

Ask Leyla: Help! My weight is creeping up!

Q: I lost 20 pounds three years ago reaching my weight goal of 150 pounds. I'm a 58-year-old female and my height is 5'9". Now over the last six months about six pounds have crept back.

I eat practically zero grains and sugars. I eat mostly grass-fed protein, healthy fats, nuts and seeds, a variety of vegetables, limited fruit and one small raw milk yogurt a day. I exercise vigorously at least an hour a day and am very active. I'm hungry as a result but do not feel like I overeat.



Do I need to start tracking my daily calorie intake?

A: First and foremost, you should not consume the same amount of calories every day. When we limit calories to a set number each day, Mother Nature will downshift our metabolism to compensate in an effort to maintain homeostasis. In other words because you've made 1,200 calories a day the new normal, Nature will make sure you don't continue losing weight after a certain point because She wants you to survive, not waste away.

This is why low calorie dieting doesn't work. It slows our metabolism—exactly the opposite of what you want!

If your exercise is causing you to be hungrier than usual, re-evaluate how much activity you really need. You don't want to overdo it. Many people ingest more calories after exercise—usually in the form of a treat—as a reward. What's the point of all that exercise when you're going to replace the calories you just burned? Don't go there. Also, some experience more hunger with cardio than strength training. Maybe you should cut down your vigorous exercise to 20 or 30 minutes per day, incorporating high intensity interval training rather than a full hour of pace-set cardio.

You're eating well but keep an eye on how many nuts and seeds you eat. It's very easy to go overboard so keep your portion to no greater than one or two ounces per day (otherwise it will be too many calories). And make sure your raw milk yogurt is unsweetened.

Stay away from all artificial sweeteners, **including stevia**, and opt for decaf coffee or tea instead of hi-test to keep cortisol levels in check.

Finally, make sure you're getting enough sleep. Not getting enough shut-eye every night will cause cravings and eventual weight gain.

To your health!