

How to lose weight in a month



**YOUR
HEALTH**

DR GITA MATHAI

Q I need to lose weight fast as I am getting married in a month.

Drastic weight loss is not sustainable. Losing 1 kilo (2.2 pounds) a week with a combination of dieting and exercise is achievable and maintainable. Exercise for at least an hour a day with light weights to lose weight and maintain muscle tone. Sleep at least eight hours a night, eat 75 per cent of what you currently consume and avoid high-calorie snacks and sweets.

Slimming pills

Q There are many medications — including herbal ones — advertised for weight loss. Are they safe?

Many herbal preparations do not list their ingredients on the packaging. They may contain natural thyroid extracts or ephedrine, which can increase metabolic rate and lead to weight loss but also cause side effects.

In modern medicine, weight-loss medications earlier had severe side effects. Newer and safer options, like semaglutide are now available. These medications are expensive, available only by prescription (in tablet or injection form) and relatively safe.

Hairfall help

Q I am losing a lot of hair. Are there supplements I can take?

Losing up to 150 strands of hair a day is normal. Sometimes hair may appear to fall out but is actually breaking off. Check if this is the case.

Deficiencies in zinc, calcium, B-complex vitamins and Vitamin D can cause hair loss. Get these checked and take appropriate supplements if necessary.

Burning chest

Q When I sleep, I suddenly wake up feeling that my chest is on fire.

This may be caused by acid reflux. For a week, try not lying down for at least an hour after eating, avoid drinking milk at night and keep your head elevated while sleeping. If this does not work, check with a physician to see if you have GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), a hiatus hernia or another issue.

Bowel issues

Q I am chronically constipated. Will toxins enter my blood?

Everyone's bowel habits are different — some go every day, some three times a day and some three times a week. But you should worry if your bowel habits have suddenly changed, there is pain or bleeding, you feel there is stool left in your abdomen after passing motion or if you need to strain excessively.

Toxins are not released from stools into your blood.

If you are concerned, consult a physician. It may be as simple as insufficient fibre, fluid or exercise.

Diseases like hypothyroidism, obstructions or tumours may also need to be ruled out.



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Blood in stool

Q Every time I pass motion, I notice fresh red blood in the stool. There is no pain.

If you have had more than one episode of rectal bleeding, even if it is painless and intermittent, it should be taken seriously. You need to consult a doctor. By examining the area, performing a proctoscopy and conducting a rectal examination, he or she can usually arrive at a diagnosis.

If needed, you may be advised further tests. The cause could be an infection, a tear or fissure, piles or haemorrhoids, polyps or even cancer.

Insect allergy

Q Whenever an insect bites me, the area swells up and itches.

You are possibly having an allergic reaction to insect bites. Apply a paste of baking soda and water to the insect bite and the area around it. Apply ice to reduce the itching. If this does not work, take an antihistamine. That should stop the itching.

The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any question on health issues please write to yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in