

Dear Maria

I am 1.72m (5'8") and weigh 102 kilos (16 stone). My doctor has told me to lose weight but I don't know where to start as there is so much conflicting information in the media.

Can you help me? I am female and 32 years old. PW

Dear PW

Usually, being "overweight" is as a result of too much fat stored in the body. Other reasons can be due to oedema (puffiness caused by water retention), or even having large muscle mass (as in pumping iron).

I am going on the assumption that we are dealing with too much fat, which needs to be burnt off. To be correct, I would need to make sure that there were no underlying reasons for your being overweight, so you should return to your GP and get this checked out. Counting calories can be very restrictive, as can be eating much smaller portions of food. The intake would be reduced but so would the nutritional contribution, as the composition of the diet would for the most part remain the same. What is needed is an overhaul of what you eat. With the right foods you can eat as much as you like and never be hungry or feel deprived.

What I would suggest is that you start off by keeping a 7 day food diary of everything that you eat and drink, (and be honest here!), which I can assess and then tailor a fat burn-off programme that works for you. This should lead to a desirable BMI of 23 – ie around 70 kilos (11 stone).

I do appreciate however, that the BMI chart has its limitations and that a weight of 70 kilos might be difficult to achieve, however keeping your BMI below 25 indicates a healthy weight for your height.

Maria Griffiths is a Nutritional Therapist with 20 years' experience and is registered with the Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council, which meets national standards. She is a Senior Associate Member of The Royal Society Of Medicine.