



5 no-diet ways to lose weight

Diets are hard work and choosing the wrong kind can mean putting back on all the weight you managed to lose and more. So how about an alternative way to shed the pounds?

Jane Alexander spoke to five women who all lost weight effortlessly – without ever counting a single calorie

Acupuncture



Who tried it: Jana Griffiths, 51, airline cabin crew
Height: 5'4"

Weight before: 10 stone 8lbs

Weight after: 9 stone 7lbs

Problem: "I just wasn't losing weight, no matter what method I tried."

Trial period: One month

How it works: Acupuncturists see weight gain as a sign that the body's energy (known as qi or chi) is out of balance. They will aim to balance your qi by pinpointing (sorry!) the exact places along the meridians (energy pathways of the body) that need stimulating.

What happened? "Dr Voronina put needles in various parts of my body and also some in my ears; the needles in my ears were left in. They didn't hurt at all. I had a toxic headache after 48 hours, but that was the only side effect. The acupuncture simply made the hunger pangs go away – in fact, I couldn't even bear the smell of alcohol (and I love wine). I lost a pound a day for the first ten days followed by a slower weight loss."

Most suitable for: Those who like swift results – acupuncture can have almost immediate effects. Although the procedure isn't generally painful, it's not suitable for the needle-phobic.

Cost: Dr Voronina charges £390 for a ten-session course. Individual acupuncture sessions vary around the country.

£ per lb: £26

Where: Jana saw Dr Tamara Voronina (020 7925 8416; www.tvrejuvenation.com). For your nearest practitioner call the British Acupuncture Council on (020) 8735 0400.

Hypnotherapy



Who tried it: Emma Watkins, 31, account manager
Height: 5'8"

Weight before: 14 stone

Weight after: 11 stone

Problem: "I didn't know how to say no to food."

Trial period: One year (six sessions)

How it works: Hypnotherapy puts you into a deeply relaxed, light trance state in which your subconscious mind is put to work on your weight issues. The process will vary according to your problem, from simply instilling positive changes into your mind to working out the psychological issues behind your weight gain.

What happened? "I was quite cynical to begin with as I'd tried everything. There was plinky plonky music playing in the clinic and Rob's voice was very deep and calm – I thought it couldn't work. But he went through my history and my feelings about food and we uncovered a lot of interesting things – early messages about eating and so on. I lost two stone in six months and then went on to lose another stone over the rest of the year."

Most suitable for: You have to be willing to look at the issues behind your weight gain and be prepared to change (possibly on a profound level). Deep-seated issues will take more sessions.

Cost: Rob Russell charges £80 per session. Costs vary around the country.

£ per lb: £11.42

Where: Rob Russell practises at the Hale Clinic in London (020 7631 0156). For your nearest practitioner call the National Council for Hypnotherapy on 0800-952 0545.

Homeopathy



Who tried it: Diana Green, 52, interior designer

Height: 5'9"

Weight before: 11 stone 7lbs

Weight after: 11 stone

Problem: "I had to eat something every two hours."

Trial period: Six weeks (two sessions)

How it works: Excess weight is seen as just another symptom of imbalance, as far as homeopaths are concerned. They'll look for a remedy that matches you as an entire person – not just the way you put on weight, but also your likes and dislikes, sleeping patterns, dreams and other symptoms. With an exact match, your body will automatically seek to balance itself and weight should slowly and surely drop off.

What happened? "I have low blood sugar, which makes dieting impossible. When my husband started eating lunch at home the weight just piled on. Homeopathy is wonderful as it gives you a chance to really talk to someone who understands and Penny gave me a lot of emotional support – I felt I was being treated as a whole person. I took my remedy and the weight just fell off. Basically, it stopped me being hungry, which was essential as I usually go droopy if I don't eat every two hours."

Most suitable for: Those who want to balance their entire bodies gently and safely. You have to be willing to be very honest and answer quite unexpected questions.

Cost: Penny Rushton charges £110 for the first appointment; £95 for subsequent sessions. Costs vary around the country.

£ per lb: £29.28

Where: Penny Rushton also practises at the Hale Clinic. For practitioners around the country contact the Society of Homeopaths on 01604-621400.

Bi-Aura (energy balancing)



Who tried it: Joan Robson, 51, hairdresser

Height: 5'5"

Weight before: 10 stone 7lbs

Weight after: 9 stone 12 lbs

Problem: "I had put on weight around my waist that wouldn't budge."

Trial period: About six months

How it works: Excess weight is seen as a disturbance or blockage in the flow of the body's energy fields. The Bi-Aura system of energy balancing uses a specific sequence of non-touch hand movements to release any blockages and encourage energy flow.

What happened? "Lynne had me standing up and asked me to imagine I was standing in the sea, feeling totally relaxed. She moved her hands around me, never actually touching me. Then I lay down on a bed while she did more work. Immediately afterwards I felt tired, but then had the most incredible surge of energy. The weight just went and I felt so energetic I've been able to exercise for the first time in ages."

Most suitable for: Anyone who has water retention, sluggish metabolism or a problem with overeating.

Cost: £30-£35 per session

£ per lb: £27.22

Where: Joan saw Lynne Ridley at the Bi-Aura Foundation (01661-844899). A register of practitioners is available on its website at www.bi-aura.com.

Subliminal CDs



Who tried it: Desiree Warren, 48, life coach

Height: 5'3"

Weight before: 9 stone 7lbs

Weight after: 9 stone

Problem: "I was a stress eater – and was eating junk food."

Trial period: One month

How it works: InnerTalk programmes send messages simultaneously to the right and left hemispheres of the brain. One message is spoken forwards and is gentle and encouraging in tone; the other is spoken backwards and is more authoritarian. Over time your subconscious starts to take on board the messages (you eat healthily, you exercise, for example) and you automatically adopt a healthier lifestyle.

What happened? "You just play the CDs while you're doing other things – I used to play it while I was working or during my "hot spots", particularly 4pm when I used to reach for the biscuits. You just hear the music, not any words. I found myself stopping before I ate something and asking myself if I was really hungry. I started to like my body a bit more and wanted to do things for it – like going to the gym more often."

Most suitable for: Anyone who wants to go it alone or is on a budget (it's much cheaper than seeing a therapist). You need persistence, though, as you have to play the programmes every day.

Cost: Programmes (CDs or tapes) cost from £15.99 to £49.99 plus p&p. Desiree used a Weight Loss Now CD (£22.99).

£ per lb: £3.28

Where: Programmes can be ordered from InnerTalk on 01628-898366 or from the website at www.innertalk.co.uk.