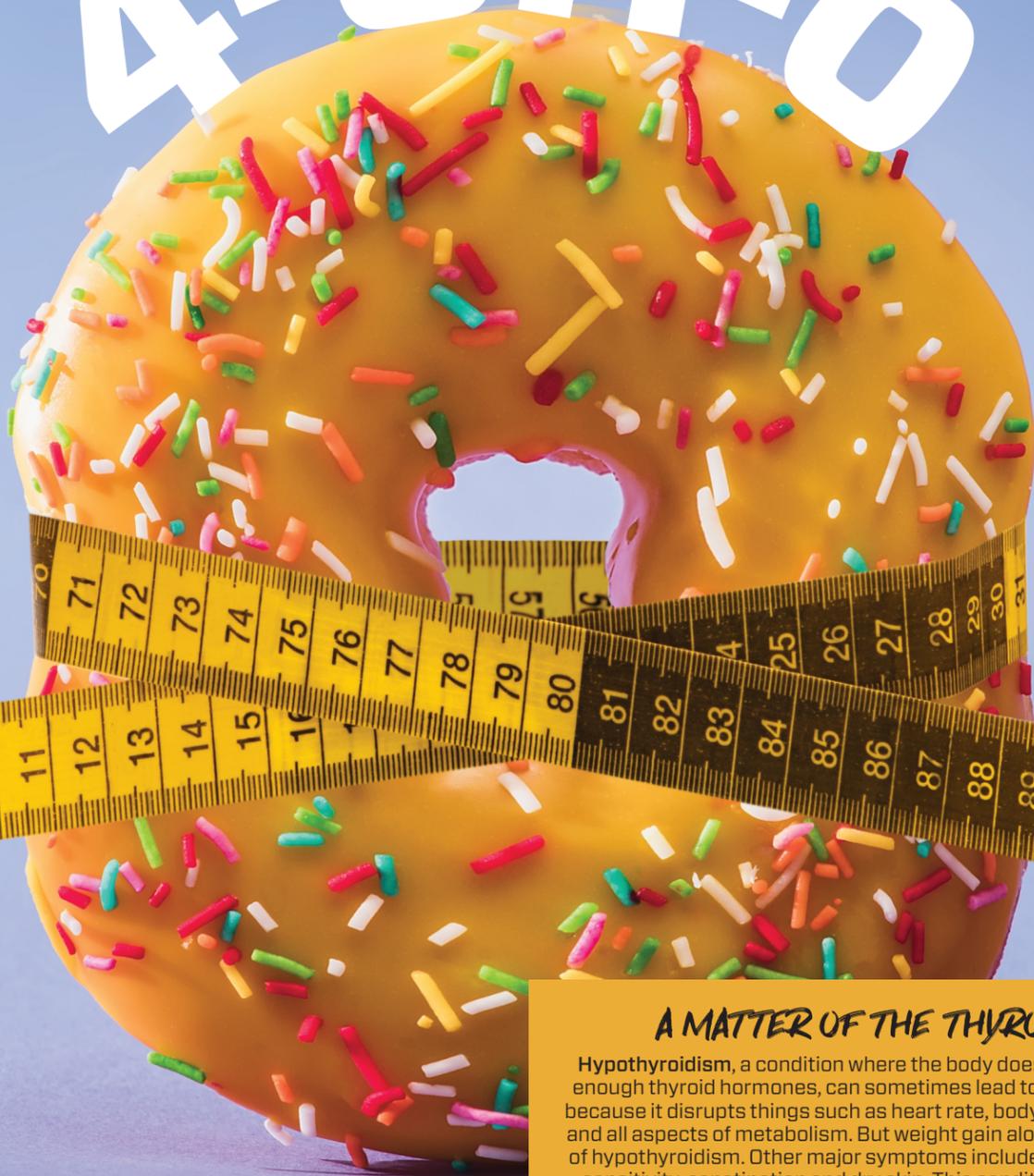


THE BIG 40-HIT



A MATTER OF THE THYROID

Hypothyroidism, a condition where the body doesn't produce enough thyroid hormones, can sometimes lead to weight gain, because it disrupts things such as heart rate, body temperature and all aspects of metabolism. But weight gain alone isn't a sign of hypothyroidism. Other major symptoms include fatigue, cold sensitivity, constipation and dry skin. This condition tends to affect older women. If you're taking the appropriate measures (eating enough of a calorie deficit for your age and body composition, stressing less, and exercising often) and still not losing weight, and you also have other symptoms of hypothyroidism, then it may be worth considering getting your thyroid levels checked.

Believe weight gain is inevitable once you hit 40? Think again! FitLife explores the commonly held myth that it's impossible to lose weight as you get older

IS THERE A POINT IN YOUR

life when you just need to throw in the sweat towel, simply accept that your body is changing and there's nothing you can do about it, except sit back and enjoy the ride (along with some freshly baked chocolate brownies)? Well, we're always all about enjoying the ride. However, hitting the big 4-0 does not mean that you hand over all control of your body. Nope, there are things you can do to get your body fighting back against a slowing metabolism with maybe a little more joint pain than usual.

The Truth

There are some shards of truth to the widely believed idea that it gets more and more difficult to stay in shape as we get older. Your body definitely changes as you age – there's no getting around that. But if you focus on nailing a consistent exercise routine and eating well, the effects of ageing can be radically mitigated, if not reduced. Our hormone balance shifts in ways that could encourage weight gain. For example, testosterone and DHEA levels decline in men, and in women, insulin-regulating hormones become less effective. These changes can decrease muscle mass, slow down metabolism (about 2% per decade after age 30), and sap your energy levels. But all is not lost. It just means that you'll need to be more dedicated to eating clean and moving your body, which will help to keep your hormones balanced and metabolism firing.

Protein & Muscles

As we get older, something happens inside the muscles. Sarcopenia is a loss of muscle mass, and the number-one reason for it is, you guessed it, age. It's seen as inevitable, and the reasons for it happening are linked to a reduction in nerve cells responsible for sending signals from the brain to muscles, lower concentrations of some hormones (including testosterone) and a decrease in the ability to turn protein into energy.

While it may be something we can't avoid, its severity is dictated by diet and exercise. Physically inactive people can lose as much as 3–5% of their muscle mass each decade after 30. Weight and resistance training has also been proven to help slow down the onset of sarcopenia. Outside of the gym, what you put on your plate can



LOVE LUNCH?

Good! Many studies have shown that eating fewer calories at night could help you maintain a healthy body weight and lose excess body fat. A study of 1 245 people found that over the course of six years, those who ate more calories at dinner were over two times more likely to become obese than the people who ate more calories earlier in the day. Plus, those who ate more calories at dinner were more likely to develop metabolic syndrome, a group of conditions including high blood sugar and excess belly fat. Europeans are definitely on to something, because they've been focusing on lunch for centuries now, ensuring this midday meal is the larger one, followed up by a light dinner.

help too: Namely protein. One study found that men and women between 70 and 79 who ate the most protein lost 40% less lean mass than those who ate the least protein. How does that work? Muscles burn more calories, increase your insulin sensitivity, and keep your testosterone production higher so that you can help stave off age-related health conditions. Increasing your protein intake from 15% of your total calories to 30% can help you boost the calories your body burns during digestion, which may just help speed up weight loss. This helps to prevent lean muscle protein breakdown that decreases muscle mass percentage, increases fat percentage, and slows the metabolic rate.

That Was Intense

You're only in your 40s. You can keep your workouts intense, if not more intense than usual. People think that as they get older, they need to change the way they exercise, to avoid injury. Yes, you do become prone to inflammation and potential injuries as you age, but there are basic precautions you can take to avoid this, such as warming

up and cooling down properly, stretching on rest days, and taking supplements for your joints. Don't just let exercise slide as you get older. Your body needs exercise the way it needs oxygen and water. It is crucial to maintain muscle mass: 500 g of muscle burns three times more calories than 500 g of fat. Try to challenge yourself and intensify your workouts by adding 20 minutes of resistance training or by increasing the incline on the treadmill.

Food Talk

Believe it or not, your metabolism can get damaged by chemicals and preservatives in food. Pesticides, growth hormones and trans fats have been linked to obesity, which is why health fanatics encourage everyone to eat food in its natural form. Then there is the matter of hormone-balancing food. During menopause, for example, a hormone called oestradiol drops, and because it helps regulate the metabolism, a decrease could lead to weight gain. Eating foods that are rich in phytoestrogen (dietary oestrogen), such as flaxseed, sesame seeds, dried fruits, and soybeans, could help to offset this hormonal change. **FL**

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