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The Natural Way to Ward Off Winter Weight

The weather's getting cooler, the days are getting shorter. Thinking about grabbing your baggy sweaters to hide a few extra winter pounds you suspect are on the way? Not this year. To help you keep weight off, we've found strategies that target the real reasons for winter gain. Ahead, four secrets for keeping your summertime body year-round.

Soak Up Some Sun

Lack of sunlight can trigger a drop in the feel-good brain chemical serotonin, leading to depression—and cravings. Avoid carb binges by getting as much natural light as possible; you'll get benefits even if it's overcast. Drink your morning cup of coffee outside, work by a window (if you can), and take at least 15 minutes to walk on your lunch break. A well-lit home and office can help, too: Add cool fluorescent lights, the type used in therapeutic light boxes.

Don't cut out carbs

To make sure your serotonin level doesn't drop low enough to trigger an all-out binge, you'll want to eat some carbs. Save them for late afternoon and early evening, when serotonin dips and cravings tend to start. "By 4 o'clock, give in to what your brain demands," says Judith Wurtman, PhD, a research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and co-author of The Serotonin Power Diet. "Have pasta, bread, and starchy vegetables like baked potatoes, corn, squash."

In other words, carefully time your carbohydrate attack, and eat the good-for-you complex carbs that are low in processed junk.



READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

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NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.

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Get friendly with winter squash

You may have enjoyed luscious farm-stand tomatoes all summer, but now their grocery-store counterparts look pale and feel like mini-medicine balls. But the produce that's naturally in season in winter is your secret weapon for keeping off the pounds: People who ate the most dark-green and orange fruits and veggies lost the most weight in six months, according to Brazilian researchers.

Hello, broccoli, carrots, kale, oranges, spinach, sweet potatoes, Swiss chard, winter squash! They're all delicious this time of year—so toss them in your cart.



Move more indoors

A Michigan State University (MSU) study found that people who are active outdoors in spring and summer working in their gardens, for instance, drop that activity when the weather changes. "And they don't make up for it," says researcher James Pivarnik, professor of kinesiology and epidemiology at MSU.

So even if you're eating the same amount of food as you did in July, you're not moving around as much, leading the scale to inch up. Find an indoor activity you love so much that you'll do it often. We like the Nintendo Wii Fit: You can perfect your virtual ski jump or hula hooping form and more—all while burning those cold-weather calories.

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