

Done with Dieting Podcast #55: Reducing Belly Fat in Mid-Life



Full Episode Transcript

With your Host
Elizabeth Sherman

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So, why is it that we need different information? So, again, most health research is done on men. Men that are much younger than we are. And most diet advice is geared towards the general population. So, women over the age of 40 follow completely different rules than everyone else. And because we make up a smaller percentage of the population, it's just not geared towards us.

And so, what doesn't work to reduce belly fat is exercising more, doing more crunches. So, you cannot what's called, 'spot reduce,' meaning that you can't do sit-ups, or crunches, or AB work thinking that working that area of the body is actually going to produce results in that part of the body.

You are listening to the done with dieting podcast. The podcast for women in midlife, who are done with dieting, but still want to lose weight and feel good in your clothes. You know that diets don't work long term. But you feel like there's this secret that everyone else knows that you just haven't figured it out yet.

I am your host, Elizabeth Sherman. And I've helped hundreds of women get off the diet roller coaster change their relationship with food, exercise, and their bodies. Through this podcast, my goal is to help you too.

Welcome. Let's get started.

Hey there! Now, before we jump into today's episode, I want to invite you to join me for a special announcement. I am starting a book club. I am so excited about this. I read a ton of personal development books. I do this for myself, but I also do it for my clients. And I will often recommend books that I've read to my clients.

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Of course, book club is helpful because it helps keep our feet to the fire. When we're accountable to a group, we're more likely to read what we're supposed to read so that we can be part of the conversation. So, when I brought this idea up to my friends and my clients, the overwhelming response was "hell, yes," I'm in!

So, as of recording this short commercial, I've picked out the book and I know that we're going to start in March. And because the books are so rich, we're going to meet every two weeks per book. You don't have to come to every single meeting. And of course, you can decide that you want to sit out one book, totally fine.

I'll also set up a community where we can further discuss the content between calls and keep each other accountable for reading the content for that period of time. All of the books will be personal development in nature. They may or may not be directly related to your health.

But I can guarantee that they will help you to live a happier life, have deeper connections in your relationships, and not be so hard on yourself. Which is definitely going to help your health. Right?

So, I'd love for you to join us. And by the way, this is totally free to find out more details, go to elizabethsherman.com/bookclub and sign up. I hope I see you there, I could not be more excited. Okay, on to the show.

Hey everyone, welcome to the done with dieting podcast, episode number 55. Today, we are talking about midlife weight gain. It's something that so many women come to me about because as we get older, as we move out of childbearing years. What happens is our hormone shift a little bit and where we used to have this, we didn't think it was so svelte waste when we were younger.

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Now, we start to get this belly fat, right? Or this muffin top. And it spills over our pants, and it really feels super uncomfortable. It feels like our waistband is sticking into us. And even though, maybe your weight hasn't changed a lot, where you store your weight has shifted.

And so, what I want to talk about today is why we gain weight around our middles as we get older, what works and what doesn't work. And then, at the end of the podcast episode, I'm going to give you a couple of resources that will help you in implementing this information.

So, I think that the first thing that is really important to acknowledge is that most of the information that we see in magazines, on newspapers, and things like that. Most of the health advice that we see that we read about, that we hear is for the general population. And therefore, most of the health and fitness advice that we hear is not aimed at women who are in perimenopause years or in menopausal years.

In fact, most of the information that we know about weight loss and weight maintenance has been done on college aged men and women who are between the ages of 45 to 60. Our bodies are so much different, our hormones are so much different than college age men. Right? And so, it's not useful to use that advice as the gold standard when it comes to our weight loss or managing our bodies.

So, why is it that we need different information? So, again, most health research is done on men. Men that are much younger than we are. And most diet advice is geared towards the general population. So, women over the age of 40 follow completely different rules than everyone else. And because we make up a smaller percentage of the population, it's just not geared towards us.

What used to work for us when we were younger women, right? What used to work for us doesn't work anymore. So, when we were 20, we could go out and binge drink during

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the week And then, afterwards, we just tighten up our diet a little bit, or we'd go for an extra workout, or extra-long run, and manage our weight so much better. Because we didn't have these hormonal fluctuations that we have as women who are out of the childbearing years.

So, the things that we used to do when we were younger, just don't work anymore. And in fact, what happens is they cause more stress and strain on the body as we get older.

And so, one of the questions that many people ask is so, why do I get this belly fat? And there are number of reasons for it. And what we're going to focus on today is four different reasons. One is genetics. Number two is diet. Number three is stress. And number four is hormones.

And so, what doesn't work to reduce belly fat is exercising more, doing more crunches. So, you cannot what's called, 'spot reduce,' meaning that you can't do sit-ups, or crunches, or AB work thinking that working that area of the body is actually going to produce results in that part of the body.

So, for an example, I can't do like inner thigh lifts, thinking that doing that is going to reduce the size of my inner thighs. I can't do crunches thinking that that's going to quote unquote “whittle my middle.”

And so, what doesn't work also is cutting more calories. We've probably all done that, right? We cut more calories and what happens then is the body just takes fat away ideally, from every part of the body.

And then, the other thing that you know, doesn't work is fad diets. So, fad diets will lead to more stress on the body which ultimately will create more belly fat, potentially. The other thing that doesn't work, our spa treatments like wraps and injections.

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And then, other procedures like tummy tucks, or liposuction. Now, those things are targeted, and they will work for that one specific area. But it can be expensive, and it can lead to gaining fat in other areas where you didn't really intend for it to be.

And so, what's the solution? The solution is first of all, acknowledging that calories in versus calories out is a broken system. It's broken for many people, but specifically for women over the age of 45.

Now, that doesn't mean that calories in versus calories out doesn't exist. Okay. Calories in versus calories out is still the foundation of weight loss and weight maintenance. And so, when I'm talking about calories in versus calories out, the idea is that when we take in the same number of calories that our body requires to move around in the day, then we maintain our weight.

When we take in more calories, then our body needs to maintain its weight. Then, we gain weight. And when we take in fewer calories than our body needs to maintain its weight, then we lose weight.

And so, for many of us, what we do, what we've heard is that we just need to move more and eat less. It used to work, right? We just would move more and eat less. But then, many of us probably got the idea, well, if some is good, then more is better. Right?

And so, when we started eating fewer and fewer calories and exercising more and more, what happened is that we stalled, right? Because there's only a certain amount of stress that the body can manage. And so, we need to still respect the idea of calories in versus calories out. Obviously, if I'm eating way more than my body needs, then of course, I'm going to gain weight. Okay.

But there are other things that we need to take into account. So, all of us know that the body is not a Seesaw. Right? And we've all done that eat less move more thing. And so,

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we know that this only works to a certain point. We know that there's something else at play. And so, what is it? The other thing at play is our hormones. So, great. Now, that we know that, what do we do about it? Right?

So, if you've listened to my podcast before and you've heard about the biomarkers, right? The five different biomarkers that I use in order to determine whether our hormones are balanced or not. Those five different biomarkers are our cravings, our hunger, our energy, our sleep, and our stress levels or our mood.

And those five different biomarkers are really influenced by our lifestyle habits. Our lifestyle habits, being what we eat, how we move, how much we sleep and the quality of our sleep, and then also our stress levels.

And so, when we are eating properly for our body, when we are moving an appropriate amount for our body, when we're getting enough sleep and good quality sleep, as well as we're managing our stress. What happens then is our cravings go down. Our hunger level goes down. Our energy level is stable, we have solid sleep, and we manage our problems way better.

And so, what we want to do is we want to make sure again, that we don't have really intense cravings. We want to make sure that our hunger levels aren't really high. That we don't have wild fluctuations in our energy. That we're not waking up in the middle of the night or that we're getting adequate sleep. And that we aren't like losing our top at the drop of a hat. Right?

So many of us, when we get into midlife, we just like lose our ability to cope with anything. And so, that would be an indicator that maybe you're not managing your stress very well.

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And so, I see it with clients and women who come to me all the time. They're so frustrated because they eat actually pretty well. They're pretty active and they're not getting the results that they think that they should be getting. They're not seeing progress. They're continuing to struggle. And they think that there's something wrong with them because they're following the calories in versus calories out, methodology.

And they're completely resentful to others who are successful, like their partners. Because men can stop drinking alcohol and lose like 12 pounds in a week. Right? And so, they go on a diet with their husbands and their husbands then, lose all of this weight and they're not.

And so, they get resentful of other people because they're not seeing the success. Not realizing that their success doesn't have anything to do with other people. Our bodies are all completely different.

And so, something that works for one person may not work for another. And I think that that's actually really important to understand is that most diets work, it's just a matter of figuring out what diet works for you and your lifestyle.

See, because when we can stop counting calories, what happens is we can actually start focusing on our body and doing what's right for our body. When we can stop seeing exercise as a form of calorie balance. Right?

So many of my clients come to me and they're like, well, I need to exercise because I need to burn off these calories. No! We don't want to do that anymore. We don't want to look at exercise as a way of managing our weight. We want to look at exercise as a way of managing our stress. And stress doesn't have any calories, but it's something that is so important. And we're going to talk about this again a little bit later in the episode.

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But we need to stop counting calories because when we're counting calories, what we're doing is we're looking for validation from outside of us. When we're counting calories, we're looking outside of our body instead of inside our body.

And what I want to suggest is that when we think about how we feel, when we think about how much food do I need in order to feel energetic, and light, and like I have proper brain function, and I feel energized. And then, also on top of that, how much exercise I need in order to feel good in my body. When we start to do those things and start to think about what are the habits that I need to do on a regular basis in order for me to feel good. Then, we can totally get rid of counting calories.

So many of my clients will come to me using food log systems. And I'm fine with that, I have no problem with that. But that's a very 1.0 version. When I had my basically come to Jesus meeting with myself about; Elizabeth, you need to figure this out, you need to figure out how to manage your weight. How to stop over exercising. I was really afraid of stopping my intense running and my intense going to the gym for fear that I would gain all of this weight.

But what it really taught me was it taught me to trust my body. And what I also want to suggest is that you know, the reason that I followed this path was because I didn't want to be 70 years old and still logging my food and my fitness pal. I didn't want to be wearing a heart rate monitor, checking to see how many calories I had burned in my workout to know if I could eat something or not. Because that is no way to live life. So, we need to stop counting calories.

The next myth that I want to address is that we need to cut out all carbs and we need to cut out all alcohol. And that is just not true. The truth is that as we get to be older, as we move out of our childbearing years, we do become more sensitive to insulin. Our body becomes more sensitive to insulin.

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And so, what that means is that first of all, carbs are not the devil, your body needs carbs. But your body means the right amount of carbs. And the number of carbs that you need is going to depend on you and your body type. So, there's this term called, 'somatotype.' And what's somatotype is for lack of a better word, the shape of your body.

So, there are three different what we call somatotypes. There's the ectomorph, the endomorph, and the mesomorph. And it's all a continuum. So, the ectomorph is on one side of the continuum and the ectomorph is your quintessential marathon runner. They are someone who's long and lean. They don't have a lot of curves on them. They don't have a lot of muscle and they don't have a lot of fat either.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have what's called the endomorph. The endomorph is your quintessential Olympic lifter. Your endomorph is very stocky and stout. Your endomorph has a lot of muscle, and your endomorph also has a lot of fat. Everyone else is somewhere in the middle of those two. So, if you think about it as a continuum, we fall somewhere in there.

Now, the ectomorph, the long lean person they do really well on vegetarian type diets. The endomorph, the stocky person, they do really well on keto type diets or Atkins type diets. The difference between those two diets is really the amount of carbohydrate or starch that they have in those diets.

So, the ectomorph does better on higher starch diets, where the endomorph does better on lower starch or higher protein, higher fat type diets. And so, what we need to figure out is where we are within that continuum.

There's this idea called a starch tipping point. And what that is, is it's the amount of starch that we have within our diet, where we feel good, we feel like we can think, we feel like we can function. But not so much that yeah, we're gaining weight. We need to make sure that we're maintaining.

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And so, the next question comes is okay so, as we get older, we become more sensitive to insulin. What exactly does that mean? So, just to give you a very quick science lesson here. When we eat our body converts our food mostly, carbohydrates into blood sugar.

And so, when we eat our body breaks down that food into what's called glycogen and the glycogen then enters our blood system. And insulin then is released from the body to go out and take the blood sugar from our blood. And store it into our muscles, as well as our liver. If our muscles and liver are full, then the body then converts that blood sugar into fat. Okay?

So, what we want to do. One of the key tenants to managing our weight is to keep our blood sugar stable. Keep our insulin stable. So, if we eat a meal that has high starch but very little to no protein, what happens is our blood sugar spikes. Our body releases insulin to take all of that blood sugar out of our bloodstream and stored into our muscles. And then, our blood sugar plummets. And what happens then is we get hungry again. Right?

And so, we eat again and then the process happens again. And so, what I want to suggest is that if we can eat fewer carbs, not 'no carbs,' but fewer carbs. Or if we're going to eat starch, make sure that we're eating it with protein because protein will actually slow the absorption of the carbohydrate into our bloodstream.

And when we have slower digesting carbohydrates, our blood sugar doesn't spike, and then plummet, and then spike, and then plummet. And so, then, we have more time between meals so that we can use up that energy that's in our bloodstream and use up that energy that's in our muscles. So that we can actually dip into the fat stores that we want to use. Right? Instead of eating more. Because our body would always prefer to use the energy that's in our stomach, then convert the fat that's in our body into usable energy. Okay?

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Now, it's really important to understand that quality and quantity matter when it comes to carbohydrates. So, your body will respond totally different to a hundred calories of cake or cookies versus a hundred calories of broccoli. Right? And then, quantity matters also. Your body's going to have a completely different hormonal reaction to one cookie versus ten cookies. Okay.

So, just make sure that you're paying attention not only to what you're eating, but how much you're eating as well. And so, as a recommendation, I always recommend that you limit your starch to one serving of starch for every three to five servings of non-starchy vegetables. And that you limit your treats to 10 to 20% of your daily calories.

Now, what we eat with our carbs matters also. So, don't eat starch without protein, don't eat starch and fat together, either. Always eat protein with your starch.

And so, as women who are in midlife, as women who are experiencing hormonal fluctuations, it's really important for you to understand that this fluctuation of insulin could be responsible for your night sweats, your hot flashes, insomnia, mood swings, your salty, fatty cravings that you have. And you're out of control hunger as well as lack of focus and productivity.

So, just be aware that some of those things, some of the new experiences that you've had as you've moved into the menopausal years, the perimenopausal years may have something to do with your carb cravings.

So, be aware that insulin managing your starches again, I'm not saying that you can't have starch. I'm just saying that we need to figure out what's right for you in terms of how much you can have without going into the night sweats, and the hot flashes, the insomnia, things like that.

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So, a few years ago, I started having hot flashes and what I did to manage that was for just a period of about a month, I got rid of all sugar and all flour out of my diet. And then, I slowly started adding it back in and noticing how much I could have within a week before I started experiencing the negative effects of night sweats and hot flashes again.

So, just be aware that you may want to cut back on some of those things for a period of time. You don't have to get rid of them forever. It's just a matter of figuring out for how long. And the other thing to really pay attention to here is that you're not doing this because of a diet, you're doing this because of how it makes you feel.

And so, I was just talking to Renee, earlier today and she's one of my clients and she was like, you know, learning this stuff from the standpoint of getting rid of my hot flashes and night sweats is completely worth the money in and of itself. Because now that I don't have to deal with that stuff, it is so completely worth it.

And so, I think that it's really important then to develop your own guidelines. Again, starting to look inward and notice, how does food make me feel versus what are the rules that the gurus are giving me. Discover, what you and your body like versus what you're supposed to do. Because it's a completely different experience.

When you start to notice that when you drink wine, you get hot flashes versus some guru telling you that you can't drink wine. And then, you go out to dinner and you're like, well, that person isn't here. Elizabeth isn't here to tell me that I can't drink wine. I know that she told me that I shouldn't, but if I drink wine, then I'm just going to do it and then having a terrible night's sleep.

And then, having the cravings the next day and seeing the snowball effect of having that one or two extra glasses of wine and noticing, oh, you know what? When I drink wine, I get hot flashes. Or when I drink wine, I have night sweats. Or when I drink wine, I

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have a terrible night sleep. And when I have a terrible night sleep, then I wake up groggy and I have cravings the next day, and so on, and so forth.

So, it's a completely different experience when you develop your own guidelines based on how you feel versus having someone else dictate those rules to you. And so, the last thing that I really want to talk about here is stress. When we get to be older, we become more stress reactive.

And so, I think that it's really important to talk about self-care here. And when we talk about self-care, so many women think that self-care is just another thing that they need to do on their to-do list. And when we talk about self-care, first of all, self-care tends to be very feminine focused, right?

So, when we think about self-care, we think about massages and we think about manicures, and facials, and things like that. And those things are absolutely lovely. Don't get me wrong. However, they are first of all, time intensive. So, not many women, our age have a lot of time and they tend to be expensive.

And third, they don't really solve our problems. They take us away from our problems for a period of time, but they don't actually solve our problems. And so, when we can shift our thinking about self-care to doing what is good for the future version of me versus doing self-care just because I'm supposed to do it. Taking care of the future version of yourself because you deserve to be taken care of. Instead of doing self-care because it's what will allow you to take care of others.

So, when we start again, paying attention to how these different lifestyle factors; how I eat, how I move, how I sleep, and how I manage my stress. When we look at how those make me feel versus doing it just because I'm supposed to, it completely changes how we look at those things.

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Again, when we look at exercise as more than just burning calories. And instead, as a way of taking care of ourselves, it completely changes the way that we think about exercise. When we think about prioritizing sleep because when we don't prioritize sleep, then everything just falls down afterwards. Right? That happens to us.

So, I want to introduce you to cortisol. And cortisol is what they call the stress hormone. And so, what cortisol does is when we sense danger. So, going back to caveman days and our body really hasn't changed a lot since that time. But when we sense danger, the body responds by releasing cortisol.

And what cortisol does, is it shuttles blood away from our organs and it shuttles blood towards the muscles. And why it does that is so that we can, you've probably heard of the fight or flight response. And so, what happens is the body readies itself so that you can run away. additionally, what happens is our brain functions, our rational brain shuts off, and our emotional brain takes over.

And then, in terms of physical sensations, we will tend to have heart palpitations and sweaty palms. this is all part of cortisol, the stress hormone. When we think about stress, there are actually three different types of stress. There's what we call acute stress. And acute stress is small stress, short stress, right? It's like when I spill coffee on me before I'm going into a meeting. We feel acute stress when we are stuck in traffic.

And then, another kind of stress that we have, the second type is what's called, chronic stress. Now, chronic stress happens when you're in a terrible job position, potentially. Chronic stress could also be a long illness or actually, you know, right now in the middle of the pandemic, a lot of people are experiencing chronic stress because it's just not going away.

Acute stress is not dangerous at all. We all experience acute stress from time to time. But chronic stress is something that can definitely lead to health problems.

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But then, there's a third type of stress. Which is called episodic acute stress. And what episodic acute stress is, is it's brought on by worrying. We get episodic acute stress through emotional distress or through physical problems.

If you call yourself a worrier, for example, that would be a type of episodic acute stress. So, when we experience episodic acute stress, it can be just as debilitating to our health as chronic stress. But because we can't point to one thing and say, well, that's why I'm stressed out, we may not feel like we're stressed out.

But if you've ever gone through one of those cycles where you look back at your life and you're like, oh my God, how did I get through that? That right there is episodic acute stress. And we really need to focus on how we think about our problems, if we want to actually have good health.

And you know, it's crazy because when we think about the things that we can do for our health, we immediately go to diet, we immediately go to exercise. We don't really think about sleep that much as being one of those lifestyle factors. And we do know, right? There are studies that come out all the time, telling us about how stress is a huge problem for so many of our health.

But would they don't really give us really good information on how to manage our stress. So, let's talk about what is stress. Stress to me is how we think about our problems. So, we all have problems. It's just a matter of how we think about them.

And when I was a young personal trainer and nutritionist, I would help my clients in getting really consistent in their exercise routines and their eating routines. And they would be doing great. And then, all of a sudden something would happen in their lives and the rug would just get pulled out right from under them.

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And everything that they had worked hard for would just get thrown out the window. And they wouldn't be able to manage their self-care on top of this problem. Maybe the problem was that their child got in trouble, or that their child was sick, or that their parents were sick, or that their job became demanding.

And so, what would happen then is everything that they had worked for all of their good eating habits would get thrown out the window and they wouldn't have time to exercise anymore.

And so, it was really frustrating for me at the time because I was like, okay, so, I can help my clients with stress. And at that point, all we were really doing, we're telling people, go get a manicure, go get a massage, or go walk, or do all of these things which were nice and lovely. But it really didn't change how they were perceiving their problems.

And it wasn't until I learned about the think, feel, act cycle, the tool that I use with my clients about when we can change, how we think about our problems? Then, we can lower our stress response. And so, what happens then is stress or using this tool called the model or the think, feel, act cycle. It allows us to preventively, change our stress. And I just think that that's completely brilliant.

What the model does is it allows us to look at a situation and really understand that the reason that I feel stress is because of how I'm perceiving the problem.

So, we know that two people can look at the same problem and have very different stress responses. And so, therefore, we know that stress occurs in our mind. So, two people can experience the same event and think about what happened in very different ways.

So, we know then, that how we think about our problems is what creates our stress. When we can look at that a little bit more in depth and this is what I do with my clients.

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I teach them how to critically think about their problems, so that they can manage them in a better way.

We have two different ways other than managing our mind through the think, feel, act cycle. There are two other ways that we can implement in order to manage our stress. So, the first one is really practicing self-care. The second is prioritizing our sleep. So, what exactly is self-care?

When I look at self-care, I think of it as taking care of your future self. And I have a really great PDF and email series, if you haven't seen it before, it's called the "8 basic habits that healthy people do." And you can go back and listen to episode number three, called the foundation. I talk all about the 8 basic habits there. And in this guide and checklist, it has all of the basics that you need in order to take care of your future self.

And I think that if you do these 8 basic things, you will be healthier than most people. So, that's the first thing is taking care of your future self. So, doing things that make you feel good, not right now in the moment but tomorrow, next week, next month, next year.

Say yes to better health, not, so that you can take care of others, like the oxygen mask analogy. But because you are a person, and you are worth taking care of.

And when we do these things, when we practice self-care, taking care of the future version of ourselves and trying to create better health for ourselves so that we can live longer and live a happier life, then weight loss becomes less important. And it becomes the cherry on top, really. And exercise is not just about burning calories. Exercise becomes a way of practicing self-care.

Those four different lifestyle habits that I was talking about are the way that we eat, the way that we move, our sleep, and our stress management, they are all connected. And I

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talked about this before on a previous podcast, it was the managing menopause podcast where I talk about how each of those habits are connected and how they influence one another.

And so, when we can prioritize sleep, then we manage our stress better. And stress and sleep, they are such an interconnected pair, right? Because when we feel stressed out, then we wake up in the middle of the night, and we ruminate, and we have anxiety, and then we stay awake. And so, then we don't get enough sleep.

And then, we don't deal with our problems very well when we are awake. And then, that compounds the problem, right? Because then, that night we go to bed and then we're thinking about, oh my gosh, I was so tired, and I was snappish, and all of that stuff.

And so, these two lifestyle factors, there are things that we don't talk about. We talk about eating, we talk about physical activity, but we don't talk enough about sleep and stress. And so, when we can prioritize sleep, it will pay us back by helping us to manage our stress.

Now, sleep completely influences our health. First of all, I don't know anyone who's like, oh, I don't like to sleep. Right? So many of us love to sleep. And when we sleep well, sleep helps us lower our cortisol. And when we lower our cortisol, what happens is cortisol is that belly fat hormone. And it helps us out by leaning us down. Our sleep changes as we age. And so, it's so important to prioritize our sleep.

Now, problems with not getting enough sleep are one that when we don't get good sleep, what will happen in our body is that we will have increased fasting blood glucose, we will have a higher what's called, A1c. And that is another biomarker or another test marker for how well our body is doing in terms of managing its blood sugar.

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But the other thing is that our body cells don't process energy correctly. And when we don't get good enough sleep, when our body cells don't process energy correctly, then what tends to happen is we get those mid-afternoon munchies. We're more prone to making poor eating choices, we feel lethargic, we're less likely to exercise, we have brain fog, and we also have a short fuse. So, we always want to prioritize sleep.

And stress and sleep have a delicate relationship. First of all, there's a really good 60 minutes, episode called the science of sleep. And in that episode, they notice in a sleep study that when sleep subjects were woken up in the middle of the night, they didn't get good sleep.

Their bodies started exhibiting signs of diabetes. They also showed signs of increased belly fat and a decreased quality of life. As well as a higher stress response, and they also had decreased sleep quality. And so, all of these things together will help us to reduce our belly fat. We don't think that those things are going to help us to reduce our belly fat because we don't see the relationship, but they're totally there.

One of the things that I always suggest to my clients in order to get better sleep is to create what I call a sleep routine. It doesn't have to be complex. It doesn't have to be extravagant. It doesn't have to include baths, or candles, or tea, or anything like that.

It's just a series of tasks or a habit that you do on a nightly basis that basically prepares your brain for sleep. It's basically telling yourself that, okay, brain, we are doing the ritual that we need to do before we go to bed. And what it does is it just prepares the body for going to sleep.

The other thing is that you want to make sure that you do practice good sleep hygiene. So, making sure that your room temperature is cool, that your environment is clutter-free. That there isn't like stacks of books, and clothes, and exercise equipment, and work sitting around your bed, and that it's also dark.

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And then, the last piece is noticing a relationship between your eating and your sleep. So, try not to eat more than two hours before bed. Just because then your body has had time to digest your food and it's not being disrupted before you go to bed.

Some people will not be able to exercise before they go to bed. So, just notice that that might be you. So, you want to exercise earlier in the day. And then, also notice that as you get older, you're probably a little bit more sensitive to caffeine. So, you may want to get rid of caffeine or alcohol later in the day as you go to sleep.

And then finally, the last thing in terms of sleep is if you're having trouble sleeping, you could try exercising. If exercise isn't part of your normal routine already, you may want to introduce exercise into your routine. Because oftentimes, when we go to bed, we can be wired, but tired. We can be mentally exhausted, but not physically exhausted. And so, when that happens, we just want to use up that pent up energy from our body so that we can have restful sleep.

And so, just to conclude, again, reasons why we have belly fat could be due to our diet. Because again, we become more insulin sensitive. As we get older, we can't just cut calories, right? We have to pay attention to the quality of our food.

Number two is stress hormone. So, really making sure that you understand that we become more sensitive to stress as we move into those perimenopause and menopausal years. And so, we really need to work on managing our stress. And then, finally just balancing our overall hormones.

Now, the other thing that I just want to mention here is that for many of us, as we get older and we start to gain weight in our belly area, our mid-section. One thing that can actually be really helpful is to notice the other women who are in your family, who are in their menopause and perimenopause years.

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So, notice, are they gaining weight in their mid-sections as well? Because although there are some things that we can do about the way that we look, be aware that we can't escape our genetics. There's only so much that we can do. Just be aware that if you're trying really hard to get rid of that belly fat, take a look at your genetics and notice, are you trying to go against your genetics? Okay.

So, I know I gave you just a ton of information in this podcast episode. What I'm going to recommend that you do is download the 8 basic things that healthy people do, PDF. And so, how you do that is you just go to elizabethsherman.com/habits, and you can get it there. It comes with an amazing email series that will allow you to just ease into all of these changes.

And then, the other thing is if you have questions, I am going to invite you to reach out to me and my team and schedule an appointment. If you think that working with me can help you.

So, that's all I have for you today. Have an amazing week everyone. And I'll talk to you next time. Bye-bye.

Hey, thanks for listening. If the show resonates with you and you have a friend, mother, sister or anyone else who you think would benefit, I'd love for you to share the podcast with them.

You can leave me a rating and review in Apple podcasts which helps me create an amazing experience for you. And it helps other women who are done with dieting and want to get off the diet roller coaster to find it as well. See you next week.