

'I ate more to lose weight'

Good Housekeeping's Jessica Callan ate five times a day as part of a weight-loss plan to see if it could help her shape up – and get healthy.

My inspiration was GH columnist Sandi Toksvig, as this eating plan led to her not just losing five stone but reclaiming her body.

Devised by weight-loss expert Louise Parker, the idea behind this way of eating is to spread calories evenly across the day and eat every few hours to stabilise blood sugar levels, boost your metabolism and ensure you burn fat rather than muscle.

After having my daughter nearly four years ago, I managed to lose some of my pregnancy weight, but when I turned 40 last year, I was at my heaviest. I felt bloated, tired and fed up with promising myself I would sort out my unhealthy food choices and chocolate binges. Plus, I have high blood pressure, and diabetes runs in my family, and I definitely want to swerve that.

With Louise Parker's programme, I was assigned my own nutritionist, and had weekly consultations to go over my food diary and help me stay motivated. I was weighed and measured every other week and taught the principles for a new style of eating. Never one to willingly skip a meal, I was delighted to discover I could eat three meals a day and two snacks – and that it wasn't a carb-free/dairy-free/bread-free faddy diet either.

Instead, I was given a binder full of fantastic recipe ideas – without a chia seed or kale leaf in sight – and nothing took more than 15 minutes to cook.

Truthfully, the only time I felt hungry was around my mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack. Apparently it's combining food groups, sticking to low glycemic index (GI) foods and eating protein at every meal that I have to thank for giving me a metabolic uplift, which helps me feel full and satisfied.

So what did I eat? Breakfast was a portion of protein (scrambled eggs/Greek yogurt), a portion of low GI carb, such as toast or oatbran, and a piece of fruit or veg. For lunch and dinner I'd have protein again (chicken/fish/lamb/goat's cheese), three to four portions of vegetables and salads and one portion of fat, such as mixed seeds or olive/sesame/walnut oil. I was also allowed two snacks: one protein and one low GI carb. Favourites were an apple and a small piece of cheddar, a pear and 12 almonds, or a slice of prosciutto and two figs.

I also started seeing a personal trainer at my local gym twice a week, focusing on high-intensity exercise and weights.

By the end of the 12 weeks, I had lost a total of 24 pounds and had gone from a size 14 to an eight but, more importantly, my metabolic age had dropped from 52 to 32 – if it's higher than your real age it can mean health problems. I also lost a total of 14 centimetres from my abdomen, 10 from my hips and nine from my waist.

I'm now living their 80:20 plan, so I stick to the plan 80% of the time and

I can still have a slice of chocolate cake with my daughter and crispy potatoes with my Sunday roast guilt free, without letting the weight creep back on. So far, so good.'

ON TEST Louise Parker's Optimum Weight Loss programme. Call 0203 427 5863 or visit louiseparker.uk.com. Follow her on @figuremagician.

BEFORE



Jess: 'Weekly consultations helped keep me motivated'



AFTER

My new menu

BREAKFAST



Messy Eggs make a protein-packed breakfast



Milly's Strawberry and Oatbran Bircher is low GI

LUNCH



Goat's Cheese Salad – my favourite lunch



Chopped Chicken Salad is easy to make with leftovers

DINNER



Steak and Green Beans is a great restaurant option, too



Louise's Lovely Lentils can also be a quick lunch choice

SNACKS



Pear and 12 almonds



Apple slices and cheese