

Ask Leyla: Help! I've increased my fat intake and now I'm gaining weight!

Q: With all the information regarding fat not making you fat, I have replaced the skim milk in my 5 cups of decaf coffee a day with full fat milk. My problem is I have gained a solid ten pounds since this change three months ago. I'm 49, exercise five days per week and now 15 pounds overweight. Most of the ten pounds gained is belly fat. My diet is relatively good overall. Other than replacing my skim milk, there is nothing I'm really doing differently. What gives?

A: While the switch to full fat milk from skim (non-fat milk) may have increased your calorie intake, belly fat gain is typically a symptom of carbohydrate intolerance, also known as insulin resistance. Maybe you increased your intake of other carbs such as whole grains and sugars?



Are you using more milk than usual now that it's full fat? Milk contains lactose which is a sugar. Keeping a food diary can help reveal if your intake has increased.

As we approach 50 years of age, we become more carbohydrate intolerant. It's possible that your weight gain upon changing to full fat milk is a coincidence; that your weight would have crept up anyway. If you're using any sweeteners in your coffee, real or artificial, time to nix it.

Belly fat gain may also be caused by high cortisol levels. Cortisol is a stress hormone that packs on abdominal fat. Your five daily cups of decaf still have a little caffeine in them. That may be causing adrenal stress which would amp up your cortisol.

Have you started taking medications recently? Certain medications such as beta blockers and antidepressants (to name a few) cause weight gain.

You can keep the full fat milk, but may I suggest you switch to half and half? It's much lower in lactose and you would use less of it because it's so rich. In addition, lower your intake of grains to no more than one portion per day and completely eliminate sugars from your diet. Barring any issues with your thyroid or other metabolic resistance to weight loss, the weight should come off.

To your health!