

Breastfeed Your Way Thin

By Shannon Crawford



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Introduction

I was absolutely ecstatic when I found out I was pregnant with my first child. I was 25 years old, and I had always wanted children. My best friend and I were trying to time it so that we would be pregnant together, but it only took me one month to conceive. I was caught off guard, because I had expected it to take longer. The first few weeks were filled with excitement and anticipation, but then the bubble burst. The nausea began, and the only thing that made me feel better was eating. So, I ate.

By the time I was 3 months pregnant, before most women show, I was already wearing maternity clothes. Haagen-Dazs coffee ice cream was my favorite afternoon treat, and I easily went through a pint every day. Needless to say, I gained a lot of weight very quickly, so much so that I was constantly being tested for gestational diabetes. I kept growing out of my maternity clothes, from large to extra large to extra-extra large, until there were no more sizes available. And although I was extremely happy by the thought of becoming a mother, I became more and more depressed with each pound I gained.

By the end of my pregnancy I had gained 82 pounds, and weighed 236 pounds in total. I had done absolutely no exercise or any physical activity whatsoever for my entire pregnancy. I was so out of shape that when my contractions began I found it very difficult to breathe through them. I ended up having an episiotomy, and the doctor had to pull my daughter out with forceps. I had to stay in the hospital for a week to recover, and it was at least 2 weeks before I ventured out of the house.

When I finally made my first trip out alone to the grocery store, a few weeks after my daughter was born, the most embarrassing moment of my life happened. I was standing at the grocery checkout stand when I saw my dentist in the next aisle. It was 5:30 pm, the busiest time of the day for the store – it was packed with people – when my dentist yelled, “When is your baby due?”

I could feel my face turn the shade of a beet. My thoughts were, “should I lie and say ‘in a week’, or should I pretend I didn’t hear him?” Instead, I whispered, “she was born 2 weeks ago”. I could feel the stares, and I imagined everyone saying, “oh, you poor thing”. I gathered my groceries and rushed to my car as quickly as possible. I buried my face in my hands and wept, like I never had before. I knew I had to get this weight off. I thought, “This is not me – this is not my body. How could I have let myself get to this point?”

I breastfed my daughter for 6 months. It was heartbreaking to wean her, but I was desperate to lose the weight, and I believed at the time that I had to stop breastfeeding in order to return to my pre-pregnancy size. Everyone I knew kept telling me that I wouldn’t lose weight until I stopped breastfeeding, and it seemed to make sense at the time, because I also believed that the only way to lose weight was to go on an extreme diet. I was unsure of what would be safe for my daughter, and there was very little information about weight loss for breastfeeding mothers. So, I felt the best thing to do was to wean her. I discovered, years later, that quite the opposite is true.

In the end, it took me almost 2 years to get all the weight off, and it was not easy. I tried every fad diet imaginable, but to no avail. The result was that I had to change my eating habits, my exercise habits, and ultimately the way I lived, to get back to my ideal weight and stay there. It wasn’t until I accepted that there were no quick fixes did I eventually lose the weight.

Jump ahead 6 years, to my next pregnancy and the beginning of this book. From the moment I found out I was pregnant, I was determined to educate myself and do everything that I could to not only maintain healthy weight gain through the pregnancy, but to exercise throughout and keep my body fit and strong. I gained a healthy 35 pounds, had a fantastic natural delivery, and felt powerful and totally in control. I was home in less than 8 hours after I gave birth, with a healthy, new baby boy. The differences between this pregnancy and delivery and my first were like night and day.

I lost my pregnancy weight within 4 months of his birth. I felt amazing, I had a tremendous amount of energy, and I felt great about my body. My friends were asking me, 3 months after my delivery, how I got back into shape so quickly; they wanted to know how I did it while continuing to breastfeed my baby. I realized then that many women still had the belief that in order to lose weight, you had to quit breastfeeding. As I discovered, nothing could be farther from the truth: breastfeeding doesn't prevent or delay weight loss. In fact, breastfeeding actually helps you lose weight.

This inspired me to write this book, to share my research and experience with other mothers who struggle with weight loss as I had with my first pregnancy. I am very excited to share my program with you. I encourage you to follow it and breastfeed your baby for as long as your baby needs, for your baby's health and wellbeing; and, along the way, breastfeed your way thin.

Shannon Crawford,

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Chapter 1

Breastfeeding and Weight Loss

Weight gain and pregnancy... my weight story...
breastfeeding for mother and baby

We naturally gain weight during pregnancy for two main reasons: one, to have enough energy resources to grow our babies to term, and two, to nourish our babies through the early stages of life. For women who gain the ‘suggested’ amount of weight during pregnancy, approximately 25 percent of the weight gain will be maternal fat, while the rest will be made up of baby, placenta, fluids and uterus.

The amount of weight gain varies widely from woman to woman, with the overall average from 25-35 pounds. However, studies have shown that over 40 percent of women gain more than the suggested amount of weight through pregnancy. So if you have gained over and above the recommended amount, you are not alone.

My Weight Struggle

I have battled with my weight since puberty. As a teenager I was slightly overweight, and seemed to be on a constant diet, never quite making it to my ‘perfect’ size. I tried every magazine’s diet of the month, but I never lasted longer than a week on them. It didn’t help that my brother’s room was wallpapered with posters of Christy Brinkley – the depressing comparison usually drove me into a bag of Doritos.

My eating habits didn't improve with my first pregnancy. In fact, they got a lot worse. Gaining 82 pounds in nine months was not an easy thing to do, even while pregnant, but eating breakfast every day as a 7 course meal didn't help. After the birth of my daughter, I had 65 pounds to lose. I thought that losing 10 or 15 pounds as a teenager was difficult; I was *completely* unprepared for this.

I was extremely happy becoming a mother. I had a beautiful, healthy baby girl, and I felt incredibly blessed. I knew beforehand that I was going to breastfeed, and everything went extremely well. She latched on right away and we had no problems. I loved the bond that breastfeeding created between my daughter and me; it was an incredible experience. There really is no way to feel closer to your baby than through breastfeeding.

Although I didn't experience post-partum depression, I was very unhappy with my body. I had never carried this much extra weight. I had extremely low self esteem, and absolutely no self confidence. I desperately wanted to lose the weight, but I didn't know what to do about it. I didn't where or how to begin.

My eating habits didn't change after my daughter was born, and I wasn't even slightly active – I basically never left my house. **But for some reason, I was losing weight. I didn't realize at the time that the only reason for this was because I was breastfeeding.**

The real challenge came when I had to return to work. I was horrified of having to face everyone I knew while still being so overweight. I knew that I absolutely had to lose the weight now, no matter what. My daughter was 6 months old at the time, and I felt that I had to wean her because I wasn't comfortable expressing milk at work. Also, I believed that in order to really lose the weight, I would have to stop breastfeeding.

Weaning my daughter was a very traumatic experience for both of us, as neither one of us were ready. But I honestly felt, from what I had read and from what

everyone I knew kept telling me, that the only way I was going to get back into shape was to wean her. I looked for information about weight loss while breastfeeding, but I couldn't find anything. I really didn't know what diet or weight loss method would be safe and still allow me to breastfeed.

Before weaning her, I had lost about 20 pounds without exercising or changing what or how much I ate. After I quit breastfeeding, I immediately went on a diet and began doing some light exercise. My weight remained the same for four months – I didn't lose even one pound. I had returned to my normal (pre-pregnant) eating and exercise habits, but I wasn't losing any weight. It really seemed to me that my body didn't want to release the weight as it had before.

I later discovered that many women have had the same experience. I believe that when we become mothers, we signal our bodies to become much more efficient with the way we store fat. Our bodies seem reluctant to let go of the additional weight.

I did eventually lose the weight, but it took a lot longer than I expected. It took a lot of trial and error, a lot of time, and a great deal of frustration. Through research on nutrition, fitness and health in general, I finally realized that the only way to do it was with some drastic changes to how I approached weight loss. I adopted a wholesome, healthy diet, and I incorporated exercise as part of my daily life, among many other changes. **I finally lost the weight, and kept it off.**

When I found out I was pregnant with my second child, six years later, I had maintained my ideal weight and was in the best shape of my life. With everything I had learned about health and nutrition, I was determined to have a healthy pregnancy weight gain. As well, I wanted to have a plan in place before I gave birth on the best way to lose weight after childbirth. I studied everything I could find, and I talked with other mothers who had successfully lost their pregnancy weight.

Through my research, I discovered many studies that I wish I had been aware of with my first pregnancy. I would have completely changed my approach to weight loss, from the very start. The most important study I found was that women who breastfed their babies lost weight more quickly than those who didn't.

Breastfeeding on your path to weight loss

Breastfeeding is intended to follow pregnancy. The fat that is stored as our babies develop is initially used to ensure the healthy growth of our babies, but once we have delivered, the rest exists for the sole purpose of producing milk.

Breastfeeding uses up stored energy, and it will help mothers lose weight; think of breastfeeding as nature's way of releasing the extra weight. If you choose not to breastfeed, you will have to consume fewer calories and significantly increase your exercise in order to shed the extra weight.

Breastfeeding is a fundamental ingredient to achieving any weight loss goal after childbirth. I have found that one of the reasons women tend to quit breastfeeding early is in order to go on a 'diet' to return to their pre-pregnancy weight. In doing so, many women completely overlook or are simply not aware that breastfeeding will naturally release the fat that is stored up during pregnancy.

The AAP states that breastfeeding 'burns more calories and helps you get back to your pre-pregnancy weight more quickly' than not breastfeeding. Studies have shown that breastfeeding mothers tend to lose more weight when their babies are 3-6 months old than formula feeding mothers who consume fewer calories.

One study of mothers at one month postpartum found that mothers who breastfed had slimmer hips and weighed less than women whose babies received

only formula. These studies do not state whether or not the mothers in the studies did any form of physical exercise, but all things equal, these studies clearly show that you will lose weight more quickly breastfeeding than not.

Your body burns 500 calories per day, on average, while breastfeeding. You would have to jog 4 miles (at 10 minutes per mile), bicycle for 1 hour, or walk briskly for over an hour every day in order to burn the equivalent amount. If you breastfed your baby for one year, you would burn approximately 182,500 calories – that’s the equivalent of running 1,460 miles! Not to mention wearing out about 10 pairs of decent running shoes.

Breastfeeding and your weight loss program

It is an undeniable fact that breastfeeding will help you lose weight. It really is absurd to stop breastfeeding just to go on a diet in an attempt to get back into shape, because not only can you easily reach your weight loss goals while continuing to breastfeed, but you may be able to do so faster and in a gentler way.

Breastfeeding can be incorporated into any healthy weight loss plan. When combined with a healthy eating program, light activities and a few other helpful methods, I believe that you will be able to lose your pregnancy weight quickly.

And note the term ‘healthy’ eating program: it is very important to avoid excessive diets while breastfeeding, as this may adversely affect the quality of your milk supply.

I have heard many women say that they would love to breastfeed their babies for longer periods of time, but have to go back to work – they say breastfeeding for them is simply not an option. But there is a way around this, by expressing your

milk during your working day. Many women are now doing this and laws are currently being developed that will require your work place to provide a private area in order for you to express your milk, and cold storage to keep it until you return home. So, going back to work is no longer the reason it once was to stop breastfeeding.

Additional benefits of breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is extremely beneficial for many reasons. I believe very strongly in breastfeeding, and I wanted to include additional information about how it is the best possible choice a mother can make. Although this is not directly related to weight loss, my hope is that you will consider breastfeeding your baby for as long as your baby needs. The research that has been conducted on breastfeeding overwhelmingly proves that there really is no better way.

Breast milk is the best possible food for your baby. Every mother has her own unique breast milk designed for her infant. It is the perfect combination of fat, water, protein, lactose, vitamins and minerals; it contains all the nutrients your baby needs. As well, many breastfeeding mothers experience emotional advantages from nursing their baby. The incredible bond that occurs is both beautiful and natural, unparalleled by anything else. Being able to nourish your baby can give you an overwhelming sense of joy and happiness.

Babies are meant to breastfeed. In comparing breast milk to formula, babies digest breast milk easier, breast milk contains antibodies which are passed from mother to baby, and breast milk contains the perfect balance of nutrients. Research has shown that breastfed babies are at less risk for diabetes, SIDS, ear infections and gastrointestinal infections.

Mothers I have spoken with believe that their breastfed babies are healthier and less susceptible to flu and colds, and if they do get sick, it is for shorter periods of time. Studies have shown that breastfed babies tend to grow up to be smarter, more secure, more independent and healthier overall.

Breastfeeding is beneficial for mothers as well. Including weight loss benefits, research has shown that breastfeeding reduces the risk of ovarian and breast cancer and helps the uterus return more quickly to its pre-pregnancy size.

Breastfeeding is an ideal form of communication between mother and baby. The physical closeness while nursing your baby creates the opportunity to really connect with each other. The overwhelming feeling of love for your baby comes through your gentle touch, eye contact and closeness.

As I write this, my youngest son is 23 months and is still breastfeeding. It is no longer unusual to meet mothers who breastfeed their children for one to two years or longer; however long you plan to nurse, remember that it is now recommended that babies are breastfed for at least one year. After all, we want to give our children the best possible start to life.

"All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel Mother."

-Abraham Lincoln

Chapter 2

Water

Weight and metabolism... water for weight loss...
additional benefits

Water is essential for life. Without it, we couldn't survive for more than a few days. Our bodies are made up of at least 70 percent water - it is the main component of all the bodily fluids, including blood, lymph fluid, tears, digestive juices, urine and sweat. Metabolism, which is the transformation of all energy within our bodies, does not occur without water. Water is important for nutrient absorption, skin hydration, detoxification, and health in general.

There are many theories on the secrets of successful weight loss. Many of the systems and books available contradict each other, but one thing they all have in common is the importance of drinking water. Specifically, they all agree that **you must increase your intake of water, in order to help increase your metabolism** and to allow your body to release stored water.

Water is a very important part of my weight loss program. Increasing water intake clearly facilitates weight loss, and it is very beneficial for many other areas of health. And if you are a breastfeeding mother, the fluid demands on your body are much higher than normal, so it is even more important for you to monitor your water intake.

Drinking the daily required amount of water has become a habit for me, but it was not easy in the beginning. I had to come up with some strategies in order to ensure I was getting the proper amount of water each day; I've included some tips that I hope will help. I trust that you will make it a part of your life, as you will

feel immediate results in the form of increased energy and vitality, your skin will glow and you will feel more refreshed and alert. Once you become aware of the many benefits that a water program has to offer, it will be something that you will feel very motivated to incorporate into your life.

Water and weight loss

Weight loss, at the most basic form, is the conversion of fat stored in your body into useable energy. Your metabolic rate, or metabolism, is the process whereby your body converts food and stored fat into energy (or uses it for bodily repairs) or stores it as fat for future use. In simple terms, if we have a faster metabolism we burn calories more efficiently and store less fat. If we have a slower metabolism we burn calories less efficiently and therefore store more calories as fat. **Weight loss cannot occur without an active metabolism, and that requires large quantities of water.**

The metabolism of fat occurs in your liver. Your liver performs many other functions as well, including cleansing of the blood in conjunction with your kidneys. Your kidneys require adequate amounts of water in order to function properly, and if your kidneys are water deprived your liver will have to increase the amount of help it gives your kidneys. This lowers the productivity of your liver, and it will not be able to metabolize fat as quickly or as efficiently as it could if your kidneys had an adequate water supply. If this is the case, not only are you putting undue pressure on your liver, but you're also setting yourself up to store fat.

It is very important to understand this relationship – how water intake affects your metabolism, and thereby, how quickly you will lose weight. Drinking water equals weight loss: it's simple and scientifically proven.

A quick way to see how water affects your metabolism is to observe your energy levels. Once you begin increasing your water intake, pay attention to how you feel. After a few days, you should notice a definite increase in the amount of energy that you have. I immediately felt an energy boost once I started my water program – I felt more alert, more energized, and consequently more enthusiastic... especially about water!

If you take the time and really observe people with an abundance of energy, you will notice that they clearly have high metabolisms – they tend to be very active, and are usually physically fit. If you have a high metabolism, your system converts fat into useable energy quickly and efficiently, providing you with more energy. High energy equals high metabolism. So, increase your water intake and get instant results - you will feel great and have the energy you need to reach your weight loss goals.

Water can also suppress your appetite naturally. If you drink water before your meals, you will find that you will eat less. Drinking water throughout the day will lower your appetite overall.

The temperature of the water you drink is also important, as cold water is absorbed more quickly than warm water. Additionally, drinking cold water can enhance fat burning, as your body will have to burn calories in order to warm the water to your body temperature.

Drink more water

The extremely clear message here is that we must dramatically increase our water intake. I am not saying drink water constantly, because there is a point at which you can drink too much water (very important – **do not**

overdo it), but in comparison with average daily consumption, most of us are in a constant state of dehydration. If you wait to drink water until you are thirsty, then you are definitely not drinking enough water.

Another important point about water, although not directly related to weight loss, is that it is required for the absorption of nutrients in your digestive system. If you have inadequate water intake, your digestive system loses efficiency. Sugars and carbohydrates are absorbed more quickly than other nutrients, and if your digestive system is less efficient, you will absorb the sugars and carbohydrates without getting the nutritional value of the foods you are eating. Nutrient deficiency can result in food cravings, such as the occasional desire to eat an entire box of Twinkies... something we 'might' want to avoid.

As well, there are theories that if you do not drink enough water (or consume too much caffeine or other diuretics) your body will attempt to store it, resulting in excess weight and bloating. With inadequate water intake you are essentially telling your body that it is not going to get enough water, so as a survival mechanism, your body will hold water in 'reserve'. Therefore, when you increase your water intake, you are telling your body that there is enough water. Consequently, your body will release the excess water, and with it, the excess water weight and bloating.

The average recommended intake of water every day is 8-10 eight ounce (250ml) glasses, but this will vary with your particular circumstance. For example, if you live in a hot climate and you are outdoors frequently, or if you exercise heavily, increase this amount accordingly.

Drinking the recommended amount of water will thoroughly hydrate your body and dramatically improve the performance of your system, allowing you to metabolize fat much more efficiently; this is an extremely important step on your path to weight loss.

It is a fact that if you were to only increase your water intake and not change anything else in your diet, you would naturally lose weight. Your body would be functioning the way it is supposed to and your metabolism would increase. In other words, if you maintained your current calorie intake, did not increase your exercise but drank more water, you would lose weight. It's a small change, but it can have big results.

Additional benefits of water

Detoxification

We are constantly exposed to toxins, through our environment, our food, and generally through the way we choose to live. Toxins create irritating and harmful effects in our bodies, undermining our health and stressing our systems. We cannot escape toxins, but we can help our bodies eliminate them. One of the best ways to eliminate toxins, or detoxify, is through drinking plenty of good quality water.

Detoxification is an extremely important component for long term health, and it is one that relies strongly on an adequate intake of good water. **Water is the means by which many toxins are flushed from our systems, through sweat, breath, and bodily waste.**

Inadequate water intake adversely affects the performance of the liver, the digestive system, and the lymph system. Essentially, if we don't drink enough water our systems will not have enough resources to efficiently manage toxins. If we allow toxins to build up in our bodies, we are stressing our systems to the point where we are allowing disease and poor health to manifest. Our immune

systems will break down and become incapable of fighting off sickness and disease.

And as toxins continue to build up over time, or are not flushed properly from our bodies, we become more and more susceptible to major disease. **So drink water and detoxify – do it for your health, now and for the long term.**

An important point to note is the quality of the water you drink. Normal tap water in most areas contains (at the very least) chemical additives to some degree, so unless you live in a region with a pure artesian well, avoid drinking water straight from the tap. It should definitely not be used specifically for detoxification. If you can, buy bottled water from a reliable source (make sure you know the source!), and avoid drinking tap water. If not, at the very least use a good water filter, and replace it regularly.

Beautiful Skin

Water is the best, and easiest, beauty treatment available. It flushes out impurities in your skin, leaving you with a clear, glowing complexion. Drinking plenty of water hydrates your cells making your skin look younger and more resilient. I moisturize my skin every single day both on the outside by using lotion and on the inside by drinking plenty of water.

Water drinking tips

Now that you have some basic information on the value of drinking enough water, I'll give you some ideas on how to fit a water program in your life, and on how to make drinking enough water a daily habit. Remember that it will take a few weeks for your body to regulate itself and adjust to the additional water - in

other words, you will be going to the bathroom constantly – but the results will be well worth any inconvenience. Once you begin your water program and integrate it into your life, it will help you reach your weight loss goals and vastly improve your overall health.

Fitting a water program in your life is really just a matter of begin aware, and being prepared. It really is not that difficult to drink adequate amounts of water, especially if it's not *too* cold, but it is easy to forget if you are not used to drinking it throughout the day.

The first step is being aware. Try placing reminder notes in areas where you often go and will see them – on the fridge, bathroom door, in your car, and on your desk. Keep doing this until you no longer need reminding (until it becomes a habit).

Being prepared is equally as important. If you are on a long drive and don't want to spend extra money on water, you will need to make sure that you bring water with you. Be like a scout, and 'be prepared' wherever you go.

Following are a few tips to help you make drinking water a more prevalent part of your day, every day.

- Stock up on plastic water bottles. Leave one in your car, one at work, one at home and one in your diaper bag, so wherever you are you will always have water available.
- Add fresh lemon wedges to your water for variety. I keep a bowl of lemons on my kitchen counter and refill it a couple of times per week.
- Leave a full glass of water by the sink and drink some every time you go into the kitchen; this may also prevent you from snacking.

- Track how much water you are drinking each day by keeping a log. This way you will know throughout the day exactly how much you have left to drink. You will want to try and avoid drinking too much water late at night, unless you enjoy spending your nights in the bathroom.

Breastfeeding Requirements

Water is the main ingredient of breast milk. While you are breastfeeding it is extremely important to drink plenty of water and keep yourself hydrated. It is recommended that breastfeeding mothers drink three quarts (12 eight ounce cups) of fluid daily. **If you are breastfeeding on demand (based on when the baby wants to nurse), you can easily reach the daily requirements by drinking a glass of water each time you nurse.** When the baby drinks, you drink.

While you can obtain the daily fluid requirements through milk, juice or water, it is best for lactating mothers to drink mostly water. Juice has a lot of calories and drinking too much of it can lead to weight gain.

“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water. “

-Loran Eisely

I hope that I have provided you with enough information to convince you of the many benefits of drinking water. It is essential for losing weight, increasing energy, releasing toxins and living a successful, healthy lifestyle. I have designed

my program around the basic principals of good health and natural weight loss,
and drinking adequate water is a vital part of that.

Chapter 3

Nutrition

Basic foods... nutrition for breastfeeding...
food combining... food cravings... sample menu

Calories in, calories out, calories in... with weight loss, nutrition is half of the equation. If you are like the majority of people trying to lose weight, it is the most challenging part.

There are an enormous number of diet plans and schemes that deal with nutrition, a virtually endless sea of information on the subject of how and what we should or shouldn't eat. Trying to decide which plan to follow or how to approach the whole concept can be overwhelming at best. And if you are a breastfeeding mother as I am, it is even more difficult. While we are trying to achieve our weight loss goals, we still have the responsibility to ensure that we get the nutrition we need, for our babies' health and ours.

I first began researching nutrition after the birth of my daughter, nine years ago. I was inundated with all the information available on weight loss and I was unsure what was safe for breastfeeding moms. I would have enormous food cravings that fruit or vegetables would just not satisfy. I craved sweets or starchy foods, such as candy, chocolate, ice cream, chips, cheese and crackers, you name it. Anything with lots of fat or sugar seemed to be continually calling my name.

And as with many people, eating was an emotional issue for me, as it had been since my teens. With a new baby came sleepless nights, constant demands and virtually no breaks – essentially the stress of being a new mom – and I would

turn to food for comfort. I knew that food would be the biggest challenge in my weight loss journey.

As I mentioned earlier, when my first child was six months old I quit breastfeeding and turned to what I thought would help me lose weight, including quick fix diet plans and weight loss schemes. The quick fixes were ‘quick’ all right – quick to start, and quick to end. Nothing worked for me over the long term, so I knew I had to find a better way. Trial and error can be a great teacher, especially if you persist; eventually I did figure it out and turned to a very basic, natural method, and have never looked back.

My approach to nutrition is based on the very natural concept of eating a wide variety of foods, and it is very simple and easy to assimilate. It is loosely founded on the five basic food groups (four food groups in Canada, but essentially the same), with some alteration. I also incorporate food combining, which encourages natural digestion and can help increase your metabolism.

In this chapter I will discuss the essentials of my nutritional philosophy, and the importance of good nutrition for health. I have included the nutritional requirements for lactation, and throughout the chapter much of the information comes from a breastfeeding perspective. I will discuss food cravings and offer some nutritious food alternatives, and cover meal planning, which will include the ideal balance of wholesome foods along with some indulgences.

I no longer believe in dieting or deprivation, but rather a healthy, proper dietary balance. I do not count calories or grams of fat, nor do I map out in detail the exact nutritional value of every meal or piece of food that I eat. I feel that this sort of activity is a (very) large waste of time, and that it is truly unnecessary in the long run. As long as we come from a healthy viewpoint and pay attention to what we eat, make sure we eat from a wide variety of foods and avoid excessive

amounts of ‘unhealthy’ foods, we will safely lose weight and have excellent health overall. Good health is something which we will benefit from for years to come.

Importance of Nutrition

Food for health

Your body requires certain nutrients, such as protein, carbohydrates and fiber to function properly, whether you are a breastfeeding mother or not. Since no single food provides all of the nutrients that your body needs, eating a wide variety of foods ensures that you get the necessary nutrients and other substances that promote good health.

The basic food groups in both the US and Canada represent what the national institutions (USDA and Health Canada) consider to be the best all around approach to nutrition for most people. The food group guides cover an extremely wide selection of foods, and give serving suggestions from each group. I understand that different people will do better with different plans, based on age, genetic tendencies, food intolerances, allergies, culture, family background, and religious and moral beliefs, but for *most people*, I firmly believe that the general recommendations provided by the food group guides provide a very solid base for a healthy life.

Specifically, the guidelines I have provided in this chapter are similar to the recommended food groups and serving sizes from the USDA Food Guide Pyramid, which emphasizes a healthy diet that is low in fat. I have made some

suggestions for alternate foods in a few of the categories, especially dairy, but otherwise I follow the general suggestions that the food guides offer.

Nutrition for Breastfeeding

As breastfeeding mothers, we have enormous demands placed on us. In the normal chaos of everyday life with a new baby, we are always on the go. We never really seem to be able to get all the rest we need, we experience continual emotional swings, and we have the tendency to look after everyone else's needs but our own. On top of all of this, we have to produce breast milk. And everything that is required to make breast milk comes from within our own bodies.

Your body uses 500 calories per day, on average, to produce breast milk. Protein, fat, carbohydrates and all of the minerals, vitamins and other nutrients that your baby requires goes into breast milk, and every one of these nutrients comes from your body. For example, every 750ml (3 cups) of breast milk you produce – about 1 day of nursing, depending on the age of your baby – contains about 245 mg of calcium.

Breast milk will take from your body what it needs, regardless of your diet; studies have shown that mothers with poor nutrition produce adequate quality milk. It would take severe deprivation to substantially affect the quality of your milk, which is why extreme dieting (starvation diets) are absolutely not recommended while breastfeeding. With a generally poor diet, however, the *quantity* of milk produced will be affected. So from a breastfeeding perspective alone, it is very important to maintain a healthy approach to nutrition.

It is very clear, however, that good nutrition is crucial for your health as a breastfeeding mother. If you notice that you are exceptionally tired all the time or

you get sick very easily, your diet may be the cause. Breastfeeding takes more from you than any type of exercise or other activity ever will (other than pregnancy). **You lose a large quantity of nutrients through breast milk, and if you do not replace those nutrients regularly, your health will inevitably suffer.**

We have a responsibility to ourselves to ensure that we are eating a very good, well balanced diet, that we are providing our bodies with what they need for lactation. Our good health depends on it.

It might seem that losing weight through all of this will be difficult to achieve, but nothing could be further from the truth. The key is to listen to your body. You will undeniably have a bigger appetite while breastfeeding, but you have that appetite for a reason – you are expending a lot of energy making breast milk. This will not prevent you from losing weight, as long as you make sure that you come from a healthy perspective, follow some basic guidelines, and most importantly, go with what feels right to you (as long as what feels right is *not* a big bag of Oreos – remember, healthy perspective).

The important thing is to eat foods that promote health while not adding additional fat to your body. When you go for a snack, choose wisely. But whether it is for your health or to help promote weight loss, good nutrition is undeniably vital.

I have included a table that lists the estimated amount of many of the nutrients breastfeeding mothers require daily. All of these nutrients can easily be obtained from a healthy diet of a wide variety of foods, as generally recommended in the national food guides, the approach I have taken with my program. In the next section, I will discuss the food groups and the suggested serving sizes of each for breastfeeding mothers.

Nutrient Requirements for Breastfeeding

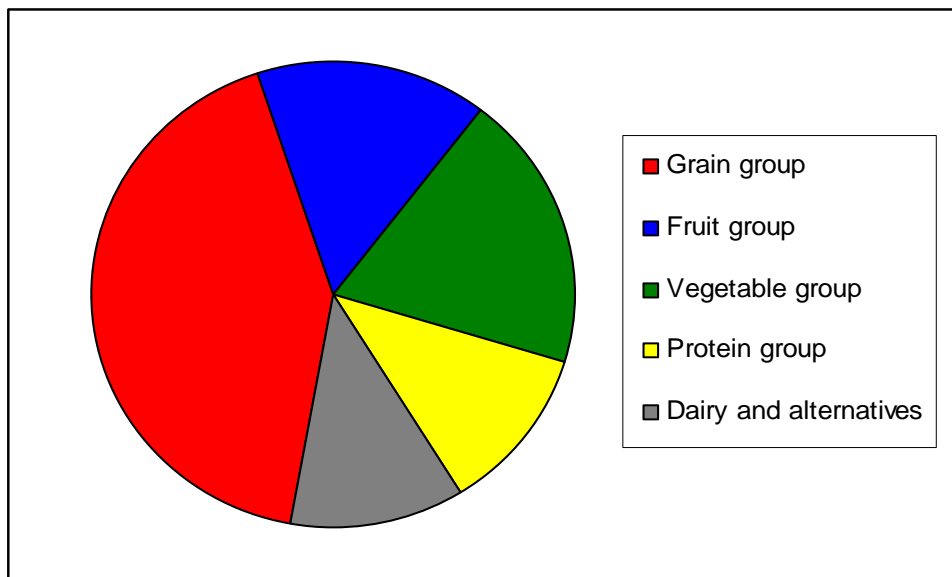
Nutrient	Lactation 0-6 months	Lactation 6 months+
Protein	65g	62g
Vitamin A	1300mcg	1200mcg
Vitamin D	10mcg	10mcg
Vitamin E	12mg	11mg
Vitamin K	65mcg	65mcg
Vitamin C	95mg	90mg
Thiamine	1.6mg	1.6mg
Riboflavin	1.8mg	1.7mg
Niacin	20mg	20mg
Vitamin B6	2.1mg	2.1mg
Folate	280mcg	260mcg
Vitamin B12	2.6mcg	2.6mcg
Calcium	1200mg	1200mg
Phosphorus	1200mg	1200mg
Magnesium	355mg	340mg
Iron	15mg	15mg
Zinc	19mg	16mg
Iodine	200mcg	200mcg
Selenium	75mcg	75mcg

Food Groups

Outline

In this section we will review the basic food groups, what is included in each group, and how many servings of each are recommended for breastfeeding moms. It is important to be aware of the proper balance between the groups otherwise you may find you are eating too much of one group and not enough of another. To ensure that we receive all of the nutrients we need for our health, we must have a varied diet.

Food Group	Servings per day while breastfeeding
Grain group:	6-11
Fruit group:	2-4
Vegetable group:	3-5+
Protein group:	2-3
Dairy and/or alternatives:	3



Grain group

The grain (or cereal) group is the most widely consumed of the food groups with wheat, rice and corn as the most popular grains. Grains help form the foundation of healthy eating; they are important for our overall health and wellness. They are excellent sources of dietary fiber, plant protein, phytochemicals, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.

Grains also provide a good source of complex carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are our bodies' main energy source – all carbohydrates are converted to blood glucose, which is the major fuel for all of the body's cells. It is recommended that we obtain 45 – 65 percent of our total daily calories from carbohydrates in general.

When selecting grains choose whole grains (whole wheat and other grains, brown rice products) over refined grains (white flour, white rice products) as much as possible. **Whole grains provide a healthy amount of vitamin B, vitamin E, fiber and other minerals, including thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, folate, selenium, zinc and iron.** Bran, which is contained in whole grains, is the best source of natural fiber available.

Refined grains, which are simple carbohydrates, have both the bran and germ removed from the grain. Refined products provide few, if any, of the vitamins and minerals that whole grains provide, and they don't provide the fiber. Studies indicate that refined foods eaten in excess (especially over a period of many years) can lead to a number of disorders, including diabetes, hypoglycemia, and obesity.

There is a great deal of controversy relating to carbohydrates and weight. The Atkins Diet, The Zone and other programs suggest dramatically reducing or eliminating grains, pasta and starchy vegetables - in essence most carbohydrates.

The basic theory behind this is that carbohydrates enter our bloodstream quickly (as blood sugar), which causes insulin levels to spike higher, which in turn rapidly lowers blood sugar levels. This then makes us hungry very soon after we eat, which leads to weight gain or at least great difficulty in losing weight.

The insulin reaction happens more strongly to some people than others – you may notice that you feel hungry very soon after eating certain foods – but this does not happen all the time or with all carbohydrate based foods. Recent studies suggest that it is foods made up of simple carbohydrates, found in processed or refined sugar and refined white flour products, which may cause the insulin reaction. Foods such as white breads (especially those with added sugar), pastries, chocolate bars and other high sugar foods are digested and absorbed very quickly into the bloodstream; this is where we get the term ‘sugar high’.

Foods high in complex carbohydrates (whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and nuts) are digested more slowly than refined foods, and as a result will make you feel full for a longer period of time. As well, complex carbohydrates are not converted into blood sugar as quickly as with simple carbohydrates. Your blood sugar levels rise and fall much more slowly and steadily, leaving you feeling much more satisfied than after eating refined foods. **Overall, eating complex carbohydrates like whole grains will help curb your appetite, while still providing you with the energy you need.**

Although many people have had success with the carbohydrate reduced diet plans, research has been very inconclusive and even conflicting - the experts all seem to disagree on the effectiveness and even long term safety of these plans. The diets recommend significantly increasing protein and fat intake, which goes against most current health beliefs.

Regardless of the conflicting studies and theories, these diets did not work for me over the long term. My focus comes from being a breastfeeding mother, and I firmly believe a balanced, healthy approach, which includes grains as its foundation, is by far the better way.

Grain Products

6-11 servings per day

Breads

Whole wheat, rye, multi-grain, flax, pumpernickel, oat, sourdough, tortilla, pita, bagel, English muffin, buns, rolls, etc.

Rice

Brown Basmati, Brown Jasmine, Wehani, Arborio, Mochi, Wild, Red, Black, Glutinous (to name a few), classified by long, medium and short grain (over 40,000 varieties grown worldwide)

Pasta

Wide variety of sizes and shapes, including shaped, tubular, strand, ribbon and stuffed; made from a wide variety of grains, including whole wheat, buckwheat, oats, rice (Asian pasta), corn, and white flour

Cereals

Oats and oatmeal, corn, barley, rice, wheat, etc

Other Grain products

Crackers, pancakes, croissants, cookies and baked goods

Example serving sizes:

Grain Group	Approx. amount	Servings
Bread:	1 slice	1
Bagel:	1	2
Roll, English muffin:	1	1
Tortilla:	1	1
Plain Rice or pasta, cooked:	1/2 cup	1
Breakfast cereal:	1 oz (1 cup flakes)	1
Pancakes, 4" diameter:	1	1
Muffin:	1 medium	1
Plain crackers, small:	3-4	1
Croissant:	1 large	2
Cookies:	2 medium	1

Remember to always choose whole grain products (whole wheat or multigrain bread, whole grain pastas and cereals, brown rice products) over refined flour or refined sugar products. I know it is difficult to completely turn away from sweets and baked goods, so I have included baked goods in the above chart. I do occasionally treat myself to baked goods or sweets, but usually only once a week. Our goal here is to aim for more complex carbohydrates, which not only promote better health overall, but they fill us up and may keep us from eating more than we need.

Fruit Group

Fruit is considered nature's perfect food. The only preparation required is washing and occasional peeling, and it is ready to eat. Many fruits are rich in vitamin A, vitamin C, folate and potassium, and they contain soluble fiber and have a high water content (which will help you reach your recommended daily water intake). Many contain substantial amounts of calcium and iron as well. Most are naturally low in fat, have no cholesterol, and are very easy to digest (about 15 minutes for fruit juice and 30 minutes for whole fruit).

Fruit helps your body maintain good health and energy levels and protect against the effects of aging. Studies indicate that increasing consumption of fruit can significantly reduce the risk of chronic disease, including heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

It is not recommended to rely solely on fruit juice for your fruit servings. Although $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of juice is considered one serving of fruit, and you will get vitamins from fruit juice, you miss out on nutrient-enhancing fiber and other natural digestive enzymes when you simply drink juice to get your fruit servings

in. You will end up getting additional un-needed calories without the added health benefits of whole fruit.

Fruit will help with weight loss in a very direct way. Fruit will improve your digestion, provide you with nutrients that may help prevent cravings, act as a substitute for higher calorie, low value foods, and provide you with a large part of your daily water needs. As well, studies have shown that increasing the amount of fruit you eat can reduce your appetite overall.

Fruit should always be eaten alone and on an empty stomach (we will cover this further under food combining).

Fruit

2 – 4 servings per day

Popular Fruit

Apples, Apricots, cherries, grapes, peaches, pears, plums

Citrus Fruit

Grapefruits, lemons, limes, oranges

Melons

Cantaloupes, Honeydew, Watermelon

Berries

Blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cranberries, raspberries, strawberries

Tropical Fruit

Bananas, guavas, mangoes, papayas, pineapples

Other

Kiwis, pomegranates

Example serving sizes:

Fruit group	Approx. amount	Servings
Whole fruit: apple, banana, peach, orange, pear	1 medium (size of a tennis ball)	1
Small fruit: grapes, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries	½ cup	1
Diced fruit:	½ cup	1
Canned fruit (unsweetened):	½ cup	1
Dried fruit:	¼ cup	1
Fruit juice:	¾ cup	1

If you buy canned fruit, avoid any with added sugar. The same goes for fruit juice; buy only 100% juice, without additional sweeteners.

Vegetable Group

Our good health depends on vegetables. Without them, we are inviting disease and sickness into our bodies. They are extremely nutritious, are very high in water and contain a huge assortment of vitamins and minerals. Different vegetables contain different levels of nutrients, but some of the vitamins and minerals you will benefit from include vitamins C and A, vitamin B group, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and iron. Most vegetables are rich in fiber as well, especially insoluble fiber (very good for the colon). Vegetables are low in fat and calories, have no cholesterol, are low in sodium, and come in a wide variety of textures, tastes and colors.

Vegetables are good sources of phytochemicals, a group of compounds that may help prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and

diabetes. Many vegetables, such as broccoli, green peppers and spinach, are also good sources of antioxidants, which are substances that slow down oxidation in our systems (oxidation is a natural process that leads to cell and tissue damage). In particular, dark leafy greens and yellow or orange vegetables such as squash and carrots are high in beta-carotene, which is widely believed to help prevent cancer.

It is very important to be aware of how you prepare your vegetables. Most should be eaten fresh and raw, but some can be difficult to digest. To soften vegetables, light steaming or micro-waving are usually considered the best ways, as this will prevent the loss of most nutrients. Keep in mind that nutrients are destroyed by heat, light, air and water, so if you can avoid boiling, overcooking, and even peeling vegetables (many nutrients are contained in the skins), do so.

Try to avoid adding high fat sauces and dressings to your vegetable dishes as much as possible – be aware of what your dressings contain. Serve vegetables as soon as possible after preparation for the best taste and for the best health value.

Vegetable juice is another way to add more vegetables to your diet, and many people swear by vegetable juice for health and for detoxification. I try to avoid juicing because of the additional calories (just think of how many carrots it takes to make a glass of carrot juice). I occasionally treat myself to a glass for a great nutrient boost, but I find it is better to stay with whole vegetables overall.

Vegetable Categories

3 - 5 + servings per day (minimum)

Leafy Greens vegetables

Cabbage, chard, kale, lettuce, spinach, watercress

Stem vegetables

Asparagus, celery, leeks, rhubarb

Root and tuber vegetables

Beets, carrots, garlic, onions, potatoes, parsnips, turnips, radishes, sweet potatoes, yams

Vegetable flowers

Artichokes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower

Flowering vegetables

Cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, pumpkins, squashes, tomatoes

Other vegetables

Mushrooms, peas, sprouts, soybeans

Example serving sizes:

Vegetable group	Approx. amount	Servings
Salad greens	1 cup	1
Baked potato	1 medium	1
Cooked broccoli	½ cup	1
Asparagus	6 spears	1
Baby carrots or carrot sticks	8	1
Peas, beans or legumes	½ cup	1
Tomato juice	¾ cup	1

The recommended number of servings of vegetables is 3-5 per day, but I find that with fresh, raw vegetables, there is really no need for you to limit yourself. Just think ‘vegetables for health’!

Protein Group

Protein is a vital part of nutrition. Every cell in your body contains protein, and it is required for growth and maintenance of your organs, muscles, nervous system, blood vessels and skeleton. Protein helps form antibodies that fight off diseases

and viruses, and many of the hormones that regulate your metabolism, such as thyroid and insulin, are also made from protein.

Protein is made up of amino acids, of which there are 20, and they are categorized as essential and non-essential. The 13 non-essential amino acids can be synthesized by your body, but there are 9 essential amino acids that must come from the foods you eat (2 essential amino acids can be *partially* substituted with 2 non-essentials).

Protein comes from many different food sources. If a food source contains all of the essential amino acids, it is called a complete protein; if not, incomplete. All meats and other animal products (milk, eggs) are considered complete proteins, while plant based proteins (except soy) are considered incomplete – they usually lack one or more of the essential amino acids. However, plant based proteins can be combined to form a complete protein, and they don't have to be combined during the same meal. As long as you eat from a variety of sources throughout the day, you will meet your protein needs.

In general, meats and animal products are the easiest (although not necessarily the best) sources of protein, along with soy. Soy is the only plant based protein that contains all 9 essential amino acids; soy based products are great substitutes for meats. From a weight loss perspective, opt for plant based protein and low fat, low cholesterol animal products, especially fish.

Even when breastfeeding, you can fill your protein requirements from vegetarian sources, as long as you ensure that you are receiving enough of the correct proteins and you are taking a vitamin B-12 supplement. Vitamin B-12, which is very important for lactation, is found naturally only in animal products and fermented plant foods, but not plants. You must supplement your diet with B-12 fortified products such as fortified soy milk or fortified cereals.

However you choose to obtain your proteins, you must ensure that you get enough in your diet, especially while breastfeeding. Lactation significantly increases protein demands. Depending on how old your baby is (whether on solids or not), your protein needs will increase by up to 20 grams (30-40 percent) per day as compared to when you are not breastfeeding.

It is, however, equally important to avoid eating too high of a protein diet. Studies indicate that when you increase protein consumption (specifically animal protein – this is not the case with plant based proteins), you increase calcium loss through the urine. To compensate for lower blood calcium levels, your body may then leach calcium from your bones (if it is not immediately available elsewhere). As well, a diet very high in protein may be harmful to your kidneys. Your kidneys filter the by-products that come from the breakdown of protein, and these by-products can be toxic. Eating a very high protein diet puts stress on your kidneys because they have to work much harder, and in doing so put more stress on the liver; this will then adversely affect your metabolism.

The general guideline is to make sure that you have plenty of protein in your diet, but be sensible about it. It should be very easy to get your protein requirements every day, regardless of your preferred source.

Protein Products:

2-3 servings per day

Meats and seafood

Beef, pork, lamb, poultry, fish, shellfish

Animal products

Eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt

Plant protein sources

Beans (including soy, pinto, black, kidney, lima, navy, etc), lentils, peas, nuts, seeds, grains, seaweed, vegetables

Plant based protein products

Tofu, soy cheese and other soy products, peanut butter, veggie meats

Example serving sizes:

Protein group	Approx. amount	Servings
Meats, poultry or fish	2½ - 3 ounces (size of a deck of cards)	1
Processed lunch meat	2-3 slices	1
Eggs	2 – 3	1
Cheese from cow's milk	3 ounces (1 ounce = 1 inch cube)	1
Peanut butter	2-4 tablespoons	½
Beans, lentils	1 – 1½ cups	1
Tofu	1 cup (8 ounces)	1
Soy burger	1 large patty	1
Nuts	4 tablespoons	1

When you choose your protein sources, try to pay attention to fat and sodium content. I find that a varied diet, including vegetarian meals, fish, and low-fat meats seems to work the best, as I ensure that I get nutrients from various sources and avoid having to worry about excess fat.

Calcium/Dairy Group

Dairy products are included in the USDA food guide mainly to ensure that we receive enough calcium in our diets, and as another protein source. Dairy products are undeniably a good source of calcium, as well as protein, vitamin A, many of the group B vitamins, and vitamin D (which is added to milk). However, there has been and continues to be a very strong debate as to whether cow's milk

and milk products are really the best, most healthy way to get the calcium we need in our diets.

Calcium

Calcium is one of the most vital minerals we need; it is essential for the optimal functioning of the entire body. It is the most abundant mineral in the human body, 99% of which is stored in the bones and teeth. We need calcium for muscle contraction, nerve transmission, proper thyroid function, blood clotting, for the regulation of heart muscles, and to build and maintain our bones and teeth.

Our bones act as a reservoir for calcium. When blood calcium levels dip too low, calcium is taken from our bones, and then replaced with calcium supplied through our diet. Over time, if we have insufficient calcium in our diets and it is not being returned to our bones, this can lead to osteoporosis. Clearly, it is very important that we have enough calcium in our diets to maintain proper health and prevent long term disease.

In order to absorb calcium, we need other nutrients in our diet, including vitamin D, vitamin K, magnesium, and vitamin C. Estrogen and exercise also affect how much we absorb. Calcium absorption is decreased by things such as stress, phosphoric acid (found in soft drinks), coffee, and excessive fat and sugar. As well, eating a diet with excessive protein will cause calcium loss through the urine, leading to calcium leaching from our bones.

It is recommended that women have between 1000-1500mg of calcium per day while nursing, and 1000mg per day otherwise. The most well known (and widely accepted) source of calcium is dairy and dairy products. There are, however, many other sources of calcium, including broccoli, cauliflower, almonds, kale, salmon (canned), beans, seeds and nuts, to name a few (see table following – Calcium Sources). And although I know many people will have difficulty

accepting this, I believe non-dairy sources of calcium are by far the better way to go.

Dairy

I have been a dairy consumer for most of my life. I drank milk regularly, and ate and cooked with cheese frequently. But since the birth of my youngest son (see below – Dairy and Colic Babies), and since I began researching nutrition and weight loss, I have virtually eliminated dairy from my diet.

The scope of my book is not to condemn the dairy industry, but to promote safe, healthy weight loss while breastfeeding. By being safe, I mean ensuring that we get what our bodies need from our diets in the most healthy way possible, while still achieving our weight loss goals. And I believe that consumption of dairy products (especially whole fat products) is one of the biggest reasons why many people have difficulty reaching their targets.

Dairy and Colic Babies

My third child was colic from the time he was two weeks old, and this lasted until he was 4 months. It was the most challenging time of my life. His crying was not limited to the three hours per day I remember reading about - some days he would cry on and off all day long. It was heartbreaking to see him so upset and not be able to do anything about it. My other children were always comforted by the breast, and I didn't understand why it did not work with him.

I had a wonderful doctor who also had first hand experience with a colicky baby, and although he was sympathetic, he informed me that the only real cure would be time. He did, however, suggest I try eliminating dairy from my diet, as studies had shown that for many babies, there seemed to be a link between dairy in a mother's diet and colic. I immediately went out and bought soy cheese, lots of

leafy green vegetables and calcium supplements, hoping that this would help. And miraculously, within a week my son was crying less frequently.

Although the colic did not completely disappear, there was a huge improvement. About a month later I tried eating dairy products again and he had an instant reaction, so for me, there was no doubt. The final result was that I did more research on dairy, and decided to eliminate almost all of it from my diet. And the consequence of that was faster weight loss for me, and better health overall.

To Dairy or not to Dairy

The biggest problem people have with reducing or eliminating dairy is a fear that they will not be able to get enough calcium in their diets. Many mothers feel that it is absolutely necessary to drink milk while breastfeeding and most do not question why – the power of advertising, I suppose.

Well, here are a few facts about dairy that may surprise some people:

- over 75 percent (yes, 75%) of the *world's* population is lactose intolerant (meaning they can't digest milk sugar) – although only 20-25 percent of Caucasians are lactose intolerant
- the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, states that cow's milk is the number one-cause of food allergies in children
- a Harvard Nurses' Health Study followed 78,000 women for a 12-year period and found that milk did not protect against bone fractures (osteoporosis) – in fact, there was a tendency for *increased* bone fractures for those who consumed more milk.
- the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that whole cow's milk should not be given to infants under one year of age
- most dairy products are high in saturated fats and cholesterol, both of which contribute to cardiovascular diseases and certain forms of cancer

There has been a vast amount of research on dairy and its effect on health. Dairy has been linked to a host of diseases in children, including autism, chronic ear infections, insulin-dependent diabetes, acne, obesity, constipation, other digestive problems and mucus, to name a few. In adults, studies have indicated a link to breast cancer, prostate cancer, obesity, heart disease and osteoporosis. Dr. Benjamin Spock, the world-famous author of the book 'Baby and Child Care', stated in the final edition of his book that "I no longer recommend dairy products. ... The essential fats that are needed for brain development are found in vegetable oils. Milk is very low in these essential fats and high in the saturated fats that encourage artery blockage and weight problems as children grow."

My point here is to show that there are legitimate reasons (other than weight loss) to reduce or remove dairy from our diets. From a strictly calcium needs viewpoint, most of the world by far does not obtain their calcium requirements from dairy. From a weight loss perspective, I believe switching to other sources will help tremendously. I know from my own experience that removing dairy from my diet was one of the best things I have done for my health.

Calcium sources

The biggest consideration in choosing your calcium sources (if you move away from dairy) is not only the calcium content but also calcium *absorbability* from each food source. The calcium in some foods such as chard, beet greens, rhubarb, spinach and some types of beans contain substances called oxalates and phytates that decrease calcium absorption. Spinach is actually one of worst, at only 5 percent absorbency rate – only 5 percent of the calcium in spinach can actually be absorbed by your body. To put that into perspective, milk has about a 32 percent absorbency rate.

However, other green vegetables like kale, mustard greens, broccoli, brussels sprouts, green cabbage, cauliflower, bok choy and collard greens have a 50 to 70 percent absorbency rate. One of the easiest sources I find for calcium is calcium fortified orange juice, which has a 36 to 38 percent absorbency rate.

Although milk does seem to have a relatively good absorbency rate, there are additional problems with calcium absorption from milk. Milk has a high protein content and a high level of phosphorous, both of which adversely affect calcium in our bodies. Phosphorous (phosphoric acid, the same as in soft drinks) directly inhibits calcium absorption, and high protein intake increases calcium loss in the urine.

Obtaining calcium from alternate sources is much easier than most people realize - you don't have to buy strange products from fringe health food stores, it is all at your local grocery store. If weight loss is your goal, I strongly suggest that you do additional research for yourself and (if you are concerned about it) consult your doctor about safe, alternate sources of calcium. But definitely think about it, and make your own decision. If you decide to reduce dairy and you don't eat a lot of other protein, make sure you get all of your protein servings from other sources.

Calcium/Dairy

3 servings

Dairy

milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, cream cheese, cottage cheese, ice cream

Vegetable

asparagus, beans (white, navy, pinto, red, northern), broccoli, cabbage, Chinese cabbage (bok choy), zucchini, cauliflower, eggplant, endive, kale, romaine lettuce

Nuts/Seeds

brazil nuts, pistachios, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds

Fruit

blackberries, kiwis, oranges, apricots, pears, dates, prunes, dried figs

Fortified products

orange juice, soy milk, calcium-set tofu, cereals

Other

canned salmon, sardines, shrimp

Example serving sizes:

Dairy / alternatives	Approx. amount	Servings
Milk, yogurt	1 cup	1
Cheese	1½ ounces	1
Tofu, calcium-set, firm	½ cup	1
Fortified Soy milk	1 cup	1
Fortified Orange Juice	1 cup	1
Broccoli, cooked	½-1 cup	½
Bok choy	½-1 cup	½
White beans	1 cup	½
Almonds	¼ cup	½
Figs	5 figs	½
Seaweed (Agar)	1½ tablespoons	1
Canned salmon, with bones	4 ounces	1
Sardines, with bones	3 ounces	1

However you choose to get your calcium, remember that from a weight loss perspective, regular dairy is not your friend. If you decide to stay with dairy, always choose low fat products whenever possible. I have included an additional table (following page) showing alternate sources of calcium with their approximate absorbency rates. A more complete table showing a very wide range of foods with substantial amounts of calcium is included at the end of the chapter.

Alternate calcium sources:

Food Source	Servin g	Calcium (mg)	Approx. Absorption (%)	Absorbabl e mg/servin g
Almonds	1 oz.	80	21	17
Beans, northern/navy	1 cup	121-128	17	21-22
Beans, white	1 cup	161	17	27
Broccoli, boiled	1 cup	178	53	94
Brussels sprouts, boiled	1 cup	56	64	36
Bok Choy, boiled	1 cup	158	54	85
Cabbage, green, boiled	1 cup	50	65	33
Cauliflower, boiled	1 cup	34	69	23
Kale, boiled	1 cup	94	59	55
Sesame seeds, hulled	1 oz.	37	21	8
Soymilk	1 cup	200	31	62
Spinach, boiled	1 cup	244	5	12
Tofu, calcium-set (firm)	1/2 cup	258	31	80
Turnip greens, boiled	1 cup	198	52	103
Calcium Fortified Orange Juice	1 cup	290-350	36	104-126
For comparison:				
Cow's milk	1 cup	300	32	96
Cheddar cheese	2 oz	400	32	128

Food Combining

Enhancing digestion

The next step in my nutrition program is something that many people have heard about, but few people really understand. It is a revolutionary way of living, altering not only the way we eat but also how we incorporate food into our lives. There is a great deal of controversy concerning it, with people strongly for and people just as strongly against it, but I have complete confidence in it. I believe that once you learn the basics of food combining, you will never need to diet again.

Food combining has been studied and written about for years, but has only recently become very popular. The original diet of food combining was developed by Dr. William Hay in the early part of the last century. He developed it in order to heal himself, as he had been diagnosed with high blood pressure and heart and kidney disease. He believed that **one of the main reasons people developed poor health was because of improper digestion, which resulted in poor elimination and the build-up of toxins in the body, placing tremendous strain on the system.**

The result of his plan was that he had a complete remission of his symptoms and lost 50 pounds in the process. His plan was fairly obscure and difficult to follow, but today, thousands of people follow versions of his idea and have lost weight and increased their health tremendously.

Currently, there are many new diet books on the market devoted to the practice of food combining. The problem I find with many of these programs is that they are very restrictive in what you can eat and how, advising you to significantly decrease certain foods and follow a strict regimen. I come from the viewpoint of a

breastfeeding mother, and I understand that not only do we need nourishment from a variety of foods without drastically reducing one type or another, but we also have very little time to devote to extensive meal planning or preparing difficult meals.

My program is designed around the basic food groups (with the exception of dairy) and incorporates food combining as gently as possible. I do not believe in any severe restrictions or radical changes; I have simply adapted the parts of the program that worked for me to fit my lifestyle as a (typically!) busy mother.

Overall, the best reason to begin food combining is for your health. Food combining absolutely promotes health and well being, and it doesn't take long to begin feeling the benefits from this way of life. After my *first week* of food combining I felt more energy than I had in years. I immediately started losing weight, and I was never hungry (this path is not about deprivation in the least - I eat all the time). I noticed a definite change in my moods as well. My level of stress dropped significantly, and I began feeling much happier, more content and relaxed.

I am very excited to be sharing my program with you, and I am certain that you will love it. Once you adopt this way of living you will explode with energy, and best of all, you will naturally lose weight.

What is food combining?

Food combining is based on the idea that certain combinations of foods are digested and utilized more efficiently than others, allowing natural, easy and complete digestion which results in increased energy, better health and (in the process) weight loss. **The focus of food combining is digestion, because it is not what we eat that is crucial to our health, but what we digest and assimilate.**

Digestion itself is governed by physiological chemistry. Many people believe that we should be able to easily digest any number of different foods at the same time. The problem is that our digestive systems use different enzymes to break down different types of food, and the different enzymes and secretions produce different levels of acidity in our systems. As well, different foods require different digestion times – some take substantially longer than others to digest.

The most noticeable is with proteins and starches. When we consume heavy proteins (meats, fish) our bodies produce an acid medium to facilitate digestion, and proteins can take up to 4 hours or more to digest. When we eat starchy foods (breads, cooked potatoes) our bodies produce an alkaline medium to facilitate digestion and starches will take from as little as 30 minutes up to 2 hours to digest. When we eat protein and starches together our bodies produce both acid and alkaline mediums; combined, the two mediums (at the very least) dilute one another, significantly slowing down digestion time. The food sits in our stomachs while our bodies work hard to break it down, and this will leave you with that full, bloated feeling that can last for hours. Improperly combined meals can take twice as long, or longer, to fully digest.

An easy example of an improperly combined meal would be a meat-and-potatoes type of meal. Remember the last time you had a large meal consisting of steak and potatoes? If you are like the vast majority of people you will have felt bloated and tired shortly after, and this will have lasted for hours as the food churned away in your stomach.

For me, the worst is a dinner of spaghetti with meat sauce. Just thinking about spaghetti with meat sauce makes me feel ill – I suddenly feel the urge to go a lie down on the couch for the next couple of hours...

A properly combined meal using the above examples would be a steak with a big, leafy green salad and steamed broccoli, or fresh vegetable pasta with pesto and a

big salad. Try these out, and you will be amazed how great you feel after your meal.

In short, when we eat from a variety of food groups at the same time we are stressing our systems, creating a difficult, energy draining digestive process.

Proper food combining ensures fast digestion with improved, more complete absorption of the nutrients that our food provides; it allows our digestive systems to operate in the most efficient and effective way possible. Our bodies are able to easily break down the foods we consume and absorb the nutrients quickly, and as a result, we feel an abundance of energy and we allow our bodies to begin detoxification and the proper elimination of waste.

How does food combining help you lose weight?

Food combining, as described, is basically just eating foods in a combination that is very beneficial to digestion. The role food combining plays in weight loss is not as clear, however. There is (currently) no scientific evidence proving that eating foods in certain combinations directly influences weight loss. Nevertheless, countless thousands of people have very successfully lost weight when they adopted food combining. So the question remains – how does it help you lose weight?

One direct way food combining will help you lose weight is by the displacement of certain foods. **By its very nature, food combining encourages us to eat more vegetables with every meal, and in doing so displaces some high fat proteins and starches.** We replace a meal of steak with a baked potato (which most people load up with butter and sour cream) with steak and a vegetable dish. Immediately, we have eliminated a large calorie and fat source in our diet, and replaced it with something more nutritious and beneficial. This alone, over time, will result in weight loss. But I believe there is much more to it than that.

I believe that food combining increases weight loss in more of an indirect manner. As proper food combining improves digestion it increases the speed and quality of nutrient absorption, it gives us more energy, decreases toxin build-up in our bodies and improves moods and happiness in general. As a result of these events, several things happen.

When you digest your foods quickly and easily and receive the nutrients you need from your foods, you will tend to feel more satisfied with what you eat, and this will decrease your appetite. I know that after I have eaten a large, improperly combined meal, I usually feel hungry a short while later, even though my body is still digesting my meal. If you are more satisfied with your meals and do not feel the desire to eat more food or eat more often, the result is obvious. Anything that decreases your appetite beyond what you need for good health will help you lose weight.

With better nutrient absorption, your body will not crave certain foods as often. **Research has shown that intense food cravings are often the result of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which can be caused by either a diet deficient in those nutrients or simply poor nutrient absorption.** The improved nutrient absorption you experience from proper food combining may help you curb some of those ‘unhealthy’ food cravings, such as the occasional desire to eat an entire box of Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Not that I’ve ever done that, of course.

There may be a link to an increase in metabolism because of the decrease in toxicity in your system. An easier, more efficient digestive process that eliminates waste faster and more completely is essentially getting rid of, and not allowing, toxins to build-up in your digestive system. Lower toxin levels mean less work for your kidneys and liver – they will not have to spend as much energy or time cleansing your system of toxins. And as stated in the Water chapter, anything that can help improve the efficiency of your liver will allow it more time for fat

metabolism. Even if it is just a small difference, remember that every little bit helps. Any increase in metabolism will result in weight loss over time, even if everything else remains the same.

I believe there is a strong emotional aspect as well. One thing I do know from direct experience is that many of us have a tendency to rely on food for emotional support: we eat to feel better. Before I came upon food combining, this was a recurring theme for me. I would feel bad, eat junk food to distraction, then feel bad about that and repeat the cycle. But when I started my program, within a few days my moods had improved significantly. I really couldn't believe how much happier I felt.

Many people who have adopted food combining have stated that they feel much happier with life, they experience less stress, and feel better overall. I am not clear as to why we experience this, but it might have something to do with the increased energy we feel. Or perhaps with better nutrition and health our hormones are better regulated, resulting in improved, more stable moods. Regardless, the direct result of this is very clear; when we feel better, we turn less to food and more to life.

A further benefit may also come from the fact that my program does not place direct restrictions on what or how much you can eat, only on the combinations of foods you eat. I have found that when a diet places restrictions on anything, I want that thing more than I did before I started the diet. It seems that we are like children when it comes down to restrictions – we always want what we can't have! I have never done well on restrictive diets, so I chose not to include limitations on any particular type of food, with the exception of dairy (I had eliminated dairy before I began food combining). Having no restrictions helps me avoid binging on those 'naughty' foods. Again, anything that will curb our appetites and help us stay focused will help us reach our weight loss goals faster and easier.

There are critics of food combining that state that there is a lack of evidence to support it, and the truth is that there has been very little scientific research devoted to it. However, there are a growing number of medical professionals who fully support and recommend food combining for healthy living. Most food combining advocates, including myself, tend to go with what their own experience and the real world experience of others tells them: let the results speak for themselves.

How does food combining increase energy?

One of the great benefits of proper food combining is increased energy and vitality. I could not believe how much more energy I had after just a few short days on my plan. I felt more alert, more enthusiastic, and I accomplished more in *days* than I had in weeks before. I couldn't stop talking about it, reading about it, and encouraging everyone I knew to get on it. Of all the changes I have made in my life concerning diet and health, this by far had the most impact on my energy levels.

To understand how food combining helps increase your energy comes back to digestion. Digestion itself is the most energy consuming process of the human body. For most people, digestion will require more energy than anything else they will ever do, throughout their entire lives. Our stomachs churn food, produce huge amounts of digestive enzymes and acids to break down all the different types of nutrients, and move the food into our intestines. Our intestines further break it down and move it all the way through to elimination.

This process requires a huge amount of energy. The more food you eat at one sitting, the more work your system will have to do. Your digestive process is the reason why you feel so tired after eating large, improperly combined meals. As well, when your digestive system slows down or gets backed up (pun intended!) there will be delayed absorption of the nutrients from your foods. The results of

this are easily apparent: you may not get the energy or other nutritional benefits of your foods as quickly as you need.

Food combining allows your digestive system to work as quickly and efficiently as possible. Simply by improving the efficiency of your digestive process, you dramatically reduce the amount of energy needed for digestion. This is something that you may notice after your *first* properly combined meal, as I did. Instead of feeling tired and wanting to lie down or rest after your meals, you will feel completely the opposite – you will have *more* energy after eating than before.

And after a short period of time, as your system cleanses itself and adjusts to the easier digestive process, you will feel even better. You will actually get the nutrients that your food contains, much more quickly and completely than before; your energy will improve, your health will improve and you will feel fantastic. I would recommend this program to anyone just for these reasons alone.

Is food combining safe for breastfeeding mothers?

Yes! My plan is based around the basic food guidelines as recommended by the USDA and Health Canada Food Guides. I do not recommend eliminating any food groups (again, with the exception of replacing dairy with other calcium sources). My program does not place restrictions on what you can eat, only on what you combine; you will get all of the nutrients required for lactating mothers from a variety of properly combined foods.

The basics of Food Combining

My program is designed around the basic concepts of the common food combining program. There are five general rules to follow, and after you have done it for a while, it will become very easy. It is simply a matter of what you are used to doing – just as you are used to your current way of eating, you will become accustomed to food combining.

Basic rules

1. Concentrated proteins and starches are not eaten together. Our bodies require an acid medium to digest protein (and dairy products). Therefore, they are best eaten with vegetables (except potatoes, because they turn into starch when cooked). Concentrated starches require an alkaline medium for proper digestion. All grain products also fall into the starch / alkaline category.

Old way of eating

Steak and Potatoes

Lasagna with meat and cheese

Fish and rice

New way of eating

Steak, salad with steamed vegetables

Lasagna with tomato sauce and layered vegetables

Fish and salad with a baked vegetable dish

2. Fruit is eaten alone or with other fruit. Fruit is high water content food and is easily digested (within 30 minutes). When eaten with other foods, fruit will ferment and putrefy in your stomach because of the longer digestion period of the other foods it is eaten with. When eaten alone, fruit is quickly digested and the vital nutrients are absorbed more readily, without interference from other foods.

3. Try to drink water in-between (or at the very least just before) meals. Water interferes with and dilutes the digestive medium in the stomach, which is

working at breaking down food. When you drink water with your meals, it may slow down your digestion time.

4. Eat only one concentrated protein per meal. Two or more proteins at the same time can be stressful on your system, as proteins require the longest digestion time. An additional reason is that many concentrated proteins are also high in fat (for example, a ham and cheese sandwich).

5. Oil and other fats can be eaten with anything except fruit. We do need fat in our diet, but only in moderation.

Proper Food combining and the basic food groups

Food combining is easily viewed from the food group perspective. Breaking it down by food groups makes it very clear and simple to follow. It is easily integrated into any meal planning – all it takes is a little forethought about food combinations. Just make sure you adhere to the basic food guide plan and incorporate adequate amounts of each of the food groups.

Grains:	with vegetables
Protein:	with vegetables
Dairy (if needed):	alone or with low starch vegetables
Fruit:	eaten alone
Vegetables:	alone or in combination with any of the above except fruit

Adapting to food combining

There is no need to radically alter your shopping habits or completely clean out your cupboards to adapt to this program. Many very common recipes can easily be modified to fit – usually it is only one food type that has to be omitted or replaced within a meal, and it will work. I find that you can get really creative

with properly combined meals, because you have plenty of room to make adjustments within the basic rules.

An easy way to incorporate this system is to go through all your favorite recipes and adjust them to reflect the food combining chart. Take hamburgers for example: I love hamburgers and have found several ways to vary my recipes. I add different spices to the meat, and I often switch from ground beef to ground chicken or turkey. Of course I have to omit the bun, so I have a leafy green side salad instead. There are many different green leafy vegetables available - I especially love the nutty flavor of Arugula with burgers.

You will more than likely be increasing the amount of vegetables in your diet. A way to enhance your meals is to add a wide variety of vegetables; try shopping at your local farmers market and look for vegetables that are in season, or shop at a specialty supermarket that carries alternative foods.

Be imaginative, and have fun. I think it's important to think of this new way of eating as a healthy lifestyle choice as opposed to a 'diet'. This will allow you to be freely creative, and not have to worry about things like counting calories or fat content.

As I mentioned, I have tried to simplify this program to fit the busy life of a mother with a new baby. With babies and young children, some days are very difficult and the last thing we want to worry about is complicated meal planning. I freely admit that there are days when I bend the rules a bit, especially around breakfast. I occasionally enjoy my toast with peanut butter or a bowl of cereal with soy (not cow's!) milk. I find that I am able to easily digest these food combinations partially due to the fact that I eat small amounts.

The important thing to remember here is to listen to your body. Keep a journal and write down how you feel after a meal. Did you follow the food combining

guidelines? Do you have more or less energy than before your meal? If you do eat protein with starch together, try to keep the meal very small and eat it early in the day to allow your body time to digest it before you go to bed. One of the worst things you can do while trying to lose weight is to eat a big, improperly combined meal before bedtime. Your body slows down and goes into rest mode, thereby slowing down the digestion process even further.

Food combining – final note

Several critics of food combining state that food combining is difficult to follow because many of the foods that we eat, such as breads, contain both proteins and starches. I think most of them miss the obvious: it is the highly concentrated proteins (particularly meats and dairy) in combination with primarily starchy foods (such as grains and cooked potatoes) that cause the digestive slowdowns in our systems. There is no one I know who can eat a large, improperly combined meal and feel lively and energetic afterwards. I wonder if the critics do not get that bloated feeling – I'd like to know how their digestive systems work. I think it really comes down to personal experience; go with what feels right to you.

Improper food combining has been attributed to many different ailments. People have found relief from chronic digestive problems including heartburn, cramps, bloating, constipation and colitis, and even many allergies, when they switched to proper food combining. Many people have been directed to a food combining type of diet for those reasons alone, as opposed to weight loss, and have benefited greatly from it. I would definitely recommend doing more research on food combining in relation to specific illnesses if you suffer from problems like these and would like to learn more.

With regards to detoxification, there is a large amount of information available concerning improper digestion and the build-up of toxins in our bodies, and about how proper food combining can help eliminate much of it. The details of

this are beyond the scope of my book, but if you are interested in learning more, definitely pursue it further. Any information that can help improve your health is always worth going after.

Seven Day Sample Menu

I have designed a seven day sample menu and a list of healthy snacks for you to choose from. It is best to wait 2 hours when switching between groups, with the exception of fruit (wait 30 minutes after eating fruit).

All serving sizes are relatively small – it is better to have smaller meals more often. All meat protein serving sizes are 3 ounces, about the size of a deck of playing cards. Pasta dishes are ½ to 1 cup in size. For vegetables, eat as much as you want (go light on sauces). Each day's menu contains the suggested servings for all food groups for breastfeeding mothers.

Day 1

Wake Up!	1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice handful of strawberries
Breakfast	2 slices of whole grain toast with margarine
Snack	1 cup soy (calcium fortified) or non fat yogurt
Lunch	grilled skinless chicken steamed cauliflower leafy green salad
Snack	½ - 1 multi-grain bagel
Snack	5 dried apricots
Dinner	whole wheat penne with tomato sauce baked vegetable casserole

arugula salad
Snack ¼ cup almonds

Day 2

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice
1 cup diced cantaloupe
Breakfast 1 large whole grain waffle with margarine and *small* amount of
maple syrup
Snack 1 cookie
Lunch toasted vegetable sandwich
(2 slices toasted whole grain bread, mayo, ½ avocado, cucumber
slices and sprouts)
Snack 1 bran muffin
Snack handful of grapes
Dinner baked salmon with dill
steamed broccoli
leafy green salad
Snack 2 slices soy cheese

Day 3

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice
handful of blueberries
Breakfast 2 whole wheat pancakes (medium)
Snack 1 cup soy (calcium-fortified) or low-fat cottage cheese
Lunch veggie burger (grain based - non soy) with bun
spinach salad
Snack 1 banana
Snack carrots and celery sticks
Dinner angle hair pasta with pesto sauce
steamed green beans

tossed salad
Snack 1 cup soy milk

Day 4

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice
handful of grapes
Breakfast toasted whole grain bagel with margarine
Snack 1 orange
Lunch whole wheat pita pocket stuffed with brown rice and vegetables:
(brown rice, cucumbers, red pepper, sprouts, avocado with ranch
dressing)
Snack 2 celery sticks with peanut butter
Snack 1 cup soy milk
Dinner baked garlic chicken
steamed artichoke
tomatoes with balsamic vinegar
Snack small bowl popcorn

Day 5

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice
1 pear
Breakfast vegetable omelet (2-3 eggs, avocado, green pepper, sprouts, etc)
Snack carrot muffin
Lunch 1 cup vegetable barley soup
½ multigrain bagel
Snack 1 kiwi
Snack 4 whole wheat crackers
Dinner grilled Halibut
steamed asparagus
cauliflower and broccoli salad with oil dressing

Snack soy ice cream

Day 6

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice

1 cup diced honeydew melon

Breakfast 1 package plain quick oatmeal with ½ teaspoon maple syrup

Snack 1 nectarine

Lunch butternut squash soup

½ veggie sandwich

Snack small handful of sunflower seeds

Snack 2 large breadsticks

Dinner 1 cup spinach risotto
steamed green beans

watercress salad

Snack a handful of figs

Day 7

Wake Up! 1 glass of calcium fortified orange juice

2 kiwis

Breakfast 1 large whole wheat scone

Snack 1 cup soy yogurt

Lunch vegetable salad with tuna: tuna, green beans, celery, green peppers,
small amount of mayonnaise, spices

Snack fruit sorbet

Snack ½ bagel

Dinner linguine with oil and garlic sauce
grilled sweet potato

grilled eggplant

Snack handful of pretzels

Healthy Snack Options

- fruit
- raw vegetables
- dried fruit
- ½ whole wheat bagel – plain
- popcorn
- nuts and seeds
- low salt pretzels
- non-fat frozen yogurt (soy)
- granola
- whole wheat crackers

Substitutes for White Sugar

- honey
- maple syrup
- fruit syrup
- date sugar
- malt syrup
- rice syrup

Additional concerns

Food cravings

I mentioned food cravings previously in the section on food combining, but I wanted to include further information concerning it. It seems to be one of the

most challenging areas to overcome, because it is where many of us seem to gain the additional weight we carry, and have the most difficulty changing our habits with.

On any new food program, many of us struggle with cravings for unhealthy foods and snacks like cookies, chips, ice cream, chocolate bars, and candy - all of our favorite snacks seem to be extremely high in calories, fat and/or refined sugar. Most of us can usually follow a basic weight loss plan and eat healthy meals; it is generally not that difficult. But when it comes to the in-between meal times, many of us find ourselves falling off the wagon.

I believe a large part of the answer lies in our overall nutrition. As mentioned in food combining, many food cravings are often the result of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which can be caused by either a diet deficient in those nutrients and/or poor nutrient absorption. Therefore, your first step in dealing with food cravings must come down to basic nutrition. You must ensure that you receive adequate nutrition in the first place, by eating well from all of the basic food groups every day. Additionally, you should adopt proper food combining to promote more efficient, complete digestion, so your system can completely absorb nutrients from the foods you eat. I feel that these steps alone will eliminate several types of food cravings for many people, as they did for me.

The next step is to look at your habits. Many cravings occur strictly from habit – when you sit down to watch TV or a movie, when you read, when you... you name it. Habits are formed by conditioning. You have chips when you sit down to watch a movie once, twice, again, and before you know it, each time you sit down to watch a movie, you suddenly feel an urge to grab a bag of chips. These cravings can be difficult to eliminate, but one way to get around them is to use snack substitutions. Simply replace the bag of high fat chips with fruit, popcorn (light on the margarine!), or even low fat pretzels. It is important to find a replacement that will satisfy you, so use your imagination. Just make sure you are prepared for the next movie you watch.

A final step to try and reduce food cravings is to use distraction. When you feel the urge to grab the ice cream, grab a glass of water instead. There are many times when a craving is really thirst in disguise (re-read the Water chapter if you have not started your water program). Drinking water will fill you up as well, which will reduce hunger pangs quickly. If that doesn't work, try something that will divert your attention long enough to get past the craving. Exercise works really well...

And for some people, caffeine can increase sugar cravings (during the 'low' after the caffeine has worn off), so try and reduce your caffeine intake for a while to see if this makes a difference.

Overall, don't completely deprive yourself. Remember that when we completely cut something we like from our diets it becomes an 'I want what I can't have' type of food – we will only want it more. Try reducing or replacing the snack slowly at first; decrease it gradually until you feel confident that you won't end up bingeing or swinging completely back into your old habit.

Reducing fat, sugar and processed foods

Changing poor eating habits can be challenging if we are used to consuming fat, sugar and refined food on a regular basis. I know from experience the difficulty of switching from an unhealthy diet to a more wholesome way of living. The first week for me was a breeze - it was the second and third week when my withdrawals hit me. Fat, sugar, salt and processed food products are addictive. It takes will power and motivation to get through the first month, as many of us have a lifetime of poor eating habits to reverse. The good news is that it can be done - you can actually enjoy eating a natural food diet!

Nature provides us with a huge variety of chemical free foods. Replace cakes and cookies with sweet, juicy fruit. Frozen soy yogurt, nuts and popcorn are great substitutes for junk food. Be creative, and be aware of what you eat. Adopting a healthy, natural diet will help you lose weight, gain more energy, and best of all you will be teaching your children the importance of nutrition.

Alcohol, caffeine and breastfeeding

After nine months of taking excellent care of your health during pregnancy, many new mothers want to know if it is safe to consume alcohol and caffeine while breastfeeding. Many studies have been done, and although there is very little conclusive evidence either way, most experts seem to agree that moderate consumption of both will not harm your baby.

The American Academy of Pediatrics lists caffeine as an approved substance for use by breastfeeding mothers. One or two cups of coffee per day should not cause any problems for your baby, but if you exceed this your baby might become irritable and want to feed more, or have problems sleeping. Babies (especially under 6 months of age) have trouble metabolizing caffeine, so it may build up in their systems if you drink excessive amounts (above 5 cups per day). One study found that mothers who were heavy coffee drinkers had reduced iron content in their milk. If you suspect that your baby is reacting to coffee, reduce or drop coffee for a few days and observe any changes.

The safety of alcohol consumption is not quite as clear as with caffeine, as there are many conflicting theories. Some medical professionals feel that you should avoid alcohol altogether while breastfeeding, while many others feel that occasional, moderate drinking is fine. The La Leche League states that “Occasional or light drinking of alcoholic beverages has not been found to be harmful to the breastfeeding baby. Moderate-to-heavy alcohol consumption by the breastfeeding mother may interfere with the let-down, or milk-ejection reflex,

inhibit milk intake, affect infant motor development, slow weight gain, and cause other side effects in the baby.” In one study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, a significant difference was detected in motor development at one year of age in those babies subjected regularly to alcohol.

Alcohol passes into your breast milk as quickly as it does your bloodstream, and the level of alcohol will peak from 30 to 90 minutes after you drink. If you drink, most experts agree that the safest course is to wait until the alcohol has left your system before breastfeeding your baby again. Pumping and dumping is not necessary (unless you want to relieve engorgement), as the alcohol will leave your milk at the same rate it leaves your bloodstream. Overall, most experts seem to agree that one (no more than two) drinks per day should not be a problem, as long as you time it so that you breastfeed before you drink, and not again until the effects have worn off.

Another concern about alcohol is with weight loss. Alcohol is not a nutrient but it does have a lot of calories, and its general effect on metabolism is to increase fat storage. Too much alcohol can result in weight gain.

Your nutrition plan

In life we must be prepared and organized in order to reach our goals. This particularly holds true for reaching any weight loss objective; when we are organized and have a healthy, nutritional eating plan in place it sets us up for success. I have found that lack of planning and preparation is a very significant reason why many of us never reach our goals.

I believe that each one of us must create a plan that is best suited to our own lives, as every person’s situation is different. However, I encourage you to utilize

my basic ideas as presented in this chapter as best you can. My plan is based on health as opposed to strictly weight loss; you will benefit from it for a lifetime, not just for a short period of time in order to lose weight. I feel that my program is easy to follow, and easy to integrate into most people's lives.

The first step in any plan is to write it down. The easiest way I find to plan for nutrition is to do a basic weekly menu. When I first began food combining, I wrote a very detailed weekly menu which included every meal, plus snacks. I found this very helpful at first, as I wanted to be sure I was very well prepared. As I became more and more used to properly combined meal preparation, I reduced my weekly menu to simply dinners. I currently prepare the rest of my meals without thinking because proper food combining has become a part of my life.

However you choose to write your plan, make it detailed enough to ensure that you are prepared for all of your meals and snacks, but do not make it too restrictive. Be sure to give yourself some options throughout the week to allow for variety. Menu planning should only take about 5-10 minutes once per week; I consider it time well spent.

As well as writing your plan, take a few steps to ensure that you will adhere to it. The most important step is to make sure that you are prepared. There really is no substitute for good preparation! This mostly entails being aware of what you need for meal preparation and for snacks, and being organized with your grocery shopping. Make sure that you have what you need when you need it. This can really help prevent those nasty slips back into the cookie box.

When we are out of the house it is equally important to be prepared. I now always carry fruit, a water bottle and multi-grain bagels in my diaper bag. I can't tell you how many times I have arrived at my mother and tot group and realized at 11:00am that I only had a piece of fruit at 7:00. This would inevitably 'force' me to go the bakery for a giant cinnamon roll loaded with icing. Preparing ahead of time prevents the temptation of stopping for convenience foods like that. **I find**

that it is often the small things that can make a very big difference when we are trying to stay the course.

Your nutrition plan should take you in the direction of your goals, but it should not be so limiting that you quickly give up. Try to achieve a balance where your plan will support you and keep you moving in the right direction, but still allow you room for choice. If we allow ourselves room for variety and room to make mistakes, it encourages us to stay and continue trying.

Overall, try to make your plan enjoyable. Nutrition should not be about strictness or inflexibility or punishment. It should be more about health and well being; it should be about increasing happiness and joy in our lives.

20 Great Tips for Losing Weight and Improving your Health

1. Eat more fresh fruit
2. Eat more vegetables
3. Eat more whole grains – cereal, rice, whole wheat, oats
4. Eat more fish – especially salmon, for omega-3 fatty acids
5. Eliminate cow's milk or use low fat or non-fat dairy products
6. Don't eat late at night
7. Eat lighter meals and more frequently
8. Avoid processed food
9. Substitute water or fruit juice with soda
10. Choose natural sweeteners over white sugar
11. Practice food combining
12. Avoid alcohol
13. Increase physical activity
14. Drink 10 glasses of water per day

15. Breastfeed your baby!
16. Take 20 deep breathes three times per day
17. Learn a new hobby – you will be less tempted to snack
18. Learn to meditate
19. Visualize yourself at your desired weight
20. Discipline yourself and work hard to obtain your goals

Alternate Calcium Sources

Calcium in Foods		
Foods	Serving	Calcium
Vegetable Sources		
Alfalfa sprouts	1 cup	10 mg
Asparagus	1 cup	28 mg
Beet greens	1 cup	46 mg
Borage	1 cup	82 mg
Broccoli	1 cup	42 mg
Cabbage	1 cup	32 mg
Chinese Cabbage	1 cup	74 mg
Carrots	1 cup	30 mg
Cauliflower	1 cup	28 mg
Celery	1 cup	44 mg
Coriander (cilantro)	1 cup	16 mg
Dandelion greens	1 cup	103 mg
Dock	1 cup	59 mg
Eggplant	1 cup	30 mg
Endive	1 cup	26 mg
Artichoke	1 cup	21 mg
Kale	1 cup	94 mg
Kale, scotch	1 cup	137 mg
Kohlrabi	1 cup	34 mg
Lettuce, Romaine	1 cup	20 mg
Mustard Greens	1 cup	58 mg
Okra	1 cup	82 mg
Parsley	1 cup	78 mg
Peas, edible pod	1 cup	62 mg
Pumpkin	1 cup	24 mg
Pumpkin Leaves	1 cup	15 mg

Radishes	1 cup	28 mg
Radish Seed Sprouts	1 cup	19 mg
Rutabagas	1 cup	65 mg
Spinach	1 cup	56 mg
Squash	1 cup	26 mg
Zucchini	1 cup	20 mg
Turnips	1 cup	39 mg
Turnip Greens	1 cup	105 mg
Watercress	1 cup	40 mg
Fruit sources		
Apple	1	9.5 mg
Banana	1	7 mg
Blackberries	1 cup	46 mg
Cantaloupe	1 slice	7.6 mg
Grapes	1 cup	13 mg
Kiwi	1 cup	46 mg
Lemon	1	15 mg
Lime	1	22 mg
Orange	1	52 mg
Strawberry	1 cup	20 mg
Tomato	1	32 mg
Watermelon	1 slice	23 mg
Nut and Seed sources		
Almonds	24	75 mg
Brazil Nuts	8	50 mg
Pistachios	38	38 mg
Sesame seeds	1 tbsp	10 mg
Sunflower seeds	1 oz	33 mg
Peanut butter - natural	1 tbsp	7 mg
Coconut, shredded	1 cup	10 mg
Cashew	1 oz	13 mg

Macadamia	1 oz	20 mg
Pecans	1 oz	10 mg
Walnuts	1 oz	27 mg
Pumpkin seed	1 oz	12 mg
Other sources		
Shrimp, small dried	1 tbsp	145 mg
Shrimp, dried	1/4 cup	60 mg
Seaweed, dried (Agar)	1½ tbsp	75 mg
Seaweed, dried (Hijiki)	1 tbsp	80 mg
Seaweed, dried (Nori)	3 sheets	15 mg
Seaweed, dried (Wakame)	1/4 cup	10 mg
Oyster, dried	1	15 mg
Soy bean curd cake	2 pieces	60 mg
Lily flower, dried	1/4 cup	85 mg
Wolfberry leaves	3 oz	210 mg
Herring eggs	1 oz	15 mg

Chapter 4

Exercise

Benefits of exercise... breathing... walking... yoga...
specific problem areas

After changing mountains of dirty diapers, living on a couple of hours of sleep per day and breastfeeding until the cows come home, the last thing that many of us want to think about is *exercise*. Yes, exercise. For many of us the word alone conjures up thoughts of pain, work, exhaustion, and more pain. And yet more pain.

Did I mention pain?

And who has time to exercise when all you have is a few minutes a day to yourself, and you're so exhausted that you can barely muster up enough energy to drop on the couch?

The undeniable truth is that there are no quick fixes to losing weight and getting back into shape. We must eat right, and we must do some form of physical activity. There are faster and slower routes to losing weight – if you eat well, drink your water and breastfeed your baby you will definitely shed pounds, though slowly – but in order to really get our bodies back into the shape they were before we gave birth (or better), we must exercise. **Only exercise will tone and reshape your body.**

If you exercised throughout your pregnancy it will be easier to get back into shape. You will be used to doing some sort of activity, it will be easier to fit in, and you will come from a better health perspective. I understand that many women have a difficult time exercising through their pregnancy due to sickness, excess

fatigue, lower back pain or work demands, but starting a program doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. Even if you have back pain, there are many activities you can do that will strengthen your back and help you reach your weight loss goals.

I did not exercise at all through my first pregnancy. All I did was work, sleep, and eat, eat, eat. I was definitely 'eating for two' (or maybe it was three, I might have been hoping for twins at the time – silly me). Needless to say, gaining the 82 pounds left me out of shape and very unhealthy. I was so out of shape that even walking a block to the corner store left me completely out of breath.

When I finally took a good look at myself in the mirror, all the ice cream, pie, bags of cookies and freight train loads of chips were staring back at me, from various areas around my body. There was just far too much of 'me' in the mirror.

Many women experience (to some degree) the sagging stomach, super-sized butt and 'thunder' thighs, non-existent ankles and flabby arms, including me. The problem is not just additional weight, but it is shape and muscle tone; losing weight is only part of what we want. Getting back into a healthier shape where we can feel better about ourselves is what most of us are really looking for, and this is where exercise comes in.

If you exercise on a regular basis not only will you reshape your body, but you will also increase your energy. When you begin to see your body getting trim and toned, this will motivate you and help strengthen your commitment to exercise. The extra energy that exercising gives you will help build momentum - it will make exercise easier and easier every day.

My exercise program is in line with the rest of my book: it is gentle, easy to incorporate into busy lives, and it is not strict in any way. I have several activities that can be done with baby or simply when you have a few minutes alone. My

activities include deep breathing, walking, yoga and swimming (when I can get away for a while), as well as stretching.

I vary what I do day to day, week to week, depending on how I feel and what my schedule is like. However, I am very consistent with my breathing routine, simply because I can always fit it into my day.

There are many benefits of exercising post partum, here are just a few:

- Return to pre-pregnancy weight more quickly
- Increased strength and flexibility
- Improves mood and relieves stress
- Provides energy and stamina
- Reduces lower back pain
- Provides opportunity to meet other new moms
- Increased positive self image

Seek Advice

Before starting any fitness program, consult with your doctor. Your body needs time to recover from birth, and the amount of time is different for each individual. Ease back into a fitness routine, and if you experience any pain or excess fatigue, stop and see your doctor for further advice. As well, if you are experiencing any lower back pain (common for many women after pregnancy) see a back care specialist who can assist you in individual treatment. Untreated back pain can remain with you for years to come - I know from experience. It is important to get evaluated by a professional and learn what method of exercise is best for you.

Light Activity

Breathing

Breathing can help you lose weight.

Um... what?

Yes, I understand that you breathe every day, all day, and it doesn't seem to be magically flinging the weight off of your body at the moment, but it really can help. If you are not familiar with this, it may sound strange, but **deep breathing, done correctly with purpose, can actually help you lose weight.**

Sounds too good to be true? I mean, if losing weight was that easy why isn't everybody doing it? Well, thousands of people have lost weight just by changing the way they breathe.

My mother was the first to introduce me to breathing as a way to lose weight. She heard about this 'fantastic new weight loss technique' and bought a series of workout tapes that claimed that you could lose weight through deep breathing. Each tape was 15 minutes long, and all it involved was doing deep breathing techniques while holding stretches. My mother has always been very health conscious, and she was in fairly good shape before she started the program. Her diet remained the same, and she did the program five days a week, 15 minutes a day. The result was that she lost 10 pounds in three weeks.

After the birth of my second child, I was looking for something fairly gentle and easy to do at home to add variety to my light exercise plan, so after my mother introduced breath work to me I did more research on it and its affect on health and weight loss. What I found was astonishing; I soon adopted it as a way of life.

Breathing - overview

Breath work has been around for thousands of years, and it is said to have originated in India. Part of the foundation of Yoga is the practice of breath work, and it can also be found in several different alternative therapy programs. Breath work is used in stress management workshops and for emotional, mental and physical health.

The vast majority of us breathe ineffectively. 'Normal', or shallow, breathing is an unconscious process, as our bodies' cannot survive beyond a few minutes without oxygen. But as an unconscious process, we only take in enough for basic survival; this is not enough for optimum health.

Inadequate oxygen intake has been attributed to a host of problems, from chronic disease to premature aging, excess fatigue, weakened immune systems, respiratory problems, and even cancer.

Every cell in the body needs oxygen for the conversion of energy. Think of oxygen as our primary energy source, and on a more general level, breathing as the way we convert energy into physical form. When we breathe fully and deeply we provide our brains and other organs with an abundance of oxygen, allowing them to perform in an enhanced state. When we exhale, we cleanse our bodies through the release of carbon dioxide and other wastes. Studies indicate that over 70 percent of our bodies' toxins are released through the breath.

Deep breathing gives a tremendous boost to vitality and well being, and is an essential key to health in both the long and short term. Deep breathing powerfully stimulates the lymphatic system, a vital part of our immune systems; the rate of toxic elimination through the lymphatic system increases by as much as 15 times when we perform deep, diaphragmatic breathing.

Every system in the body improves when we begin proper breathing. Breath itself naturally heals and renews us, and deep breathing can become a very powerful self-directed healing process. Stress, anxiety, tension, excess worry and a host of other unhealthy mental states can be improved by deep breathing. Peace of mind is really only a (slow, deep) breath away.

“There’s no single more powerful – or more simple – daily practice to further your health and well-being than breathwork.”

-Dr. Andrew Weil

Breathing and weight loss

The primary reason why deep breathing helps us lose weight comes back to metabolism. As stated, our cells require oxygen for energy conversion; in essence, our cells require oxygen in order to actually *use* energy. With average to low oxygen intake, which can be caused by shallow breathing, our cells will not efficiently use the food energy that we provide them through what we eat. And when our cells are not using the energy available to them as efficiently as they can, much of that energy will be converted to fat. This is the core of an inefficient or slow metabolism.

Deep breathing, on the other hand, provides our bodies’ with a much higher level of oxygen, allowing our cells to convert and use energy as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is where the expression ‘burn fat’ comes in: at the cellular level, oxygen converts energy for use by the cells, and carbon dioxide, heat and water are released, similar to what happens with fuel and oxygen in your car.

Improved oxygen intake will result in better overall energy use and less fat storage; in short, an improved metabolism. And when we improve our metabolisms, we improve the amount of fat we burn even while we rest.

Improving your breathing technique will help you lose weight in other ways, as well. Deep breathing can have an immediate effect on mental well being. People have stated that once they learn proper breathing, they feel much more relaxed, calm, and positive – in essence, they find themselves happier and in a much better emotional state overall. Being in a happier, more positive mental state can help you avoid turning to food for an emotional escape.

Along with a better mental state, deep breathing increases blood flow through your body and provides you with more energy – it can eliminate feelings of fatigue very quickly. For many of us, improved energy levels and a better outlook on life are all we need to become more physically active.

Deep breathing can also be used to control food cravings, something I have used many times. When I feel a craving for something I'm trying to avoid, I make a deal with myself to first do 10 proper, deep breaths. Usually this calms any anxiety or negative feeling I'm having at the time, and I can (usually) avoid the treat. I end up going for a glass of water, instead. The more I use this technique, the less I hear my name being called from the cookie cupboard.

The type of breathing techniques and exercises you do will also help with weight loss. Simply by taking deeper breaths, you are exerting more energy. Your diaphragm, your lungs, and even your stomach work harder when you practice deep breathing. It really doesn't have to take very much, and it will make a world of difference.

How to breathe

I'm sure that if you are reading this, you've known how to breathe for at least a few years... but if you are like most people, you've been breathing improperly for most of your life.

There are two basic types of breathing: chest and abdominal. Most of us are predominantly chest breathers, where air is drawn into the lungs by expanding the chest, or rib muscles; this is called shallow breathing. For shallow breaths like this, you use only 1/5th of your lung capacity, and you breathe mainly into the top area of your lungs. The lower lobes of your lungs have a greater capacity for oxygen exchange, which you do not fully utilize with shallow breathing.

Abdominal, or diaphragmatic, breathing is done by drawing in air with the diaphragm, in essence pulling the air to the bottom of your lungs, then allowing the chest to expand and the rest of the lungs to fill. You utilize the full potential of your lungs when you breathe deeply with your diaphragm. In truth, for normal, unconscious breathing you probably do some combination of both throughout the day, depending on your body's basic need.

Deep breathing for health and weight loss requires proper diaphragmatic breathing. Breathing with your diaphragm is very simple: when you inhale, imagine that you are breathing into your abdomen. You can place your hand on your upper abdomen, just below your ribs, and visualize breathing to that area. Breathe in through your nose, as your nasal passages will warm and moisturize the air as well as partially cleanse it (your nose is your first line of defense against infection). As well, breathing through your nose will actually direct the air to the lower, more effective area of your lungs.

As you breathe slowly in, allow your abdomen to expand fully, and then feel your chest expand. Breathe in as much air as you can, slowly and smoothly. Once your lungs are completely full and you feel you cannot hold any more, pause for a

moment, and then slowly push your breath out, through your mouth. Purse your lips slightly, and make a 'whoosh' sound as you exhale.

Exhalation is the most important part of a complete, full, deep breath.

We have more control over exhalation because the muscles controlling it are stronger than those governing inhalation. So when you exhale, push the air out through your mouth, smoothly, and tighten your rib and stomach muscles as you squeeze the air out. When you have squeezed out as much air as you can, squeeze out a little more. This will naturally set your lungs up to take in more air on the next breath, for an even deeper, more complete breath.

It may take you a while to get used to deep breathing, so go easy at first. If you feel dizzy at all, allow your breathing to return to normal until the feeling passes. I think the best method for deep breathing will be slightly different for everyone, so experiment with it for a while until you find a way that works best for you. Just be sure to make your breaths as deep and complete as you can, with an absolutely complete exhale, and a full-to-capacity inhale.

Breathing exercises

My daily breathing routine is very simple, and extremely easy to incorporate into any schedule. My routine consists of one set of 10 deep breaths, 3 times per day. Each set only takes about 3-4 minutes. I usually do my first set shortly after I get out of bed, the second mid-afternoon, and the last a couple of hours after dinner.

I begin each breath from my diaphragm, drawing in as deeply as I can, slowly through a count of 5; I hold the breath for a count of 5; I slowly push the breath out over a count of 5, forcing as much air out of my lungs as I can; then, repeat. And that's it - very simple, very fast, and I feel completely refreshed after. I can always fit it in, no matter how crazy my day gets.

As I stated above, begin deep breathing gradually. Try experimenting with how long you hold each phase of the breath, and go with what feels most comfortable to you. However, make sure you challenge yourself over time to fuller and deeper breathing. The more you can improve your breathing, the better health and vitality you will experience in every area of your life.

I cannot say enough positive things about deep breathing. I highly recommend it to everyone that they make it a part of their daily life. All it takes is awareness and a willingness to pay attention to your most basic bodily need, and it will have tremendous positive impact in your life.

There are many different forms of breathing that people use for many different purposes, but the form I have described is what I use for weight loss, relaxation and general health. If you would like to learn more about breathing and health, or for specific mental or physical health reasons, please see the references at the end of the book.

Walking

Any type of exercise where you can include your baby is ideal: you don't have to arrange for child care, and you are introducing physical activity to your children at an early age. Walking is something that you can always do with your baby, and it is a very easy, safe and effective weight control exercise. It is a great aerobic activity, and babies love the fresh air and motion (walking can really help colic babies, especially if you use a baby sling). Walking is gentle on your body and is an excellent activity for all levels of fitness. Almost everyone can do it, and it can be done almost anywhere, anytime. And to top it all off, it's free!

I think most people are aware of the health benefits of walking, but I will just touch on them briefly here:

- reduces body fat, helps control weight
- improves muscle tone and strength
- helps flexibility and co-ordination
- increases bone density, helps prevent osteoporosis
- can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, colon cancer
- can help with back pain, respiratory problems and a host of other ailments
- relieves stress, and enhances mental well being

What you need:

Supportive shoes

Comfortable clothing – preferably cotton

Stroller, baby backpack or baby sling

Water and a healthy snack, such as fruit

It is very important to start any walking (or exercise) program gradually. After delivery, begin with very light walking as soon as you feel comfortable and strong enough, and slowly build your time and pace.

I walked throughout my second pregnancy, and was foolish enough to think that I could immediately head out for a nice long walk once my son was born. Only *3 days* after I delivered him, my husband and I headed out to our favorite trail and embarked on one of our ‘medium’ walks (about 40 minutes), with my husband carrying our new son in a baby sling. Our son did well – he slept the whole time, snuggled perfectly in the sling – and I thought I was fine, until I arrived home. I was completely wiped out, to put it mildly. I felt as if I had just run a marathon and had been repeatedly run over by a bus as well. I obviously was not ready for that much exertion so soon after giving birth. So a word to the wise: do not overdo *any* exercise too soon after delivery. Pace yourself, and pay attention to how you feel.

Sample walking program:

Level one	10 - 20 minutes per session
Level two	20 - 30 minutes
Level three	30 - 50 minutes
Level four	50 minutes - 1 hour +

It's a good idea to vary your speeds as you walk: start with a slow pace until you are warmed up (usually 5 minutes), increase your pace until you reach a brisk, yet sustainable rate, and finally slow again at the end of your walk for a few minutes to cool down.

While walking, try to incorporate some deep breathing. Not the complete deep breathing exercises as shown in the breathing section, but nice, deep breaths that fit well with your walking pace and cardiovascular level. If you have been sedentary throughout your pregnancy, start walking at level one and move to a higher level at your own pace. It is important (I can't repeat this enough!) to allow yourself enough time before increasing any exercise in order to prevent injury and to allow your body to heal from childbirth.

The more you walk, the better, but as you increase your stamina and strength, you will have to walk for longer periods and/or at a faster pace in order to fully receive the aerobic benefits. As well, it is a good idea to stretch at the start of your walk (although after your warm-up) and after, to keep your muscles supple - see the section on stretching at the end of the chapter. Remember to bring a water bottle and a healthy snack along.

I try to walk at least 3 times per week. Depending on your choice of exercises and what your schedule is like, walk as much as you can, even as much as one hour or longer every day. It gets you out of the house, gives you time to clear your mind and think, and easily helps shed those extra pounds.

Additional Exercise Ideas

Yoga

In keeping with my gentle approach to exercise (and my commitment to deep breathing), I have added yoga to my exercise choices. Yoga is a very mild and extremely effective way to ease back into shape. There are many different styles, but in general yoga involves stretching and holding specific poses combined with deep breathing and concentration techniques, along with meditation. For many people, yoga is considered a spiritual practice as well as a physical one.

Practicing Yoga is good for the body, mind and soul. There are many benefits of Yoga: it can increase your energy levels, strength, flexibility, and balance; help relieve stress and tension; improve circulation and stimulate the immune system; improve creativity and ability to concentrate, and create a sense of wellbeing and peace.

Yoga will help you lose weight through an improved metabolism, which is gained from increased strength and improved breathing techniques. Yoga is an excellent way to improve muscle tone.

A style of Yoga which is designed for women who have recently given birth is called Postpartum Yoga. Typically, the classes allow you to bring your baby with you, making it another ideal exercise simply because you won't have to rely on having childcare. Postpartum Yoga can help strengthen your pelvic floor, tone and firm lower back and stomach, and release tension in your shoulders and neck, which may be strained from nursing or carrying your baby. The breathing and meditation will help ground you and give you relaxation techniques that will help you in your new role as a mother.

After the birth of my first son I went to a Postpartum Yoga class twice a week. I took my son with me, and for most of the classes he just slept, but occasionally he would lay there on the Yoga mat watching me and listen to the soothing music. Both of us would leave the class feeling relaxed and peaceful. I really enjoyed taking those classes the first few months after his birth; it was great for both of us. It was also great for getting me out of the house and as a place to socialize - I met several new mothers in my community through my yoga classes.

It is imperative to take classes with a certified Yoga instructor who has a background in Postpartum Yoga. The instructor will have the expertise to ensure that you only do poses that are safe for postpartum women, and will make sure that you hold the poses correctly to avoid injury. I made the mistake of taking my first class with an instructor who was *not* trained in Postpartum Yoga, and I badly injured my back, to the point where I could barely walk for a week. If a pose or exercise causes pain in any way, stop immediately and tell the instructor. They should be able to guide you around difficult poses and help you receive the benefit of the exercises.

If you do not have a Yoga studio in your area, there are many Postpartum Yoga videos/DVDs available on the market. Just be sure that the program you buy is specifically Postpartum Yoga, to ensure you do not begin a program that may put you at risk for injury. As always, consult with your doctor before undertaking any strenuous exercises to be certain that you know what is safe for you.

Swimming

Swimming is an excellent exercise, postpartum or at any time of life. It has all the aerobic advantages of other popular sports without the strain on muscles and joints; vigorous swimming can burn from 350 – 650 calories per hour. The

resistance of the water works all the major muscles of the body, which makes it similar to exercising with weights. Swimming also improves mobility, and keeps your joints flexible and your body supple.

One of the many side benefits of swimming is the tranquility of being in the water. It's soothing, relaxing and a great way to relieve stress. Swimming is very therapeutic, and is a good choice for people who are overweight, or suffer from arthritis, knee or back problems (although if you do suffer from these problems, consult with your doctor first).

Swimming is a great exercise for all-around fitness; it will improve your cardiovascular level and tone your arms, shoulders, waist, hips and legs.

The only disadvantage of swimming is that it will not build up our bones, which we need to do in order to prevent osteoporosis. We have to perform weight-bearing, land based activities for this, such as walking, hiking, running or weight training.

Breathing for swimming

Proper breathing while swimming is very different than breathing with any other sport or exercise. Breathing is usually considered to be the most difficult part of swimming technique, because with incorrect breathing you will not be able to swim very effectively or for very long. Swimming demands concentrated, forceful deep breathing, where we exhale as completely as we can then inhale as deeply and completely as we can in rhythm with our swimming exercise.

Take a few minutes before you begin swimming to practice correct breathing technique. Concentrate on exhaling calmly, forcefully and completely out your nose and mouth while your head is under water (make sure to entirely empty your lungs), then turn your head out of the water (obviously!) and inhale deeply

through your nose and mouth, completely filling your lungs with air. The reason for exhaling with force out both your nose and mouth is to prevent any intake of water as you swim.

It is important to take full breaths and not little sips of air. If you do, you will be forced to take many small breaths as opposed to fewer deep ones, and this can quickly fatigue you or lead to hyperventilation. Also make sure that you exhale only under water, not while your head is out of the water; a common mistake for novices is to both inhale and exhale while their heads are turned, and hold their breaths while their face is in the water. This cuts your breathing time dramatically, and will lead to early fatigue – you will be exhausted after your first lap.

Once you learn the basic breathing skills for swimming you will be ready to begin your swimming regimen.

What you need

Pool facility

Childcare

Swim suit

Optional equipment: goggles, bathing cap, swim fins, kickboard, resistance devices

Workout options

Swimming Laps

If you already know the fundamentals of swimming you can start right away - just jump in and start doing laps with your favorite stroke. Remember to start slowly at first. Don't push yourself until you have recovered sufficiently from your delivery, and be sure to do your warm up and stretching before and cool down after.

The basic swim techniques are the Freestyle or Crawl, Backstroke, Butterfly, Breaststroke and Sidestroke. Some of you may want to take a few lessons to brush up on your skills, or check your local library for a book about swimming that can teach you a few new techniques, to add variety to your routine. Be sure to record the number of laps you have done and chart your progress on your exercise log (see the end of the chapter for a sample log). Try to increase your pace as you improve – continually push yourself for greater stamina and strength. You can alternate workouts by changing your swim stroke each week.

Water Aerobics

This is a great workout if you have difficulty with or do not like swimming laps, but still want the benefits that exercising in water provides. Water aerobic workouts are designed to tone your body by using resistance exercises. The routine may be similar to a regular aerobic class, and may include music to help motivate you.

You do not need to know how to swim in order to perform water aerobics, as the classes are usually performed in water that is waist to chest deep, depending on the specific exercises. Jogging in water is often done at the deep end, so you will be completely immersed. There are devices available that you can wear to keep you afloat during your workout if this is a concern for you. You can create your own water aerobic routine or join a class at your local public pool.

Regardless of how you incorporate swimming into your life, I highly recommend that you do. I feel that it is a wonderful activity for overall health and peace of mind. You can even involve your baby or toddler – there are many ‘mom & baby’ or ‘mom & tot’ swim programs, just check with your local pool. It’s also something that you can get the whole family involved in, like walking – it’s great for everyone.

Stretching

Before you begin any form of exercise it is important that you start with a few minutes of stretching. Maintaining flexibility is necessary for a strong, healthy body. **Stretching before and after a workout will help prevent injury, improve range of motion, reduce lower back pain and decrease the chance of muscle strain.**

When muscles and tendons are not stretched they become less flexible, which can lead to stiff and sore joints. A simple stretching program will ensure muscle flexibility and free joint movement. Stretching combined with deep breathing is also a great stress reliever (as in Yoga).

Key points to remember while stretching:

1. **Always do a light warm-up exercise first**, such as jogging in place, walking in circles, or even light callisthenic motions, combined with deep breathing. Experiment and go with what works for you. The point is to get your heart rate up and your blood flowing to your muscles to warm them up, as warm muscles are much more flexible than cold. It is important to NEVER stretch a cold muscle, because the risk of injury is greatest with cold muscles.
2. Stretch each muscle slowly until you reach a point of resistance - you should feel tension but never pain. Do not overstretch, as this can lead to injury.
3. Hold the stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.
4. Do not hold your breath – continue taking deep, controlled breaths, and remain relaxed through the stretch.
5. Refrain from jerky or bouncing motions.
6. Refrain from locking your knees while standing.

Schedule your fitness routine

Finding the time for exercise is a common problem for new moms. The extra demands on your body and schedule make it challenging to set aside time for it. It's important to look at all the options and find something that will work for you.

All you really need is 10-15 minutes per day to begin with. Try to set up a schedule and do your exercise routine at the same time each day; this will create a habit which will help you stick to your plan and help you reach your weight loss goal. I have found that keeping an exercise log in my journal helps me push myself a little further. It is also encouraging to see my progress.

Example Exercise Log

Date	Type of Activity	Start Time	End Time	How did I feel afterward?

Specific exercises for problem areas

Abdominals

Bringing the stomach back to its pre-pregnancy tone and shape is a big concern for most new mothers. Childbirth leaves you with a thick midsection, and it usually takes months before you are able to get it back into shape. Since our bodies are all different, how long it takes to slim down your stomach will depend on certain factors. If you have always been the type who has a flat stomach but wide hips, then it may be easier for you to tone this area. But if you are the type that typically gains weight on your stomach, it may be more of a challenge.

Flattening and toning your stomach requires two things: first, you must decrease the excess fat that lies on your abdominal (stomach) muscles, and second, you must strengthen your abdominal muscles with strength training exercises.

You can reduce the excess fat through increased activity and metabolism building exercises, such as the ones I have presented to you here (breathing, walking, yoga, and swimming, combined with breastfeeding of course), along with improved nutrition. Excess fat will burn away gradually, from fat stores all over your body, including your stomach (although for many women, this seems to be the last place that fat wants to leave!).

While you are doing your fat burning exercises, you must strengthen your stomach muscles with specific exercises; this will shape and tone your stomach. Through a combination of consistent strengthening and fat burning activity you can be on your way to a flat stomach, but it will take patience and persistence. It is also important to have strong abdominals because of the additional lifting of baby and equipment. We must focus on strengthening this area to help prevent

back injury, because of how we use our stomach muscles when we lift heavy objects.

After delivery, make sure to give yourself enough time to heal before trying any abdominal exercises. Your pelvic floor (see Kegels in the following section) must be strong before you begin; it is generally advised to wait from 6-8 weeks after delivery before starting any strenuous stomach exercises (start with very gentle exercises to begin with). It is always a good idea to check with your doctor first. If you have had a C-section, make sure you get very specific instructions from your doctor before starting any exercise whatsoever.

I have included my two favorite stomach exercises with a brief description of each. They have worked well for me for all three of my pregnancies.

Stomach Crunches

Stomach crunches are very effective, simple and easy to do when you have a few free minutes, and they take nothing but a clear space on your carpet. First, lie on your back with knees bent (pointing up) and feet flat on the floor, then cross your arms across your upper chest. I suggest doing this instead of clasping your hands behind your head (which many people advocate) so you will not pull directly on the back of your head, and risk injuring your neck. The point of a stomach crunch is to isolate and contract only your abdominal muscles, not to pull your head and body up with your hands.

Next, press the small of your back to the floor, take a deep breath in and exhale while you tighten your stomach. As you contract your stomach muscles, your head and upper body will rise slightly off the floor (the stronger your muscles, the higher you will be able to lift your upper body using only your stomach). Concentrate on tightening your stomach as much as you can, hold for a second or two, then inhale as you lower your body back to the floor and relax your

abdomen. Start very gradually with this. Only do what feels comfortable, but still feels as though you are working the muscle (it shouldn't be too easy).

You should never feel pain - if you do, stop immediately and consult your doctor, as you may need more time to allow your stomach to heal. Begin with two sets of 8-12 repetitions, and gradually increase the intensity, up three sets of 25 to 30 repetitions or more (go with what challenges you – I do 3 sets of 50 repetitions).

Deep breathing with stomach contractions

This is a great stomach exercise because as you strengthen your abdominal muscles, you will improve your skill at deep breathing. It is something that my husband taught me that he learned from martial arts training. It is even more convenient to do than crunches, because you can do it standing (or even sitting once you get used to it).

The exercise is very simple. Stand comfortably with your feet slightly apart, and start your breathing as you would for your deep breathing exercise: inhale deeply through your nose, and completely fill your lungs. Hold briefly, then slowly push the air out through your mouth (purse your lips to add resistance) while tightening your abdominal muscles. Tighten your abdominals more and more as you force the air out, until your stomach is as tight as you can get it, and you can't force any more air out. At that point, tighten a little more, and push out a little more air, in a succession of 2 or 3 quick out-breaths. Then, relax your stomach and begin again.

Inhale and exhale slowly, and be very careful not to hyperventilate – if you feel yourself getting dizzy at all, stop and allow your breathing to return to normal for a few breaths, and then begin again. As always, start this gradually and gently at first until you are used to both deep breathing and strong abdominal

contractions. It might be a good idea to do a couple of normal breaths between each repetition at first, until you get used to it.

I have found that I can do this exercise sitting down as well, in front of a desk at work, for example... that leaves very few excuses now, doesn't it?

There are many other exercises aimed at toning your abdomen, but I find these two, combined with my other activities, work very well. You can vary your crunches and stomach contractions to isolate the sides and lower part of your stomach if you need to (do simple experimentation to find what works), but for general stomach toning, these are all you will ever need.

Kegels

We have all been told to do our 'kegels' during pregnancy, and especially after childbirth. Kegels are simply the name of an exercise designed to strengthen our pelvic floor muscles. I have included information about kegels and the pelvic floor muscles because of how important it is to strengthen them before you begin any exercise program.

Through pregnancy and childbirth, our pelvic floor muscles, the ones that support the urethra, vagina and rectum, become weakened. These muscles can only be effectively strengthened through the daily practice of performing kegel exercises. Kegels will also help heal the perineum, prevent incontinence and will even improve your sex life! It only takes a few minutes a day and they can be done anytime, anywhere – no one will know that you are doing them.

Where are your pelvic floor muscles?

The easiest way to find them is by tightening up the muscles that stop the flow of urine. You can insert a finger into your vagina and then tighten to feel them.

How do you exercise the pelvic floor muscles?

The exercise is done just by flexing the muscle as mentioned above. Begin by inhaling as you flex the muscle, hold for a few seconds, then release and exhale. Repeat and continue for a few minutes, a few times per day. Try to do as many as you can each day – the more you do, the quicker your muscles will recover. It may help to do these exercises while doing household chores or some other activity that you do on a daily basis, that way you will ensure that you get the exercises in.

Where there's a will there's a way

For most new mothers, getting back into shape will require a fair amount of hard work and time. Some days, just getting motivated to move can be a daunting task. Life is not even remotely the same once your baby arrives, and it may be challenging to fit any workout or regular exercise into your busy new lifestyle.

It may take you months before you can get your life organized and balanced enough to settle into a regular fitness routine. Remember, there is no hurry - start slowly and build. If all you can manage is a short, 10 minute walk per day, that's great, as it will be a good starting point. It may help to look at exercise as more than just a way to lose weight; it should be an enjoyable way to bring happiness, health and well being into your life.

And be sure to go easy on yourself during this transition in life. We tend to demand too much from ourselves and place high expectations on where we

should be at any given time, and we very often end up missing out on much that life has to offer. The first year of your babies' life will be filled with excitement and new wonders, so enjoy every minute, because this time will pass very quickly.

“The task ahead of us is never as great as the power
behind us.”

–Author unknown.

Chapter 5

Elements of Success

Goal setting... visualization... affirmations...
journal keeping... support

The greatest weight loss plan ever written in the history of human kind, in fact the greatest weight loss plan in the universe that anyone could or ever will conceive, designed by a team of the world's most brilliant scientists, doctors, nutritionists, exercise professionals and genius weight loss gurus living in mud-and-wattle huts in the high, remote, inaccessible-except-by-one-impossible-to-find-ancient-Tibetan-guide-with-a-yak mountains in the far east... is worthless.

Unless, of course, you use it. Well, that, and find it – if you do manage to make it to the Himalayas and find that guru, let me know.

Any plan, no matter what it is for or how good it is, will not help you unless you persistently follow it. This is by far the most important, and undoubtedly the most difficult, part of a plan. And unless you are one of those types that everything just seems to 'magically' happen for, you need to have a definite strategy that will help you start and stay with your plan, through thick and thin (...). Anything substantial that we want to accomplish in our lives, be it in our careers, finances, families, or otherwise, will require us to have some sort of strategy. At a basic level, weight loss is no different. To get where we want to go we must first set clear goals, develop or find a plan we like, follow it, and stay with it consistently until we reach our goals and beyond.

For mothers who do not normally have weight issues, getting back to their pre-pregnancy shape quickly may be their primary goal. Their normal weight and

health and eating habits are essentially good, they are just looking for a safe, healthy way to lose weight after childbirth. But for many of us, the weight we carry is more than what we added during our pregnancy.

Many of us have tried plan after plan, again and again, only to find ourselves back where we started (or worse); trying to lose weight feels like taking a leisurely stroll to the moon and back in an afternoon. It may seem that the approach to weight loss from the two perspectives will have to be very different, but in reality, it won't. The goals themselves are basically the same, to bring your weight down to a desired level and keep it there; it is the *long term* strategy that must be different.

The simple reality is that women who normally have a healthy weight and are happy with their body shape already have a long term strategy that works for them. Many will say it is just their 'natural' way, but if you look closely, you will see that they do (and do not do) very definite things with regards to nutrition and exercise, and live in a relatively healthy way. As long as they return to the way they used to eat and go back to exercising like they did before they became pregnant, they will return to their normal sizes.

For those of us who have always had some difficulty with weight, we must be sure that we do more than simply aim for a short term weight loss goal – we must develop a strategy that will allow us to remove the weight and keep it off, for good. That may require some of us to change our approach to health overall, to develop new habits and make health a new way of life.

My approach to weight loss is exactly that: it is a way of life. My program applies to anyone and everyone who wants to lose weight and improve their health, and it will work as fast or as slowly as you apply it.

I know that making changes, especially large ones, are easier said than done. But like all goals that we have in life, there are ways to help us move in the right

direction. With a good plan, with excellent mental and emotional tools, and with the right support, we can all reach our destinations.

My strategy for success, for weight loss and for everything else that I want to accomplish in my life, is fairly simple. I begin by writing very clear, definite goals; I use visualization, mental imagery, and mental conditioning to set and keep me on my path; I keep a journal, and write in it daily; and, I enlist the support of my family and friends.

One of the most wonderful things about going after and actually achieving your goals is that it will have an enormous impact on every area of your life. You'll feel an immense boost to your happiness, confidence and self esteem, and best of all you'll develop an unshakeable belief in yourself and your ability to succeed at anything you want in life.

Goals

The importance of goals

Everything that you have ever accomplished in your life, whether you know it or not, was first created as a goal. It may never have been written or clearly defined in a step by step format with benchmarks and timelines, and it might have been largely unconscious, something that you knew you 'just had to do'. It could even have been something small that you just decided to do and went ahead, but regardless, it first began as a goal in your mind. Graduating from high school or college, developing a career and finding work, buying a house, getting married, having children, and going on vacations all began as goals.

Goals have power. Specific, clearly defined goals with deadlines are keys to success. Top leaders, top level athletes, successful business people and achievers in every field all use goals extensively. There are people who have written over 100 goals for their lives, and achieved them.

Anything that we desire in our lives, no matter what it is, can be achieved when we are perfectly clear about what we want, and take constant, decisive action towards it. Goals can challenge us, inspire us, and fill us with energy and drive. Therefore, it is vitally important that we set goals that create tremendous excitement in our lives; in the words of Anthony Robbins: “Giant goals produce giant motivation”.

How to develop effective goals

In order to create compelling goals, you must get perfectly clear about what it is that you want. The more detailed and precise you are about your goal, the better. Every goal must have a timeline, with a definite date for completion. It is important to start with your ultimate end result, and then create a detailed step by step plan consisting of several mini-goals that will lead you to success.

The first step in goal writing is to develop a clear picture of where you are now. This also establishes your starting point, and a way to measure your progress. Since this book is about weight loss, I'm assuming that your purpose here is to create outstanding health and fitness goals. So if you have been avoiding the scale (and possibly the mirror), now is the time to 'face the facts'. You will need to weigh yourself, take your measurements, and identify any areas that you wish to improve.

To begin, set aside some time where you won't be interrupted. Take out a pen and a piece of paper or, better yet, your weight loss journal (if you haven't started a journal, do so now). Once you have written down all your current measurements and weight, ask yourself the following questions and write the answers:

- what is my ideal weight?
- what kind of shape do I want to be in (slim, toned, or muscular)?
- if I could have anyone's body, whose would it be?
- what is my ideal waist and hip size?
- what dress size do I want to be?

Also, for fitness:

- what exercises do I like?
- how many days during the week can I commit to exercise?
- what activities can I cut out (hint - TV) in order to make time for exercise?

Try to think of as many questions as you can that will help you form an exact picture of the ideal you, including your fitness level. The more details you write, the clearer your goal will be. Once you have formed an extremely detailed description of the 'new you', decide when it is that you want to reach your goal. This must be very specific as well – decide to the day.

Setting your deadline is especially important. It should be far enough away so that you can actually achieve it, but not so far away that you lose motivation. There is a danger in setting your goal too soon or making it too difficult. Although it may be very exciting to set a goal of losing 50 pounds and having the body of Jennifer Aniston within 30 days, chances are this won't be very attainable. People who set goals like this soon become very frustrated, and end up giving up completely. **Make your goals exciting and challenging, but make them achievable.**

This was my weight loss/fitness goal after my second pregnancy:

Weight: 138 pounds (current: 163)
Shape: fit and toned
Ideal Body: Cindy Crawford (no relation!)
Waist: 28 inches
Hips: 37 inches
Dress size: 6
Exercise: 1 activity per day:
walk 1 hour, 2-3 days per week;
light weight training 20 minutes, 1-2 days per week;
yoga 20 min, 1-2 days per week;
swimming 20 minutes, once per week,
or a variation of any of the above.
By: February 17, 2001 (6 months after delivery)

I actually achieved my goal within 4 months. I couldn't have done it without having a clear picture of where I wanted to be.

The next step in writing your goal should be to develop a detailed, step by step timeline. Break down your goal into manageable mini-goals. For example, with your weight goal break it into 5 pound increments, and set a date for each one: 158 @ September 17, 2000. Do the same with your exercise goals: walk 20 minutes, 2 days per week @ October 17, 2000. The importance here is to set up small, easily achievable goals that add up to your larger goal. This makes your ultimate goal far less intimidating, and it helps build the power of momentum. The little successes build very quickly; small victories always lead to larger ones.

“The journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step.”

–Confucius

Have fun writing your goals. Think of goal writing as designing your life: designing your fitness, health and body, just the way you want it. So if you haven't yet, sit down right now and develop your new future – because in the next few sections, I'll show you tools that will help you get there.

Condition yourself

Get yourself to follow through

You've written your goals, broken them down into mini-goals, and you now have a clear picture of where you want to go. Getting yourself to follow through is the next step. Easier said than done?

The most difficult part of going for your goals is to consistently take action towards them, every day, until you reach them. Sometimes the excitement of a goal wears off very quickly, especially when you are up at 2, 3, and 4 am nursing and changing diapers. For those kinds of nights, sleep becomes more important than anything else. But once your nights (and days) get easier and you settle into a routine with your baby, you will need something to help you push past the doubts, fears and self sabotage, and build momentum towards achieving your goal.

First of all, you need to list all of the reasons why this goal is so important to you. Write a list or a paragraph describing why you are absolutely committed to achieving your goal; this will help you get very clear about why you must change. Be very specific. This paragraph should inspire and motivate you, and give you the strength to get through the inevitable rough times.

Having a powerful ‘why’ lays the foundation for success. Without really knowing why you have your goal at the absolute core of your being, all the motivational tools in the world won’t help you. So once you are clear with your burning ‘why’, you will be ready to move to the next step.

“(S)he who has a strong enough why can bear almost any
how.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Visualization

The most powerful tool you can use to achieve any goal is visualization. Athletes, speakers, executives, actors, and all top achievers use visualization to succeed. They visualize themselves having already achieved their goal. They clearly see themselves reaching their outcome in exactly the way they want, down to the last detail. Visualization can be used for anything, from delivering a speech, to quitting smoking, to developing the perfect body.

Learning to use visualization is very simple. **Visualization is essentially developing a clear, detailed image of yourself already having achieved your goal.** The more detailed the image, the more effective it will be.

When you visualize, see every detail you can, and more importantly, feel every emotion that you would feel on the day when you finally reach your goal. See what you are wearing, what the weather is like, who is with you, and even the color and shape of the scale you are standing on. See and feel yourself there, imagine what it feels like to have pushed through all of your barriers and fulfilled

your deepest desire. Feel how amazing it is to fit back into those jeans, wear that bikini, or that sexy new dress that you bought just for this moment.

As you visualize, breathe slowly and deeply, and allow yourself to feel all the excitement, happiness and joy of that moment. This may take a little practice, but once you start using it you will begin to create a very powerful belief that you can and will succeed.

The most important part of visualization is that it creates the *feeling* that you have already achieved your goal. This generates incredible energy and momentum which will give you the drive you will need in order to take the necessary actions, every single day. Use visualization as much as you can. Start and end each day by visualizing your goal for at least 30 seconds. When you wake up in the morning, before you do anything else, visualize. Before you go to sleep, visualize. Do it throughout the day, whenever you have a spare moment. The more you do it, the stronger your belief will be in yourself and your ability to reach your goal.

Affirmations

Another valuable way I effect change in my life and build faith in myself is to use affirmations or mantras. Affirmations are basically positive phrases that you repeat to yourself, over and over, in order to train your subconscious mind to believe in yourself and your ability to create transformation. Affirmations can help you with anything in life, from getting through a rough day with your baby, to getting through a job interview, to overcoming your biggest challenge.

Affirmations can be simple and general, about things that make you feel happy and positive, or they can be very specific, directed at changing certain beliefs or

adopting new ones. Affirmations should be short and to the point. They should be in the present tense, they must be positive (don't use 'you are not fat!'), and you must write them down.

Affirmations are usually in the first person ('I am beautiful'), but you can use your own name in them in different persons: 'You, Shannon, are beautiful', 'She, Shannon, is beautiful', 'I, Shannon, am beautiful'. Using them in this way helps you imagine that other people are saying the affirmations to you, and this will help strengthen your belief in what you are saying.

Always believe in what you are saying, and feel it as strongly as you can; the more you believe, and the more positive emotion you put into it, the more effective the affirmation will be. And most importantly, repeat! Repetition will burn it into your subconscious, and your affirmation will become a fantastic new belief.

Health and Weight loss affirmations:

I am in filled with energy and passion

My body is toned and fit

I love my body

Every day, in every way, I feel healthier, stronger and happier

I always recommit to my goals no matter what happens

I keep promises to myself

I am happy with who I am

I am proud of myself

I always follow through

I eat food that supports my health

I love exercise

These are some of the affirmations that I continue to use; if they inspire you, use them, or create your own that have special meaning and significance.

Positive Thinking

The achievement of every wish, want, hope, desire or goal begins and ends in our minds. Our thoughts determine our outcome, and we are responsible for every thought we have, just as we are responsible for our actions. Our thoughts do not 'spring up out of nowhere'; we created them, and we own them.

Some of us are naturally optimistic, and think generally in a very positive way, while others live in a constant state of negativity. Negative thinking is a habit for many people, built up over a lifetime. One of the truest laws of nature is that what we focus on constantly becomes our reality. The reason why optimists tend to do better in life, achieve more, and are generally happier is because their thoughts are centered on the positive.

In order to reach your goals, you must change your thoughts from a negative state to a positive one. By changing or redirecting your thoughts to ones that reflect your true hopes and desires, you can ultimately shape your destiny.

Habitual negative thinking may seem very difficult to change, but it can be done. The first step is to be aware of what and how you think. Pay attention to your thoughts, and notice when your mind starts drifting towards your old patterns. When a negative thought appears, immediately say a positive affirmation to replace it. Repeat the affirmation over and over and over, until the negative thought completely disappears.

This will take practice, but the more you do it, the easier it will become. Eventually you will notice that negative thoughts will intrude on your life less and less. You will gain control over your mind, and in doing so, your life.

Journal

I started keeping a journal at the age of 16, and continue to do so now. Not only is it a place where I write my dreams and desires, but also where I work out my life's frustrations. I record my thoughts and I keep track of the progress I make towards my goals and aspirations. It is my constant companion; it is invaluable to me.

I have found that it is particularly important since I have become a mother. Sometimes it seems like I lose track of almost everything in the chaos that surrounds me, and my journal is a place where I can be organized. It is very easy to get caught up in motherhood and the demands of our busy lives. Keeping a journal is a constant reminder of where I am going and where I want to be.

I believe keeping a journal is an essential tool for personal growth and self development. I recommend writing in it every day; write your top goals and affirmations every morning, and continually note your thoughts and feelings. Your journal will support and encourage you while you move along your path, every step of the way.

Support

In the pursuit of your goals, one of the most important ways to help you continually move forward is to have the support of family and friends. I could not have achieved what I have in my life if I did not have the fantastic support that I do. I can't stress how important it is to surround yourself with people who love and encourage you, lend you strength when you need it, really listen to you, and challenge you to always be your best. Having good support can sometimes be the difference between success and failure.

“The key is to keep company only with the people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best.”

-Epictetus

Let the people who will support you know what your goals are, and let them know that you want their help and encouragement. Aside from ensuring that you will receive the support you want when you need it, you will also be making your goals ‘public’. This has the added benefit of outside pressure – you will be less inclined to give up if all of your friends and family know.

A good idea is to find another mom who has similar goals. You can act as each others’ exercise partner and weight loss coach, and help each other stay motivated. It will make the whole process a lot more fun, because you will be able to share in the experience, talk about the challenges of motherhood, and encourage each other the whole way. And you will find that you will be more motivated to keep your exercise schedule, simply because your friend will be relying on you, as you rely on her. You will want her to reach her goals as much as you’ll want to reach your own.

If you do not know any other moms with new babies, most communities have support groups for mothers where you can make new friends and share experiences. You can also check your local community center for programs designed for mothers with new babies or toddlers. Another way to meet moms is through a breastfeeding support group, such the La Leche League – check your phone book for a leader in your area or go to the La Leche League website (www.lalecheleague.org).

Be Committed

Everything you have ever dreamed of having in your life will never be anything more than a dream, unless you take action towards its fulfillment. You can write pages and pages of goals, you can map out every last detail of the perfect life, but until you take the necessary steps, your goals will never materialize. You must be committed, you must constantly and consistently push yourself forward, and most importantly, you must never give up. Keep your goals at the forefront of your mind as much as you can; visualize, use your affirmations, think positively, surround yourself with support and use your journal daily.

Become proactive, rather than reactive. Plan your days and schedules well, and try to ensure that you have enough time to do what you need to do, from visualization to exercise. Don't beat yourself up over mistakes, because they will happen. Decide that you will learn from each and every mistake you make and recommit to your goal every time. Accept, learn, and move on, and always strive to improve.

And remember that it's not just achieving the goal that matters. The journey, the quality of life you experience along the way is what is most important. Reward yourself for each milestone you reach, and for every small success you make. Have fun and enjoy yourself as much as you can; it's what life is all about.

“Live so that at the end of each day, you can say, ‘I did my
very best.’”

-Oprah Winfrey

Chapter 6

Time for Yourself

Home spa treatments... nursing wardrobe...
hair and makeup... leisure time

Becoming a mother is the most beautiful event in a woman's life. Those first few hours after the birth of your baby are like magic; nothing in the world exists but you and your newborn. You look at this sweet angel you have just brought into the world and you feel incredibly blessed.

Then the sleepless nights begin...

And the engorgement and cracked nipples...

Not to mention all the flab you have in places it never existed before...

Suddenly you look in the mirror and don't recognize the woman staring back. The dark, puffy eyes with a glazed expression rather than the dazzling sparkle that used to be there, the pale skin and limp hair – that can't be you. Your closet is empty because you burned your pregnancy clothes the day after your baby was born, and you have at least 20 pounds to lose before you can fit into your pre-pregnancy clothes (don't pull these out of storage yet, it's just too depressing).

Sound familiar? Many of us have been exactly where you are now. What you need is a little 'mommy time', a little relaxation and pampering. Light some candles, run a bath, shut off the phone and get your husband to watch the baby. You deserve it.

Home Spa

Pamper yourself

Taking time out just for you is essential. When you become a new mother, the demands on your body are continuous; between breastfeeding, burping, diaper changes and sleep deprivation... well, let's just say the reserve tank is empty. It's time to start filling it up again.

Arrange some luxury time to clear your mind and rejuvenate your spirit, to relax your body and allow yourself to reflect on this new journey in your life. This will help you better deal with the stress of day to day life, and meet one of your most basic needs: rest. Your new baby and whole family will benefit, because when mothers' needs are met, babies needs are met.

There is no need to go to an expensive spa. Creating your own tranquil spa right at home is extremely easy to do: all you need are a few indulgences for your bathroom, and a little time.

Mini Home Spa Treatments

Aromatic Baths

These baths can be relaxing or invigorating, depending on which essential oil you use. Gather some candles, soothing music and draw your bath. Add four to six drops of oil after the water has finished running (if you add oil while the water is running, the oil will evaporate too quickly). Stir the water to disperse the oil. Immerse yourself into the tub and take a few deep breaths.

Relaxing Essential Oils

Lavender
Rose
Neroli
Ylang Ylang
Jasmine
Sandalwood
Chamomile

Invigorating Essential Oils

Grapefruit
Lemon
Orange
Rosemary
Patchouli
Bergamot
Lemongrass

Salt Bath

Soaking in a warm scented salt bath is a great way to ease sore muscles or just unwind at the end of the day. There are many scented bath salts available on the market today. If you feel like getting a little creative, you can make your own in just a few minutes time. Draw a warm bath, add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of your favorite salts, and wait a few seconds for them to dissolve. Light some candles, put on some classical music, and enjoy.

Bath Salt Recipe

3 parts Epsom salts
2 parts baking soda
1 part table salt
Essential oil
Food coloring - optional

Invigorating Foot Bath

Women often neglect their feet through pregnancy, especially during the last trimester. Get a large bowl and fill it with warm water - it is even better to use a massaging foot spa if you have one, but it isn't necessary. Add a few drops of your favorite essential oil, or a blend such as cypress and lavender. Add one drop of

each, and stir. This mixture will help with any swelling, varicose veins or water retention. Allow your feet to soak for 10 minutes.

Exfoliation

Our skin naturally renews itself every 28 days, on average, although this begins to slow down as we age. Dead cells will build up leaving skin looking dull and feeling rough, but with regular exfoliation your skin will look polished and clean.

Exfoliation invigorates the skin, and as an added benefit it increases circulation.

Use a loofah, body mitt or body scrub and massage your skin while it is damp.

Work in circular movements: start with your shoulders and work your way down to your feet.

Conditioning Hair Pack

Nourish your hair with a rich, deep conditioning hair pack. Deep conditioners are an excellent way to repair dry, damaged hair and will replenish moisture. First, shampoo your hair and rinse. Then, apply the hair pack and wrap your hair in a hot towel for 10 minutes. Rinse and style.

Cleansing Mud Mask

Mud masks are effective deep-cleansers and work by absorbing excess oil from your skin. Your skin will feel renewed and refreshed after this treatment. Sponge the mask onto damp skin, and leave it on for the specified time. Rinse and apply your daily moisturizer.

Steaming

Steaming your face is an excellent way to keep your skin cleansed and detoxified. It opens up your pores and helps eliminate impurities. Adding herbs or essential oils will enhance your relaxation.

1. Tie back your hair and wash your face.
2. Add boiling water to a bowl or in the bathroom sink.
3. If using herbs, wrap them in some cheese cloth and soak for 3 minutes. Or, add 2 or 3 drops of essential oil.
4. Drape a towel over your head and lean over the steaming water for 5 minutes.
5. Rinse your face with cool water, and then apply toner and moisturizer.

Basic Manicure

Giving yourself a simple manicure can be completed in as little as five minutes, and this will leave your hands soft, beautiful and polished.

1. Soak your cuticles in warm water and gently push them back. Trim with a cuticle clipper or apply a cream that will dissolve dead skin cells and keep your cuticles looking neat.
2. Save time by using clippers to trim your fingernails, and finish shaping with an emery board.
3. Buff your nails if you want a clean, natural look, or apply polish (I know very few mothers who are able to keep up with the maintenance of polished nails).
4. Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize. I keep a bottle of hand lotion in just about every room. If your hands are in and out of water all day, you must keep them nourished and moisturized.

Basic Pedicure

Treat your weary feet to a rejuvenating pedicure, and then get your husband to massage them. Threaten death if he turns you down.

1. Soak your feet in a bowl of warm water or in a foot spa for 5-10 minutes; add a few drops of bath oil or a tablespoon of baking soda to soften your feet.
2. Use a skin file, pumice stone or sloughing cream to remove dead skin cells. Build up mostly occurs on the heel.
3. Apply foot cream.
4. Trim your toenails with a clipper, and then file with an emery board.
5. Gently push back your cuticles and trim, or apply cuticle cream.
6. Buff your nails or apply polish

Mama Chic

Nursing wardrobe

With a little creativity and some imagination you can have a perfectly stylish nursing wardrobe, and you can get it without spending a fortune. Remember that this is only a short phase in your life, and the weight *will* come off. Buying just a few new items for your wardrobe will lift your spirits without breaking the bank.

To begin, analyze your closet and only keep the clothes that fit you right now. Pack up and store all items left over, including your maternity clothes. If you do not plan on having more children you can donate them to a charity organization or sell them at a consignment shop. Use any money made on the maternity

clothes to purchase some new items you may want. Get out a notebook and a pen for taking some notes.

Modern Classics

Once you have evaluated your wardrobe it is a good idea to take some notes and write down what you need. The chart below is a simple guideline of the basics. The last thing you want to do is agonize over what to wear in the morning - you should be able to open your closet and pick out an outfit that is comfortable and stylish. A clean and classic look is easy to put together, and always looks great. You should have enough outfits to last one week.

What you will need:

- Bras: 2 comfortable nursing bras
- Underwear: 8 pairs cotton thongs or panties
- Sleepwear: 2 pairs of nursing pajamas or nightgowns
- Shirts: 7 – 10 cotton shirts in colors that you love

Simple cotton shirts are a great choice. They are comfortable, cheap, and you can find them in just about any color. Wrap tops are great for breastfeeding, as long as the sides are sewn in and not tied.

- Pants: 5 – 7 pairs of pants or jeans

Cargo pants are a good option for new mothers. The extra pockets are handy for keeping tissue, soothers, nursing pads and just about anything else. The cotton/spandex blends are the most comfortable. Khakis are also a great option, and they have a classic look.

- Diaper Bag: 1 small bag for quick trips out
1 large bag for the all day adventures

Once you have a list of the wardrobe items you need, you are ready to go shopping. Thrift and consignment stores are good places to find the clothes you need if you are on a budget. When shopping at department stores, always do a little comparison shopping. And stick to your list! I know it may be difficult to pass up that feather sweater that is on sale, but trust me, you won't wear it. Think cotton and comfort.

Outer Beauty

I always take the time to look my best. I keep my hair style simple and my makeup routine uncomplicated so I can be ready in as little as 15 minutes, including showering time. Every morning my routine is the same. I never skip my beauty ritual even if I plan to stay home all day, because it helps me feel beautiful and boosts my self confidence.

Hair

When choosing a style, think about how you live. Find a hairstyle that suites your face and is easy to look after. New mothers rarely want to spend a lot of time on their hair, so keep it simple. Talk to your stylist for a few suggestions, or look through some magazines to get an idea of what you like. A short and sexy style can work well. Long hair is also good, and can be easy to maintain, because you can wash and slick it back in a pony tail. And don't forget about baseball hats... they are great for those bad hair days.

Makeup

I am a makeup addict, and have been since I was 16 years old. Buying a new lipstick is like a sugar high for me: I always want more. Experimenting with new

looks is something I have done my whole life. I love reinventing myself and try to change my look every season.

After pregnancy and childbirth, it can be challenging to discover your style. Finding the right balance of what looks good and how much time you have to apply it takes a little practice. Think simple, fresh and minimal. It should only take 3 to 5 minutes to apply your makeup every day.

Here are a few suggestions:

- begin with a concealer under the eyes to cover dark circles
- apply a light foundation or tinted moisturizer
- dust your face with loose powder to set
- lightly apply blush to your cheeks
- use light shadow across your entire eye lid
- dust color eye shadow in crease of the lid
- apply one coat of mascara
- use Vaseline or gloss on your lips.

Eyebrows should be kept neat and well groomed. Properly shaped brows will enhance your eyes. Be sure to have a good pair of tweezers with a slanted tip. Book an appointment with a spa and have them professionally tweezed if you are having trouble shaping them yourself.

Leisure Time

For yourself

One of the great rewards of motherhood is that it forces you to mature. With maturity comes a sense of discovering who you really are: what you're passionate about, what truly makes you happy, and what is most important to you in life. Your time is no longer just your own. Finding time for yourself is much more difficult than it was before, so you must learn to multi-task, be organized and prioritize.

Making time for your passions and hobbies is essential for maintaining your sanity. Set aside time when there are no distractions or interruptions. Get your mother or husband to watch the baby, and learn a new hobby. Teach yourself how to knit or paint, purchase an instrument and take some lessons, or try a craft like rug hooking or needlepoint. Learning new skills is a wonderful way to ensure that you are growing. Let your imagination go, get creative, and expand your mind.

Suggestions on spending leisure time:

- Plant an herb garden
- Read a book
- Write in your journal
- Walk barefoot on a beach or in the grass
- Learn to paint
- Get a massage
- Watch the sunset
- Sit at a sidewalk café and people-watch
- Go to an art gallery
- Learn Tai-Chi
- Meditate

Spending a little creative time on yourself will leave you feeling refreshed and energized. Life's stresses will be easier to handle. Enjoy the simple things in life and don't get caught up in negativity; let the house get a little messy, and turn the television off. There is always a way to find more time to do the things that leave you feeling happy and satisfied.

One of my favorite ways to spend some leisure time is to watch my children sleep. I listen to them breathe and remember the day they were born... nothing is more beautiful than that.

A Final Note

The information I have presented in this book is the culmination of 5 years of research, trial and error, and (like labor) a fair amount of *pain*. Everything here represents how I now live my life, from a health perspective. It was not an easy process getting to this point, but the results have definitely been worth it.

I hope I have given you enough resources and information to help support you in your weight loss journey. I hope you feel motivated, energized and inspired to create the changes that you want in your life. Practice the techniques and principles, keep focused on your goal, and make health a way of life.

I would love to hear any comments, questions or suggestions you may have. Send me your success stories, via email or regular mail, and I will post them on my website. I wish you all the best in the world in the pursuit of your goals; I hope your journey is as exciting as your destination. Believe in yourself, and in the words of Winston Churchill, 'Never, never, never give up!'

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Resources

Books and Audio

The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, Sixth Revised Edition; La Leche League International, Plume

The Breastfeeding Book, Sears and Sears, Little Brown and Company

Awaken the Giant Within; Anthony Robbins, Fireside Simon and Schuster

Staying Healthy with Nutrition; Elson M Haas, M.D., Celestial Arts

Spontaneous Healing: How to Discover and Embrace Your Body's Natural Ability to Maintain and Heal Itself; Andrew Weil, M.D., The Ballantine Publishing Group

8 Weeks to Optimum Health; Andrew Weil, M.D., The Ballantine Publishing Group

Conscious Breathing: Breathwork for Health, Stress Release, and Personal Mastery; Gay Hendricks, Bantam Books

Food Combining Bible: Your Complete Guide to Using the Hay Diet for Digestive Health and a Balanced Approach to Weight Loss; Jan Dries and Inge Dries, Element Books Ltd.

Breathing: The Master Key to Self Healing; Andrew Weil, M.D., Sounds True

Websites

La Leche League: www.lalecheleague.org

PCRM Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine:
www.pcrm.org/index.html

Harvard School of Public Health:
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/index.html

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center:
www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html

Mayo Clinic Online: www.mayoclinic.com/index.cfm

Ask Dr. Sears: www.askdrsears.com

Carbohydrates - information: www.drmirkin.com/nutrition/9347.html

Cleansing, Alternative Health Care: www.hps-online.com/index.htm

Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca

Discovery Health: health.discovery.com

Dr. Stanley Bass – Sequential Eating: www.drbass.com/sequential.html

Dr. Lark: www.drlark.com/index.asp

Medline Plus Health Information Network: medlineplus.gov

Milk Sucks!: www.milksucks.com

No Milk Page: www.panix.com/~nomilk/

Nutrition for Vegetarian Mothers:
www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/nutrition/vegetarians.htm

ProMom Inc. www.promom.org/

American Dietetic Association: <http://www.eatright.org/Public/>

WebMD Health: my.webmd.com

The Fruit Pages: www.thefruitpages.com/

Vegetable Protein Sources: veggietable.allinfo-about.com/articles/protein.html

Your Medical Source: yourmedicalsourc.com/index.html

Yoga Journal Magazine: www.yogajournal.com/index.cfm

Breastfeed.com: breastfeed.com

Healthy Living – Walk your way to good health:
www.healthierliving.org/exercise/walking.html