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<http://www.noellyons.com>

Noel Lyons

Noel is The BodyMind Coach. If you would like to look 10yr younger, or save yourself unnecessary frustration through learning only the latest most time-effective body & mind training methods, then sign-up today at: <http://www.GetFit.es>

Noel also runs a number of websites all based around fitness and wellness.



<http://www.energise.co.uk>

Penny Hunking

Penny regularly contributes to national newspapers, magazines and health professional publications and has written or contributed to ten books on all aspects of food, fat loss, fitness and special diets in a career spanning some 30 years.

Penny's client list is a 'Who's Who' of major food producers and she has done freelance writing for the Food Standards Agency. She works extensively with a range of clients including health, sport, fitness and leisure organisations providing them with innovative solutions to their corporate and national nutrition projects.

Noel Lyons: All right, welcome everybody. My name is Noel Lyons, and this is another audio in the **Jet Set Go** Beach Body FIT series. Today I'm delighted to be speaking with **Penny Hunking**. Penny is a registered dietician and a member of the British Dietetic Association, the nutrition society, nutritionist in the industry, and dieticians in sports and exercise nutrition. From fueling fitness for sports performance to healthy eating and fat loss, Penny Hunking has written, researched, and talked to consumers and professionals about virtually every aspect of diet, weight management, and exercise. She regularly contributes to national newspapers, magazines, and health professional publications, and has written or contributed to ten books on all aspects of food, fat loss, fitness, and special diets in a career spanning some 30 years. Penny's client list is a Who's Who of major food producers and she's done freelance writing for the Foods Standards Agency. She works extensively with a range of clients including health, sport, fitness, and leisure organizations, providing them with innovative solutions for corporate and national nutrition projects.

As I said, I'm really pleased that Penny's giving up her valuable time to contribute on this project. So good morning, Penny.

Penny Hunking: Good morning, Noel. How are you?

Noel Lyons: Good. I'm just stumbling over a few words, but we'll get into this.

Penny Hunking: I'm sorry, Noel, did you have breakfast? That's what I want to know.

Noel Lyons: Yeah. *(Laughter)* Okay, we can talk about that, but first let's start with a question, there's one from **Khandi**, on the leadbritaintowellness.ning.com site. It was like "eating five to six times a day seems to be what the experts are recommending these days, but I have a problem with food, and find that eating this often has me thinking about food too much. In the three to four hours' break in between meals, I'm thinking of what I can eat, then packaging it and preparing, then eating, and then all over again, and then trying to eat on the same schedule everyday, as is recommended. Is there anything that you could recommend so that my life doesn't seem to revolve around food? I've made tremendous strides with handling my eating disorder, which was centered around a pattern of diet pills, exercising after eating, guilt, and starvation, then bringing up the whole works. And I have been eating smaller, more often for about a year now, but it makes me feel so obsessed with food. What would you suggest?"

Penny Hunking: Wow. Okay, it was a lot in that question, Noel, and, you know, eating disorders are quite challenging. But I think if I might give some sort of solace here, that a lot of people have a problem with food, and of course it can be incredibly distressing. And the thoughts and attitudes that go with an eating disorder (and it may or may not be an eating disorder). I mean, today we have things like compulsive overeating, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and

all sorts of strange and weird, wonderful names. And I don't really mind, you know, what that person has. If they have a problem, then obviously we need to see how we can help. Now one thing that Khandi needs to understand is, and I'm sure has already realized, that it takes a long time. And, you know, little, small changes make absolutely huge differences, you know, in the battle against a struggle with food.

Now going back to the question – the first question, or statement, is eating five to six times a day, and it seems to be what experts are recommending. Well, I don't know, really. I mean, what we do recommend is that people start the day with breakfast, and that they don't leave long gaps between meals, but as to whether or not it's five to six times a day, I think really it's down to personal choice. And, you know, sometimes people have forgotten to listen about whether they're really hungry or full. You know, they've lost those sort of internal signals. And so sometimes I think rather than trying to revolve around too much of a strict pattern, try and become a little bit more relaxed about when and how often they eat. So, yes, start with breakfast and then have regular meals and snacks but, you know, I don't whether it should be such a – I'm getting the impression here that they're following, you know, an absolutely rigid routine, almost, to time. And I'm not so sure that that's the way forward because I think that builds in other challenges, yeah?

Noel Lyons: Okay, so you placed a big emphasis on breakfast.

Penny Hunking: Absolutely right, yes.

Noel Lyons: And obviously, you know, break the fast –

Penny Hunking: Yes – I mean, you know, it's such a sort of statement –

Noel Lyons: Cliché.

Penny Hunking: Everyone says, “Oh, you know, you can't expect a car to run without petrol and such” – we can't expect a better body without fueling it, you know the mind and body work better during the morning. You know, the bottom line truth is, that actually, you know, breakfast does mean breaking the fast. We know from the research that breakfast eaters tend to be happier, better able to concentrate during the morning, they tend to have higher intakes of essential vitamins and minerals than breakfast skippers, and you generally speaking will find, also, that if you're struggling with your weight, breakfast eaters tend to be more lean than breakfast skippers. So, you know, there's a heck of a lot of good reasons why you should have breakfast. I suppose the bottom line is what is breakfast? What do you eat? So in this situation, I mean, you know, is it the sort of thing, do you jump out of bed and have breakfast? You know? Or is breakfast something you have one to two hours after you get up, because a lot of people don't hungry –

Noel Lyons: That was gonna be my next question – is it something you have straight away, as soon as you do awake? Because I know for some people, they're really, really not hungry.

Penny Hunking: Absolutely right – it's personal choice. All I know is that, you know, say for example you're working at, you know, say 9:00 and you get up at 7:00 and you shower and you, you know, you shuffle around and do whatever you have to do before you get to work. If you haven't had anything to eat in that period, your concentration just won't be what it is, energy levels will be sagging, and as the day goes through what tends to be a sort of common thread here is that these people who skip breakfast tend to not eat too much during the day, and then they find their appetite is a bit more out of control towards the evening. And they're the sort of people that say, you know, "When I get home I just can't keep my head out of the fridge. I just can't keep my head out of the cupboard, you know, and I tend to feel quite hungry. But when I get up in the morning, I don't." So I think that's something that people need to address. And it doesn't have to be a full-blown meal, you know, we're talking about maybe something as simple as a bowl of cereal and milk or maybe some fruits and yogurts, or fresh fruit on its own – you know, just something, really, to pop up the blood sugar, to give you a bit of a kick start.

Noel Lyons: Again, it's one of those things that gets talked about a lot, though, isn't it? This whole idea of cereal nutrition, you know; what should we look for in the cereals that we have?

Penny Hunking: Well, I will sit here and say that I am actually the spokesperson for the British Cereal Information Service (*Laughter*) and – so you picked a good one here Noel – but the thing about breakfast cereals is there's an enormous range, and that's why I'm happy to be the spokesperson, because there's something for everybody. And, you know, some people say, "Well, actually, you know, you should have one without salt and sugar." Or, "You should have one that's high in fiber." Well, okay, that's fine, if you want to have, you know, more fiber in your breakfast and you're watching your salts and sugar levels. But on the other side of the coin, breakfast cereal manufacturers have actually done a lot towards what they do and don't put into cereals. So really the best thing I can say is read the label and choose what you feel is right for you. Now, if you look at whole grain, for example, whole grain cereals is a great start to the day, and we know that whole grains, and a higher intake of whole grains, two to three portions a day, is linked to a reduced risk of cancer and heart disease. So it's really important that we think not just if, well, you know, it's good or bad or right or wrong. What are we trying to achieve? How are we trying to look after ourselves? And if we want to eat two to three portions of whole grain a day, depending on what else we eat for lunch and supper and snacks and, you know, a whole grain cereal in the morning might be the one to choose.

So it's really personal. If I was dealing with an athlete, who was going to go off for a run, on an endurance run, they might be better off with quite a sugary cereal, with little fiber because they don't want anything in their tummy or something that's going to hang around, 'cause they might just throw up on their run, to be quite frank. Do you know what I mean? So it's horses for courses. I think if you want to be fit and well, look for things that are wholesome, maybe check the food labels, if you want to reduce sugar and salt, look at that. Compare one against another and make the choice. And my feeling is, don't buy it simply 'cause you think you should. Always use and eat something you like. It's really, really key.

Noel Lyons: Well, I guess I cover my bets, then, Penny, 'cause I always mix and match mine. I have about three or four different, and I just put them all in together.

Penny Hunking: And that's wonderful. It's a bit like if you go, you know, to stay in a hotel and you see lots and lots of different cereals on the buffet bar, and you can have –

Noel Lyons: That would be me.

Penny Hunking: A little bit of this, a little bit of that, and quite frankly, then, you know, everyone talks about eating lots of fruit and veggies. You can put some fruit on the top, you know, some fresh fruit or some dried fruit. You can put milk on it, you can put yogurt on it. If you don't want to do that, you can put fruit juice on it, you know what I mean? Really, let's ring the changes, let's be experimental, let's try new things, and I think, you know, that's a great start for people who are struggling with anything to do with their eating habits. You know, try and legalize all foods and enjoy what you're doing – great message, I think, there.

Noel Lyons: The possible red flags with cereals would be the sugar and the hidden sugars, certainly in the first three of the ingredients, salts, and then any additives – would you agree?

Penny Hunking: Well, when you look at a label, you see, it's a little bit confusing these days because, you know, there's a whole new raft of food labeling coming in, you know, the Food Standards Agency is looking at the traffic light system. The food industry is looking at what we call GDAs, which says that in a portion it's guideline daily amounts which means, you know, the bar on the front that says, "If you have a portion of this cereal," or whatever food it is, "It will give you X percent of salt, sugar, and calcium," or whatever is in there. And it guides the person to make a choice.

So I would say look at the ingredients list as well, because the things that it's highest in will be listed first, and the things that it's lowest in are listed at the end. So look very much at the ingredients just because I think sometimes it's a little confusing, in terms of looking at the labels. And some people are getting

a handle on these different labeling systems, and some of them are becoming quite clear. So again, I think, just think carefully before you buy, look at the food label terms, and make your own choice. You know, if you like a particular two cereals, turn them round and have a look and see what they offer.

If you want to reduce sugar, look at the one with the lower sugar. But choose something you like, is the key. Just remember that things like, you know, food labelings – it is changing, but certain terms such as like fresh, pure, natural, wholesome, hearty, traditional – they don't have a legal definition, and they don't really mean anything as far as the food content is concerned, you know what I mean? I mean, there's no legal definitions for terms such as low, reduced, or high except for in butter and margarines, spreadable fats.

So again, I think you just have to go down, decide what you like, and again, you know, my message generally to clients is, if you really, really, really like something, do not deny yourself of it because do you know what? Guess what happens if you choose not to have something you really like? You eat more of it, or you think about it and you dream about it, and then you end up probably pigging out on it. So I think, you know, the key is just to find – is to be sensible. Look at the label and make a decision based on what you're trying to achieve.

Noel Lyons: Okay, now, is it a bit of a cliché that the metabolism is higher early on in the day, than later in the day? Or is there good evidence for that?

Penny Hunking: Oh, metabolic rate – that's such a difficult question. (*Laughter*) To be quite frank, I'm not expert on what it is does in every hour throughout the day. But what I will say is that what we do need to do is try and keep our metabolic rates as high as we can. And how do we do that? It's by regular eating. And in terms of training, I'll put my trainer's hat on for a second here, let's try and make sure that we have a good amount of muscle mass. So, you know, we have a rounded training program to maintain some sort of good muscle mass to fat mass ratio. Because when we look at the amount of fat mass, fat mass contains – muscle mass contains, you know, these busy little cells that burn calories, called mitochondria. And that's what happens when we train, you know, we burn more calories both from the exercise, and then we obviously get stronger and increase the number of mitochondria in the cells, so we burn more oxygen. So metabolic rate is all to do with how much oxygen we burn. And I'm far more interested in what we do over a 24-hour period, and over a week, and over a month, and over a year, than I am in any particular time of the day. Do you see what I'm saying?

Noel Lyons: I've got you. Thanks for clarifying that one. So I will come on to metabolism boosters like, you know, muscle mass, etc. But let's just get back to Khandi's question, which is about the frequency, then, of meals. You know, we

shouldn't really go by time, you know, like a set time every day. Should we just wait until we are hungry? Or should we aim for every three to four hours? How can we help, you know, if there's 200 people listening, what would be an ideal sort of goal to go for?

Penny Hunking:

It's such, such, an interesting question. If you have the sort of life that is a little bit more structured, you know, and maybe you're working in an office and you can have a lunchtime break or an afternoon break or whatever, then I think this is a lot easier. You know, some people can't run time-tabled eating quite the same. And so I think what you need to do is not leave more than about five hours between meals. So that's quite a key point. So you start the day with something to eat, and then try not to leave long times between eating phases. So say, for example, you get your breakfast at 8:00, you really should start to think about having something by 1:00. So that would naturally put you into lunchtime. Now if, in the middle of all this, you feel a bit peckish, it would be quite a good idea to go and have a drink and something to eat and think about, you know, what would be useful to eat there. Well, you know, we're always talking about fruit and veg, so maybe a piece of fruit, maybe a yogurt, or something like that. In terms of timing, just don't leave more than five hours between meals.

Now, some people get on very nicely with a very sort of more of a rigid routine, because they can be planned and prepared and they've got – you know, they can take stuff in their bag with them if they're on the move, for example, and they've got a couple of snacks, and they know they're going to have something for lunch. Other people are a little bit more – haphazard, shall I say? So I think you have to work out what's right for you, but if you can eat more regularly, the general consensus is that it's much better in things like appetite control, weight management, and just general feeling of energy levels, you know. So eat relatively frequently, but I'm not so sure that people should sort of set the stopwatch, do you know what I'm saying?

Noel Lyons:

Yeah – so, like, no carbs after 6:00 and that sort of things, it's a little bit –

Penny Hunking:

Well, I mean, that's another point entirely, really, about, you know, what you eat at the particular time. But I would say in terms of timing of meals, I would suggest that, again, you know, if you've got more of a pattern to your life, it's easier than those who might get sabotaged, and we all got sabotaged. So I would say is, you know, be prepared, carry snacks with you in your bag or your sports bag or your handbag or, you know, the glove compartment of the car, so that you don't get caught out, and sort of plan an offense. So maybe again if you work in an office, you could take something to work with you to have for lunch so you're not, you know, just dependent on what's around you. So planning and preparation is the key, but I think don't allow yourself to get so very hungry, because when you get very, very, very hungry you might eat a very, very, very large amount. So try and keep that energy level, you know,

try and keep your energy intake quite steady. It's quite good for your blood sugar, quite good for your energy levels. So regular eating, just don't leave long gaps.

Noel Lyons: And it's just common sense, at the end of the day, not to eat a big meal before sleeping, because it'll affect your sleep patterns, and –

Penny Hunking: Well, I would definitely recommend that people try and eat – try and weight their food earlier in the day, rather than eating a massive meal, you know, particularly late at night because – you're absolutely right Noel – it can disturb sleep patterns and once, you know, you lose sleep you feel out of sorts, nothing goes right in the day, your eating patterns will go all skewy, everything else, you won't feel very happy with the world, and all sort of things start to happen. So I would say try not to eat too late. And of course, unfortunately, that's really what happens with most people, does it not? A lot of people, you know, there's so busy in the day, and from a social perspective, it's often the only time people get together. So be careful about eating really large meals, particularly meals later on at night. I would say that's particularly something to keep under control, and not make a habit of doing.

Noel Lyons: Bernadette of <http://leadbritantowellness.ning.com> asked me when is the best time of day to train? Again, I think, it's not the big picture. The big picture is just get your sessions in; that's the biggest problem. But certainly there isn't really a good time of day to train. I tend to avoid weight-bearing activities early on in the morning, like jogging, because there is this belief that overnight your synovial fluid tends to dry up a little bit and you'll get stiffer first thing in the morning, and it's a little bit more sort of impactful on the joints. But apart from that you should really train as and when you can fit it in, and as and when you feel good which for most people is probably late afternoon to early evening.

Penny Hunking: And I think, you know, from a nutrition perspective – and, you know, we have such, people today, you know, we're so much more sedentary because of labour saving devices, cars, escalators, and so on that you know, it's important that everybody remains really physically active and, you know, train whenever you can. And some people, you know, they find they can fit it in better before work, some people find they can fit it in better at lunchtime or off – well, it's all to do with accumulation, isn't it? And again, going back to looking at the concept of the management of a healthy weight, I remember years ago when I first heard about pedometers, you know, they're little gadgets that you stick on your, usually the waist area, and it counts the number of steps that you do. And I just thought, "What a wonderful idea," because you see, all of a sudden it gives somebody an accumulation of the number of steps they took over the day. So for someone like me who for years and years and years says, "When you're in the office, please take the stairs, not the lift." You know, "When you do this, walk across – park your car at the furthest end of the health club or the

supermarket and have that extra 50 meter walk – you’re going for a workout, for goodness’ sake,” you know? And they go, “Oh, well, what good will that do? That won’t make me lose a kilo.” And I said, “Well, no, that 50 meter walk won’t, but if you did that several times a day and made life a little bit more active, that would be equivalent to an extra calorie burn which would help you in the management of a healthy weight – not necessarily weight loss, but just to stop further weight gain.” In the three-four hour breaks between meals I’m thinking what I can eat, then packaging and preparing, then eating, and then all over again, and so on, and trying to eat on the same schedule.

So, you know, if we can just sort of reiterate that – try and become a little bit more relaxed. It’s important to plan and prepare, but on the other side, don’t let food rule your life, and how can we do that? Physical activity is one thing, you know, it’s social, you can go meet people, you can get out – you have to take the emphasis away from thinking about food all the time, and try and get your mind to consider something else, something that is either a social activity, you know, something to do with work, something to do with physical activity – anything to stop this sort of obsessional behavior and permanent thinking about food. In essence, I think it’s very, very simple: the only way we get fatter is we’re eating too many calories for our energy needs. So we’ve either go to eat less, change the calorie content of what we eat, and/or, in conjunction with that, do more. And it really is simple.

Where the problem arises, Noel, I believe, is that people can’t understand how to implement. You know, in essence, eat less, exercise more – it’s a simple message. What people need is direct tips for their particular situation. And I know from my client base over the years, that where I come in handy is I help clients to identify risk areas and areas that they can improve upon without it being such a major change. So it might be that, you know, we look at, for example, they might write a little food diary, so they write down what they eat at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks, and then, you know, I could look at that and I might, you know, from the ideal, sort of gold standard say, “Hmm,” in my own head, “Gosh, there’s so much here we can change.” But nobody can change all of that. Exactly where do we start? So what I do, we discuss one or two things that the client would find easier, so what are you most in control of? And say, “Okay, for the next few days or for the next week or two, let’s concentrate on, for example, what you eat for lunch. You know, what access do you have for lunch? Do you have it at home, or do you have to have it from a workplace restaurant or café or canteen? Do you have to buy it on the run?” You know, “How do you manage lunch? Is it something that you just buy a quick sandwich?” You know, “What do you do?” And then we look at that and we discuss how they can manage that and improve upon it. And then they go away and try and if they succeed then we look at something else that we can sort. But that’s the sort of change process. I think one of the things that people probably try and do is they try and change too many things all at once which is just like, you know, pressing the “Let’s not succeed” button –

- Noel Lyons:** Or they actually do succeed, but they can't sustain it; it's not the same thing, because they're changing too much at once –
- Penny Hunking:** Because we can't change so much about our diet and exercise habits overnight. Of course, exactly, if people suddenly say "today I'm gonna be doing this, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang." But tomorrow is a whole new day. Once anything that happens in your life comes to challenge you, this will go flying straight out of the window. So try not to change too much all at once, and again, we know from, you know, the pattern of dieters and when you track dieting behavior, that what will happen is that people will maybe be relatively successful. If you measure that by weight loss, for example, they might lose, you know, a few kilos here and there and be very happy with what they're doing. But because they haven't learned from that experience, and they've been doing too many things that are alien to them, and not sustainable, they lapse straight back into whatever they were doing earlier. So they haven't really learned anything, and then they get doubly depressed.
- Noel Lyons:** Okay, people come up with a lot of excuses. One is an underactive thyroid, and they say you don't understand. I mean, what percentage of the population actually has a thyroid problem?
- Penny Hunking:** Hardly any, really. Very few. I mean, you know, very, very, very few people – I mean, a lot of people say, "Yes, it's my thyroid, I've got an underactive thyroid." Well, to be quite frank, that's high unlikely. Yes, some people are diagnosed with an underactive thyroid and they do have problems and it's a medical condition and they have to be given thyroxin and get their thyroxin levels correct –
- Noel Lyons:** And how would you know? Would you notice any underlying symptoms?
- Penny Hunking:** Consult with a medical practitioner, but quite frankly, most people aren't in that vein at all, and it's an excuse. Well, I mean, if you are feeling tired all the time, there's all sorts of reasons it could be not necessarily your thyroid, but if it was your thyroid that would be one of the symptoms. I mean, the thing is if you are feeling tired, you know, it could just stress, it could be pressure, it could be that you're slightly anemic, you haven't had enough iron in your diet, your iron levels are low. There are other issues. There could be a medical condition that, you know, that you need some help with. So all I would say is, to anybody that's listening to this now, if that tiredness is something to impact on everyday life, it is never hurts to get it checked out with a medical practitioner. You're not wasting their time.
- Noel Lyons:** I was gonna say, the bottom line is that it is highly unlikely and that unfortunately you may have inherited poor genetics.

Penny Hunking: Well, yes, genetics. I mean, sometimes I think a lot of people wished they'd chosen their parents differently and, you know, if you're going to have a stockier frame, with shorter legs and, you know, be more muscular or more prone to putting fat on, on your hips and thighs and whatever, that is your genetics. And what you have to do is make the best of what you have.

Noel Lyons: And do we not tend to model ourselves to a great extent on our parents?

Penny Hunking: Well, you've hit on another great point, Noel. At the end of the day, a lot of our habits, obviously, are learned from the people that surround us, and that includes our parents and people who impact on our home life, particularly when we're younger. And, you know, we tend to see these traits within families, even down to mannerisms. I mean, you know, like mother, like daughter; like father, like son, and eating habits in themselves tend to be learned behavior. And so again, that's something that we need to obviously factor in. And that will come back down to change, and obviously if people are trying to change – if you're living in a family situation, for example, where, you know, if certain eating patterns always been the norm, it's very difficult to just change you as a single person within that frame work. So factor that into a family of four or five.

Noel Lyons: Clients say that to me, just wait until you have children of your own, Noel. Do you get that a lot, Penny?

Penny Hunking: Absolutely. And, you know, I mean, people blame all sorts of reasons for that, but pest power is enormous, and, you know, in a busy day, when you've had a hard time with the kids, and, you know, some days you get good days, and some days you get not-so-good days, you know? Sometimes it's very tempting to say, "Have it. Just have it!" And, you know, what's wrong with that occasionally? But as long as – you know, I use a sort of 80-20 rule, Noel. If you get things pretty right 80 % of the time, you can get things pretty wrong 20% and you'll gonna be okay.

Noel Lyons: There was yet another study this week that picked up on how we lay fat cells down early on in life.

Penny Hunking: Oh, yes, I've picked up on that, too. I mean, obviously, you know, there are various issues here, but essentially you lay fat cells down in the womb – there's three major times in your life. I mean, they're laid down, obviously, in the developmental period, sometime before you're born. Then as a toddler you tend to lay down some fat cells, which is why it's really important that parents try and keep their babies' and toddlers' weight to a manageable, healthy level and get regular checks, you know, with their practitioners. And then the third time is around sort of adolescence. And the number of fat cells, you're pretty much fixed for the rest of your life at that stage. Now what happens is that these fat cells, if you imagine loads and loads of, if you like, balloons that

aren't blown up, and you've got hundreds and thousands and thousands of them, and they're there under your skin, what happens is as you lay fat down, if you eat too many calories and your body converts this extra energy into body fat – because basically they, you know, our bodies haven't learned that, you know, the shops are open all day and there's loads of food available – no, they think we're still, you know, going to have shortages of food after living in caves and things. And that's just not the case. So we lay this extra fat down in the fat cells, and the fat cells blow up.

So if you can imagine you've got fat balloons and then you blow them up, you've got a much bigger area, haven't you? And that's what's happening with your fat cells. So when you lose weight, the reverse will happen, and the fat will come out of the fat cells, but you will not lose the number of fat cells that you have laid down, and that tends to be genetically determined. So some people are generally, you know, the genetic trait is they might have more fat cells than others. And I have to say that as far as I'm aware, I think that there is a general consensus of opinion that in gross obesity, when people get very, very obese, the fat cells start to split. So in that situation, you start to increase fat cells when normally you wouldn't have that happen, and then again, and again, so once you lose weight you still have that number of cells. They don't go away.

Noel Lyons:

If this is the case, that you're literally set your child up for life, in terms of whether they're gonna struggle to maintain a healthy weight.

Penny Hunking:

It's important that parents get their children measured regularly. We have what we call percentile charts, these growth charts which have sort of maximum and minimums and you can plot where your child is at their age, and weight and so on, on these charts. Obviously if they start going above the norm, and they start to become overfat, if you like, it's really important, so vitally important that the parents get behind this and work as a team and help that child to control their eating or get them more active or whatever it takes. Weight loss in children is something that we don't tend to aim for, particularly. We'd like them to, if you like, can you understand the term, grow into their weight. So as they grow – and you can imagine in adolescence, you know, they go through quite a good growth spurt, and they can gain several inches in height, and that way we could see that they sort of stay the same weight and yet lose the body fat. And again, I think with children's weight loss, it would be worth, you know, if you're very worried, going to talk to a health profession about this because there's some very good ones out there that can help. But the key is don't leave it, really don't leave it. It's something that's so hugely important because you are setting up really what – you're setting the theme for their future, really. And, you know, often you say, "Fat child, fat adult," and, you know, generally there is that trend, so try and keep your children's weight to a very healthy level, and get regular checks, and if you need help, get it because it's the best thing you can do for your children.

Noel Lyons: Now there is this trend for avoiding certain foods like wheat, dairy, with all these detox eliminating diets everywhere, with a massive take-up by the public, which just goes back to some of the things we've been saying.

Penny Hunking: A great question, I could probably talk all day on this one, but I'll try and be concise. First of all, people must never self-diagnose. So if they feel that they have a problem and, yes, some people do, get it professionally diagnosed, and get some professional help. Because, quite frankly, we know, there have been studies to show, that if you take a group of people who believe they are intolerant to whatever the food is, that only a certain percentage of those people actually are, and the vast majority aren't. And why deny yourself food that make up part of a healthy, balanced diet, give you a range of extra vitamins and minerals, whatever is in that food? Why take that out of your diet and make life difficult for yourself? Now, that's from a sort of allergy and intolerance point of view. Now some people are clearly allergic to foods, things like a nut allergy – life-threatening, you can go into anaphylactic shock, you have to walk around through the epi-pen, you know, that's not to be messed with. That a serious condition. And then, coming down from that –

Noel Lyons: What sort of percentages are we talking about, Penny?

Penny Hunking: Well, it's difficult to get exact figures because we don't know that we have exact figures. One thing that does seem to be happening is that – I think because people talk about it more, we're picking more people up on diagnosis. Maybe people who did struggle along, quite frankly, they struggled along, and of course they think, "Yes, I'll go and get myself checked," and then they're diagnosed. So maybe we're picking up on it more, maybe we understand more, so maybe there is, if you life, perceived to be an increase.

We're not sure whether it's real or perceived. On the other side of the coin, there does seem to be more allergies around but, you know, why, what's happening, very, very complicated. All I will say is, you know, I go back to my initial statement – get yourself checked out if you think you have, don't deny yourself food that could make up an important part of a healthy, balanced diet unnecessarily. And the other thing is it's so unsociable. You know, you end up looking like a picky eater. The other issue is that if people try and use this method for weight loss as in "I'm allergic to this, and that's why I've gained weight." That's rubbish. At the end of the day, you gain weight because you eat too many calories and the wrong foods.

Penny Hunking: I would suggest that people need to think about what they're doing. If you take a raft of foods out, like bread, dairy, and whatever else you choose, you're simply reducing your total calorie intake. It's the total calorie intake reduction that makes you lose weight. Do you see that as a point? It's to do with the

fact that you're taking so many foods out of your diet, that you're eating less. Cutting foods out of your diet is the most likely solution as to why such diets prove so popular.

Noel Lyons: No coffee, no alcohol, in bed by 9:30 etc – not only is that not sociable, in my mind, that's plain just not good living as well!

Penny Hunking: No, no, no, not at all, no. I mean, quite honestly, if you've got a real problem, then obviously you can't have the food. But, you know, I'm going to sit here and say now that, you know, we know lactose intolerance is quite a problem in some population groups. But we do know also, that people with absolutely diagnosed lactose intolerance can, after a period of elimination – so you take all dairy out of the diet for, you know a few weeks – they can re-introduce small amounts of dairy back into their diet after that elimination period and have no symptoms. So, you know, my feeling is that dairy, if you like it, it's a great source of calcium, we've got a huge problem with bone health and, you know, calcium is an important – it's like, at the end of the day, you know, again, why take foods out of the diet? Because all foods can be tolerated in small amounts in any healthy balanced diet.

Noel Lyons: Also by eating certain foods, it takes energy to absorb them. It's almost like putting the body on autopilot, isn't it, just to sort of slow down everything and give it a rest before going again. Do you support 24-hour fasts? Here's my thinking – longer than that can be a problem, 'cause it can seriously slow down metabolism, but a 24-hour fast now and again is good for character!

Penny Hunking: No (*Laughter*), well, I'm not going to go into it, because I like my food too much. Why on earth should I do that to myself, and put myself under that pain? I love food, and at the end of the day, you know, it's an enjoyable part of my diet. Your body was built to eat and when you eat food, yes, there is what we call the thermic effects of feeding and there is a calorie expenditure. And so, actually, you know, you're not getting that calorie expenditure if you don't eat, so I see it as a negative thing, not a positive thing so – well, I mean, I would say that's personal choice. If somebody wants to go and, you know, not eat for 24 hr that probably their decision. But it's not for me, and I don't see any logic behind it, to be quite frank.

Noel Lyons: OK but we are aware now there is a weight-loss period, followed by a weight management phase, and the two are quite distinct. So you know, and I know that people want to lose weight fast, so could we accept a 30-day, quite a strict sort of diet that people go on as part of the weight loss phase, and then as part of the weight management phase introduce certain foods back in. Surely far more realistic for many, yes? What are views on that?

Penny Hunking: I see what you're saying. Well, I think, from the psychological perspective, if you can give somebody a sort of quick start, or a kick start, whatever you want

to call it, so – you know, in the early days of embarking on trying to, you know, lose weight, if you see some good results very quickly it's incredibly motivating. You know, professionally we say, half to one pound, maybe a kilo a week maximum, because anything more than that is not likely to be true fat because there's three and a half thousand calories in a pound of body fat, so to lose a kilo you've got to shift the energy balance by about 7,000 calories, which is 1,000 calories a day, which is just, you know, impractical for a lot of people. But I mean, if you can sustain a sort of quick start, and you have a sort of high-nutrient-density, low-energy type of diet and you get that sort of, you know, faster-seeming weight loss, it's incredibly motivating. And then, obviously, start to introduce foods in, but, you know, the bottom line is that if you reduce the number of calories you need, according to your energy expense, you're gonna lose weight. And as you take those calories down, you'll lose weight faster. But then there seems to be a sort of, if you like, a tipping point, whereby you don't want to put your body into a bit of a state of panic saying literally, "Oh, my goodness, I'm not getting enough calories; therefore, I'm going to slow down my metabolic rate," which will happen on very low calorie diets. So at the end of the day, we have to be quite sensible and say – we've got to shift the energy balance. One of the things I would say is, and I've seen it over and over again in stricter-diet weight loss plans, that they don't encourage physical activity. And I actually had some client in the other day saying, "Well, actually, I'm on this very low calorie diet and I've been told that we're going to cut out carbs and we can't exercise because we haven't got the energy and we're too tired."

Noel Lyons: Right, just cuts out an entire food group. And you mentioned before today's call too that you are not a believer in metabolic typing.

Penny Hunking: Let me put it this way. I haven't seen anything that's really scientific that would make me change my mind to support it. And I have read around the subject quite a lot. I mean it sounds great and, you know, it sort of ticks a few boxes in your mind about this, that, and the other, but quite – again, you know, show me the evidence and show me the body of evidence to suggest that, you know, this is why you're fat and why you're going to lose weight. You know, again, if you start to look at what you're doing activity-wise and you reduce your calorie intake – hey, you lose weight. Surprise, surprise.

Noel Lyons: We have sort of touched on quite a few behavioral issues relating to weight loss which crop up a lot of time, one being where we have this idea of sometimes we just set ourselves up to fail, because it's the wrong time in our life, we've got so much else going on, etc., etc. Any sort of guidance you could give people, if they're embarking on a weight-loss program? It's another leading question, I'm sorry, Penny. We're actually covering a lot of ground, aren't we?

Penny Hunking: Well – gosh, where do I start? I think – I know, I know – oh, absolutely, yes. Okay, weight-loss guidance, readiness to change, all of that stuff. Unfortunately, I think some people, although – you know, in their head, and they desperately probably do want to lose weight – there might be some reason why they're not quite ready to start. You know, it could be so many reasons. There could be so many stresses going on in their life – why start a weight-loss program, you know, 'cause to some people that could be another stress. So I think you have to find out what's right for you and, you know, I've worked with clients long enough to know that, you know, you could see people and, you know, all the words come out of their mouth and yet you know in your heart of hearts, and they sort of know that, you know, they're not quite ready to do that. And then one day, you might meet them in the street, or they come back to see you and they say, "right, I can do it now." And, you know, there's a lot of involved reasons for that and we do have questionnaires to find readiness for change and so on and so forth. But all I would say is, to anybody who's listening to this is, you know, try your hardest, but don't beat yourself up if you fail, in your own case.

Penny Hunking: It can come down to setting your sights too high sometimes. If you try and make too many changes and set your sights too high, you're going to build in failure from the start because you're just gonna manage it. Whatever you do has to be achievable and realistic and targeted so, you know, we talk about these smart changes. I'm sure probably other people you've talked to have talked about SMART changes in, maybe, physical activity or anything else in their life. And what we do – SMART means – so what you're doing is: specific; measurable – it's got to be something you can actually say, "Yes, this is the measurement I did so, you know, I'm having one extra apple once a week," or something like that, there's got to be a measure. It's gotta be achievable – you know, is it something you can actually, realistically do, or is it going to make life hard? If it's gonna make life hard then don't do it because, you know, sooner or later you'll trip up and stop doing it. So SMART – S-M-A-R – realistic.

It's gotta be something that you can actually, you know, achieve and something that's maybe in a certain time frame. So for a client I might say, "Okay, you're eating absolutely no fruit and vegetables." You know, we do see people who do this. And so, you know, the government recommendations here and in many countries is five portions a day. In some countries it's higher, up to ten. But whatever it is, if you're eating none, it's not a very good idea. So we would discuss about how they could build that in. So then they might say, "Okay, I might put some raisins on my breakfast cereal," or, "I might have a tomato or two with my supper," you know, and so on and so forth. And what they'll do, they'll make it very targeted and say, "Right. On Wednesday, I am going to, you know, have one." And if they don't achieve it, it was because there was a reason, so they've got to start thinking about the fact that why they didn't achieve that and how they can.

So I know it sounds a sort of slow and laborious way to do it, but for every change you make, it's a step in the right direction, and if you could make it a change a week, in four weeks you've made four, in a year you've made 52. And 52 changes in a year – my goodness, I mean, it's substantial. You know so – not to be underestimated.

Noel Lyons: And we're still a long, long away from the magic pill, aren't we, and if we ever do find one, we're gonna be dependent on that and I daresay, there's always gonna be side effects. Enough said?

Penny Hunking: Absolutely, I think so. I mean, put it this way, there's dodgy weight loss pills that you might be able to find somewhere, not to be encouraged. There are a couple of prescription pills you can go and get but again, you know, they only work – and I'm saying work in inverted commas - if you are looking towards healthy eating changes and dietary changes possibly and get some significant activity in there. Otherwise they are just a mild fix so they're not going to be the magic wand at all.

Noel Lyons: Not a long-term fix then. How about the role of meal replacements then?

Penny Hunking: Meal replacements – well, there have been some very, well – interestingly there've been a lot of studies on meal replacements, something like very low-calorie dieting, and there's various forms of meal replacements. And sometimes, you know, people, you know, buy these meal replacements or they're prescribed them or whatever, and they get along with them very well. We see usually incredibly good weight losses, if you stick to it. The problem is they're hard to stick to. Sometimes people miss the chewing if they're liquid meals. Some say that you have to have two in one day, and then you have an ordinary meal in the evening so, you know, you're promoting food as well. So I think – all I would say is it may suit some people. If you weren't into cooking, and if you were on the move a lot, and all you had to do was have your meal replacement, it might be a good way to control your food intake. So for some people, it will be good. For other people, they'd say, "I really miss chewing, I can't cope with it, I really love my food, I prefer to go to, you know, X, Y, and Z." So all I would say is it's horses for courses and they may well not suit some people, and some people can do very well on them.

Penny Hunking: Of course, if somebody has lost on meal replacements, and then they go back to normal eating, and they start to see their weight creeping up, you know, it's easy enough to maybe just have a meal replacement at lunchtime every week for five days. I remember I was on BBC – do you remember, there was the diet trials? And they used liquid meal replacements in diet trials, as I recall. There's some nice research that's been coming thick and fast about, not just liquid meal replacements, but volume of food, i.e., liquid. And a lot of

research has gone into, for example, having a bowl of soup before you eat your meal. And it's obvious, really. If you have a fluid, it tends to take up a bigger space in your tummy, so to speak, and may be better at controlling your hunger and appetite. So possibly putting a liquid rather than a solid meal replacement is better. So, you know, it's just looking at what the research is saying, and there might be some value in that for some people.

Noel Lyons: The message I'm getting today is, is a simple formula I use **"FAT"** where F is for frequency, or the timing of the meals, the A stands for amount, or the quantity, this whole idea of portion control, calories or points counting, and then T is just the type of food, which is the composition of food, fat percentages, and that's really your take-home key message, that it all comes back to these three key factors added together?

Penny Hunking: Yes, exactly. I think you're absolute right, you know, because if we start talking about, for example, for example fat, so frequency is how often, the amount, well portion size is just, you know, king, when it comes down to weight control. And then type – we start to start getting a little bit more technical there about the type of – you know, the big picture, the type of food you eat. So you have more whole grains, fruit and veg than you do, say, you know, oily and fatty foods. Or it could be, you know, we could narrow it down to the type of carbohydrate you eat, the type of fat that you eat for health, and so on. So, you know, how far do we want to go? But I think this formula - Frequency, Amount and Type - is excellent, excellent advice, yeah.

Noel Lyons: Plus you shouldn't be going below 1,200 calories minimum in any one day.

Penny Hunking: 1,200 is reasonable to aim for, because, you see, once you start going too low, you know, we don't want to put the body into a bit of panic. But from a nutritional perspective, it's very hard to get a nutritionally complete diet. The lower the calories the diet goes, the harder it is to become nutritionally complete in terms of vitamins and minerals. And the sorts of things I would really key in here – I mean, I've written many a diet plan and analyzed _____ and evaluated – it's so tough to get things like enough calcium and enough iron in your diet. And these are really important things that we should ensure we get enough of. And the smaller amounts of food and the fewer calories you have, the harder it is to achieve that and that will possibly affect your long-term health. So I would say be sensible, and try and keep, a reasonable energy intake relative to your activity level, as you could lose weight on a high-calorie intake if your activity level was high enough!

Noel Lyons: And more realistic would be about 1,600 for women and about 1,800 for men?

Penny Hunking: Well, it will depend on their activity levels. I must admit, I would possibly put women a little lower than that. I mean, I've seen some studies which show that many women are actually existing and maintaining weight on 1,600

calories a day, so if you start eating 1,600 calories a day, you're not gonna lose any weight. The only route you've got there is to increase your activity. If you're quite sedentary in your lifestyle, then maybe that's not gonna work but you'd have to be a bit cautious there. So maybe a little lower.

Noel Lyons: Is there a quick way to determine this? So that anybody can work it out for themselves? I always go by either gaining weight or losing weight and adjusting accordingly but I know some people like to be more precise than this.

Penny Hunking: I think once we start getting into direct figures, it starts to get a bit more complicated. In brief, to lose a pound a week, you've got to take 3,500 calories out of the diet, which is 500 calories a day on a seven day week, so therefore, if a woman is 2,000 a day, she's got to go to at least 1,500 or less to lose one pound in a week. And a man, if he needs two and a half thousand calories a day, will have to eat 2,000 calories a day or less to lose a pound. Do you see the math?

Noel Lyons: Without any consideration to type of food, like low carbs?

Penny Hunking: Carbohydrates are a key energy nutrient and we're pushing physical activity so, you know, it's an important part of the diet, along with everything else. But, you know, are we just thinking bread, rice, potatoes? Let's clarify this. Carbs are in fruit, carbs are in some veg, carbs are in yogurt, carbs are in milk, carbs are in beans, so a low carb diet means you're reducing those wonderful foods, and I can't run with that, no.

Noel Lyons: Sure, and what about athletes whose bodies are much better at regulating blood-sugar levels?

Penny Hunking: When you're a sportsperson, you can just eat so much more than anybody else. And so you see – yeah, we don't talk percentages, you see, when it comes down to sportspeople. We talk grams per kilogram body weight. So what we do, we take their body weight and we work out, according to the type of activity they do – it can be quite prescriptive, you know, how much protein they need, how much carbohydrate they need, and so on and so forth, and it's done on activity levels and grams per kilogram body weight. And so what we're doing there, we're becoming more prescriptive.

For the average listener who is just, you know, keeping regularly actively and trying to manage their weight, I would just say, you know, eat a range of foods, focus on whole grains, you know, lean meats, fish – I mean, if you're trying to lose weight, you probably need a little bit more protein, to be honest, 'cause it knocks your appetite and it potentially helps your body composition. And so maybe the lower the calories that you go, the more protein you need in the diet.

Noel Lyons: Sometimes the 40-30-30 ratio is recommended ...

Penny Hunking: I can see, you know, why people would say 40-30-30. You've got slightly more protein if you're taking your calories down. You've got a slight less carbohydrate because, you know, you're probably not needing the carbs for – depending on your energy levels. And in terms of fat, we do need about, you know, generally 30% to 35% energy from fat normally. You know, if we take fat down it might help a little, but it's the type of fat I'd be more worried about, rather than the amount, to be quite frank. So try and eat essential fatty acids such as those found in fish like salmon. I think in the days of the real low fat diet era, where fat became the demon, people just got – took all fat out of their diet, and that means they weren't eating enough oil-rich fish. You know, they'd have white fish, but they wouldn't have salmon. They weren't eating avocados, they weren't eating nuts and seeds, and these are all wonderful, wonderful sources of essential fatty acids and the types of healthy fats that we need for good health. So I think we've turned the corner on that one.

Penny Hunking: It's the fat that you find on the edge of meat and bacon – you know, when things solidify, if it's a casserole or a stew, you'll see it on the top, butter, lard, pastry. And things – also, remember in catering, Noel, fat is what we call a shortening. So why you fry things and you put more fat into something, like pastry or French fries, they become crunchy and hard, more sort of flaky, if you like. So that's an indicator of more fat, and obviously, maybe not necessarily saturated fat, but more fat. So if you want to reduce saturated fat, yes, reduce meat, meat pies, sausages, hard cheese, eggs, butter, lard, and certain pastries, cakes and biscuits really. And obviously cream, sour cream can be sources of saturated fat, too. So those are the sorts of things you should probably have a little bit less of.

Penny Hunking: You can find transfats naturally in some foods, but only in tiny, tiny, tiny amounts. And the problem is, you know, they're not on the label. We don't really know where they are. The key there is look for hydrogenation. If you see hydrogenation or something that's hydrogenated on the food label, it's probably going to have transfats in it. So remember transfats have a similar effect on blood cholesterol as saturated fat. The other way they're formed, when liquid vegetables are turned into solid fats through the process of hydrogenation, so foods containing hydrogenated vegetable oil, which has to be listed on the label, the food label, might also contain transfats.

Noel Lyons: A lot of weight loss attention now is on trying to satisfy people's hunger. EG high fiber, low GI.

Penny Hunking: Yeah, that's obviously a huge issue, and we haven't touched on what we call GI – glycemic index. Again, you know, as we talked about the type of fats, this is type of carbohydrates, and when a carbohydrate, or foods containing carbohydrate are given a score or rating, they can be tested and given a score or rating called the glycemic index. And if it's a high glycemic index, it's absorbed quickly and pops your blood sugar up quickly, and when it's a low glycemic index it does the reverse and you'll get a sort of slower, steadier rise in blood sugar, and you obviously have a moderate glycemic index which is somewhere between the two. Now in practice, it can be a useful tool in dietary planning but again, it's not the magic wand. It takes the focus off fat, calories, and everything else, you know, so there could be lots of salt in there, because remember, when you put fat into a product, when you put fiber into a product, it lowers the GI of a food. So just because it's low GI doesn't mean it's necessarily something that you can eat a lot of. Points in case include chocolate and ice cream which are both low GI.

Noel Lyons: OK to start finishing-up, it's really all about keeping your metabolism as high as you possibly can, isn't it? Becoming a lean mean fat-burning machine! So, Penny, take us through what factors make up or influence metabolism.

Penny Hunking: Yes. Well, metabolism is basal metabolic rate, really. The synergy is there, so you can – and it can be measured, and that's the calories you burn at rest. So, you know, if you just lay down and you didn't move, the calories you're burning in that period, over a 24-hour period, would be your metabolic rate. And you do that every 24-hours. Now, any calories burned over and above that is the thermic effect of activity, so you've got calories burned in activity, so that's additional to your metabolic rate. So the more activity you do, the more calories you burn, the more your total energy expenditure. And then, obviously, is the systemic effect of feeding, so that when you eat you get a slight energy expenditure from the different foods that you eat, and that's quite a small amount. And there's other things that might impact, like stress and so on. So metabolic rate is all to do with how many calories you burn at rest, and how can we look after our metabolic rate? Well, don't go low calorie, and exercise regularly. These are the best things to do to optimize your metabolic rate.

Noel Lyons: And obviously not just aerobic but include a sort of resistance or strength training, so that you do maintain lean muscle mass. I must sound like a recording, 'cause I've said this so many times to so many people.

Penny Hunking: *(Laughter)* Well, well, yes. I'm a huge believer in resistance training, and most people don't do enough, and particularly for women because, you know, we start with less muscle than men genetically, and so we, you know, we tend to struggle earlier. And it's so important for so many things – for your bones, you know, to look after yourself, and also to help you burn lots of calories. There are lots of reasons to do resistance training. So I would say, yep, get

down and push some weights. Because, you know, in years gone by, we used to carry lots more, we used to, you know, naturally do more resistance training. I mean, just think about it. If you get into a supermarket or a gym or something, they've got automatic doors. You're not even pushing your hand against the door anymore! I mean, that's in effect, it's putting a force on the muscle. You know, pushing a door is in a small way, it's a bit of resistance training. We're not even doing that anymore. And we don't even wind that car window down now, we just push a button. So, you know, it's really important to try and replace what we would normally, naturally have done, day-on-day, years and years ago.

I mean, more recently, just on a personal note, I had an occasion to drive a car that didn't have power steering, and it's so much tougher. And the figures will show that you burn 20 calories an hour more, when you drive a car without power steering than with. And of course, in terms of resistance training, you really have to tug on that wheel.

Noel Lyons: Right. Penny, we've covered an amazing amount of topical subjects within weight loss. Yet you could talk on so many different subjects with authority. It's been great listening to you. I really appreciate it. Is there anything you'd like to finish with?

Penny Hunking: Well, I would just say to everybody that's listening, you know, just hang on in there. Planning and preparation is the key. You know, don't jump into anything. Listen to this information, think about it, think about what's right for you, and obviously try and make small steps and changes towards steps in the right direction. You know, and Rome wasn't built in a day, so what positive improvement you make in your eating, you know, is a step in the right direction, and well done, big tap on the back. You know, don't undermine the smallest of victories, you'll get there in the end, I'm sure.

Noel Lyons: Brilliant. That's a great wrap. Well, you've been listening to Noel Lyons and Penny Hunking. If you'd like to find out more about Penny, you can go to www.energize.co.uk. Thanks everyone for listening and thank you Penny.

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