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better body

Melt away CO

Have fruit not juice

We need to drink more in summer, but don't glog lots of juice or you'll rack up calories (around 110 per 250ml of orange juice).

Instead have water (zero calories) and an orange (a medium-sized one is about 60 calories), says Lucy-Ann Prideaux of Simply Nutrition (www.simply-nutrition.co.uk).

'Or put a few chunks of fruit in a jug and pour water over them for a delicious, virtually zero-calorie drink.'

Go for a different pudding

No weight-loss plan will work if you feel deprived, so don't avoid pudding – just go for a low-calorie option.

Charlotte Parker, a nutrition expert at www.sainsburysdiets.co.uk, recommends 80g of frozen summer berries (defrosted in the microwave) mixed with sugar-free jelly. It's only around 40 calories and also gives you one of your five-a-day.

Choose your carbs

Swap potatoes and white rice or pasta for quinoa (pronounced 'kweenwah'). Quinoa is fantastic for loss as it helps keep blood sugar levels balanced so you'll feel fuller for longer, but it isn't stodgy, says nutrition and health therapist Julie Silver (www.juliesilver.co.uk).

It also has a low GI and is higher in protein and richer in nutrients than rice or other grains.'

Eat some leaves

Invest in some tasty, ready-prepared salad leaves (or your own, if you grow them), such as peppery rocket, watercress – at approximately 10 calories per 35g.

Eat a good handful as a nutritious snack, or add extra as raw grated butternut squash, apple, tomatoes, and grapes. Or try them as part of a snack (say on oatcakes with low-fat humous), as a starter or side dish, or with a main meal (aim to fill half your plate).

We like the new Steve's Leaves salad leaf range, from £1.10, especially the Wild Red Rocket & Milder Leaves pack (www.stevesleaves.co.uk).

Beat sugar cravings

'Too much sugar is a major cause of weight problems, yet sweet cravings can be due to nutrient deficiencies,' says Lucy-Ann Prideaux.

To avoid this, try to have more than one dominant flavour in meals. This will help you feel more satisfied and furnish you with more nutrients.

'Flavours to aim for include bitter (such as dark salad leaves), sour (lemon juice), pungent (chillis), salty (olives) and naturally sweet (such as baby carrots).

Eat chocolate strawberries

Instead of having a bar of milk chocolate (at about 260 calories per 50g), go for a low-calorie chocolate fruit treat instead. Here's Charlotte Parker's recipe (you can replace the strawberries with chunks of pineapple or mango).

Chocolate-dipped strawberries with crème fraiche

Melt 6 squares (25g) of dark chocolate (at least 70 per cent cocoa) in a bowl over a pan of boiling water. Dip the tips of 8 strawberries into the chocolate and chill in the fridge to set. Serve with 1 tbsp half-fat crème fraiche per person. (Serves 2, around 110 calories per person)

Have a barbie

Barbecuing food (or grilling it in the oven, if the weather has turned a bit British) helps save calories as it allows excess fat to drain away.

For example, grilling a steak can reduce the fat content by around 75 per cent. And always trim off the excess fat to make it as lean as possible.

Bella 18



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Calories

Make a few blissfully simple changes to your diet this summer and the pounds should soon drop off



Lose up to 2lb in a week

Dress carefully

Salads are not a healthy option if they're drenched in high-calorie dressings. 'A Caesar salad can be around 600 calories, so a chicken salad sandwich at 300 calories is a more satisfying, lower-fat option,' says Jill Scott, registered dietitian and member of The Fat Panel (www.thefatpanel.org.uk).

'When making salads use clever swaps – mayonnaise can be up to 100 calories per tablespoon, but a low-fat mayo only 40. Or try balsamic vinegar, at around 10 calories per tablespoon.'



Trade fruit for veg

'Too much fruit can lead to bloating and the calories can add up,' says Julie Silver.

'So choose raw veg, such as carrots, celery, cucumber and sugar-snap peas as snacks, rather than only eating fruit (aim for one to two fruit portions and eight to nine veg portions a day). Vegetables are lower in calories and sugar than fruit.'

Enjoy them on their own or with a dip such as humous.

Eat a summery breakfast

Warm weather can reduce your appetite. But don't skip breakfast – you could end up with yo-yoing blood sugar levels leading to cravings.

'Good, quick, low-calorie breakfasts for summer are seasonal fruits, such as berries, with low-fat yoghurt or on top of a high-fibre, low-sugar cereal,' says Professor Chris Seal, nutritional expert for The Breakfast Panel (www.breakfastpanel.org).



NB: If you have a medical condition, or are pregnant or breastfeeding, do seek professional advice before changing your diet.

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Bella 19



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