



7.

## *Rounding That Figure*

IF YOU WISH your figure had curves in the right places instead of hollows and angles, this chapter is for you. Hollows and angles usually mean underweight, and this can be a handicap to the way you look and feel.

Being underweight can mean lowered resistance, no reserve to use in emergencies, undue fatigue, and poor physical and emotional stamina.

There are many false ideas about being underweight. You have heard them often; perhaps you have even

used them to excuse your own thinness. Let's state the facts about some of them.

*Fallacy:* "I come from a thin family; therefore I guess I was meant to be thin."

*Fact:* Our calorie supply depends on our eating habits. The habit of not eating enough to meet our needs results in being underweight. Eating amounts too small may be a family habit; then the whole family will be underweight.

*Fallacy:* Underweight people require more energy than do people of normal weight because their metabolism is high. "I can never eat enough to gain weight."

*Fact:* Underweight people usually have normal metabolic rates and do not require more food than people of normal weight. Actually they need less energy to do a piece of work because they are light in weight, they require fewer calories to move around, to go up stairs, etc. When the metabolic rate is high a physician must be consulted.

*Fallacy:* Underweight people are more energetic and ambitious than people of normal weight.

*Fact:* The energy and ambition of underweight people usually come from nervousness and are short lived. Such people tire more easily and are likely to have less stamina than people of normal weight. Extreme thinness makes them jumpy, jittery, and tense instead of relaxed and poised.

The reasons for being underweight can often be found in the answers to certain searching questions. Learning the answers usually makes it easier to start and stay with a plan for gaining. When you decide to gain weight, try having a private talk with yourself to get honest answers to these personal questions:

*What and how much do I eat?*

Perhaps you are making your body run on half rations. For three days keep a list of everything you eat and how much. Probably it is a little more than usual because keeping a list makes you self-conscious and you try to eat more. Count the calories and compare them with what you need for your activity level and your normal weight. Compare the foods on your list with the Daily Food Guide given in Chapter 9. No doubt you will find several places where you could improve on the quality and quantity of what you eat.



*When do I eat?*

You may be eating much less than you think you are. You may be skipping meals because you think you aren't hungry or, when you are hungry, eating only very small amounts. On the other hand, you may be eating frequently but the caloric value of the food is not enough to cover your demands. If you eat frequently, you may consciously try to eat less at mealtime, or your appetite may be dulled so that you are not interested in food and so eat very little.

*Why don't I eat more?*

This is probably a matter of habit. You think you "get full" with very little food. Your stomach is not in the habit of holding as much food as you need because you have let it get out of the practice. Every time you sit down to a meal or to a snack try to eat three more bites than you think you want. These will not make you uncomfortable but will gradually get you in the habit of eating more.

*What do I get out of being underweight?*

To answer this you must be extremely honest with yourself and try to see behind the front that you present to the world. It is possible that you are getting some kind of special attention because you are underweight. Your friends may worry about you and talk about you a lot—and urge you to eat more. Or they envy you and say, "Oh, if I could only be small like you!" or "I don't see how you eat so little and do so much!" Your thinness may give you a feeling of superiority, especially when you hear your friends fussing about their appetites, their hips, or their waistlines. You may unconsciously wish to stay underweight because you enjoy the satisfaction of being superior to your friends. It is not uncommon for a person to use an underweight condition to express martyrdom to a family or to a job. Such a person wants you to think he is so important to the scheme of things that he cannot waste his precious time or thought on taking care of himself. It is a sort of self-sacrificing attitude calculated to get attention. Needless to say, this person is not showing good judgment or common sense.



Are you among the many men and women who complain that they cannot gain weight or that they actually lose on a high calorie diet? They follow a high calorie diet for a few days or a week and then become discouraged and discard it because they do not gain immediately.

Gaining weight seems like a very slow process to those who are habitually underweight. The body must have 3,500 Calories *in excess* of its need in order to store a pound of fat. To add a pound of fat, therefore, you must eat enough food to supply 3,500 Calories more than the body needs. It may take a week or several weeks to accumulate the calories that will finally make a pound of fat. The scales do not register an increase in your weight each time you eat a hundred extra calories. Sometimes it takes two or three weeks of eating more than your usual amount before your weight starts to climb.

When there are extra calories to be stored as fat, the body discards some of the water in the tissues and stores the fat in its place. This shift causes no change in weight. Eventually the tissue has to absorb water in order to have a normal composition. When this happens, there will be an increase in weight.

You can eat as much as 500 Calories a day more than you need and still stay about the same weight for a week or more. Finally, the newly deposited tissue absorbs water to become normal in composition and then the scales record a sharp gain in weight. Even though a gain may look quite sudden, it comes only as a result of the body having stored fat over a period of several days or weeks.

It is hard to stay on a diet during this discouraging time when the scales do not budge even though you know you have eaten enough food to supply several hundred extra calories.

Just as the best way to save money is not to spend it, so the best way to gain weight is not to spend calories unnecessarily. You must not omit all exercise — some exercise is needed regularly for developing good muscle tone and normal appetite. You should, however, spend some time during the day in resting, preferably lying down, for additional rest is a thrifty way to save some energy. If you can't sleep, reading is almost as restful. Don't wait until you have a free hour or two before taking time out. Fifteen minutes of complete relaxation taken two or three times a day is much more saving of your energy than two hours when you are restless and have frequent interruptions.

You need just as much patience and will power in gaining weight as the overweight person does in losing weight. Sometimes your problem is even greater because you have to dig out some of your unconscious and deep-seated pride or satisfaction in being underweight. You have to replace this with intelligent recognition of the need for normal weight and the advantages of increased vitality, better appearance, and greater stamina.

There is no special seven-day diet for you as there is for the overweight person. Why? Because when you look at the kind of diet that is usually given for an underweight person, you say, "Oh, I could never eat that much." And you're right; you can't hold large quantities of food, and you would be ill if you tried to stuff yourself willy-nilly.

You have two hurdles: first, to develop the habit of eating both the quantity and the kind of food you need for normal upkeep, and second, to add some extra calories for storage. Your problem requires specialized individual attention rather than a general diet. The directions below have been developed especially to help you clear these hurdles and land feet first on the side of normal weight.

For at least a week and maybe two, do just this:

Forget about calories and your weight.

Follow carefully the Daily Food Guide given in Chapter 9; omit nothing, but add anything you wish.

Find 15 minutes each day for extra rest.

If this applies to you, go slow on alcoholic beverages and other lone-wolf calories; also try not to smoke just before meals or at other times when smoking might dull your appetite.

#### THE COMMON SENSE WAY

When you start on a weight-gaining project, your aim is to add from 300 to 500 Calories a day to what you usually eat without feeling stuffed with food or being overwhelmed by what you need to eat to gain. Many of these extra calories must be accompanied by essential nutrients — protein, minerals, and vitamins. Adding just lone-wolf calories will not build the figure and feeling of well-being you are striving for. An underweight person needs to build additional muscle and supporting tissue and to improve the over-all functioning of the body as well as to deposit some fat.

You can include at least half of these extra calories in the foods you regularly eat if you use some food nuggets that are small in size but large in caloric and nutritive value. Here are a few you can practice adding inconspicuously:

*Cheese or cheese-food*

Count a 1-inch cube as about 100 Calories.

Use it with mid-morning coffee instead of a cracker; put a sliver on poached or fried egg, a few slivers on a creamed vegetable, or with your usual sandwich fillings.

Count 1 tablespoon of cream cheese as 55 Calories.

*Cream or fat*

Count 1 tablespoon coffee cream as 30 Calories.

Count 1 tablespoon of heavy cream as 50 Calories. (For the calories in a teaspoon divide these figures by 3.)

Count 1 teaspoon of fat or oil or mayonnaise as 35 Calories.

Don't use so much that everything seems to be greasy. Mix it with the foods rather than just putting it on top or over the foods.

Mix with mashed potatoes, cereals, desserts. Take a little more cream in coffee or tea. Use oil dressing on your salad or a half teaspoon more butter or margarine on each slice of bread.



*Milk*

Undiluted evaporated milk:

Count 1 tablespoon as 22 Calories.

Add this to other milk dishes, 2 tablespoons in a custard, gravy, creamed vegetables, cereal cream or cooked cereal, mashed potato.

Dry milk:

Count 1 tablespoon of the instant non-fat milk solids as 12 to 18 Calories and 1 tablespoon of whole milk solids as about twice these amounts. These figures depend on the "dryness" of the milk solids. Caloric values usually are given on the label of the package.

Use this in powder form or reconstituted in the same way as you would use evaporated milk.

If you eat cooked cereal (farina, oatmeal, rice or others), instead of water cook it in milk—fresh, reconstituted evaporated or dry.



In the calorie column of the Table of Food Values (page 171) you will find other foods that will give you ideas for your new hobby of tucking in calories here and there.

It is likely that some of the extra 500 Calories will have to be more obvious. They may take the form of an additional half slice of bread or a serving of vegetables; a somewhat larger serving of dessert; a bedtime snack of fruit juice and a cracker with peanut butter; or salted nuts and small candies used after a meal or for a snack.

You may prefer to eat five or six small meals a day instead of the usual three. This is all right if they fit into your schedule of work and play. Three meals and some snacks, however, can do the job and is a more convenient plan for most people.

If 500 Calories seem too many for you to add to your usual food intake, start with 200 or 300 Calories, or even 100, and work up. Every extra calorie will help in gaining. Just be sure it is an *extra* calorie, for only then can it be stored to count toward your new weight.

Tobacco and alcohol can interfere with your eating enough of the foods you need for good health and normal weight. Drinking alcoholic beverages or smoking just before meals may satisfy your hunger and make you lose interest in food.

#### CALORIE ACCOUNTING

When you reach your desirable weight you will want to begin to drop out some of these extra 500 Calories. Omit about 100 Calories a day for a week and then wait a week before dropping another 100. If your weight goes down, put the calories back in your menus. If your weight stays up, you can try omitting a few more calories.

You would be wise to do a little honest bookkeeping of your calorie need and supply while you are tapering off the calories. First, write down how many calories a day you need for your desirable weight. Then write down the calorie value of everything you eat, as you eat it, and add it up as you go along. This gives you an up-to-the-minute record of how much you are sup-  
plying and reminds you how much you still have to

supply before the end of the day. Calorie accounting like this will help you develop the habit of eating enough and will save you from the discouragement of losing weight again. You can stop counting calories as soon as your food habits can support this new weight.

Your weight will not need to be as much of a problem to you in the future as it has been in the past. Now you know how to keep it up. You will want to weigh often to check on how good your judgment is in matching your calorie supply to your calorie need—that is, in tailoring your appetite to insure both your fitness and your figure.

