

Gwyneth's diet diary

We take another peek inside the diet diary of 52-year-old Gwyneth Watson, to see how an operation affected her weight-loss campaign this month

May 2009

My month started with a week's break in Norfolk. This was a lazy affair, as I could not do any food preparation or washing up after having had an operation on my hand. But this did not stop me walking about being a tourist in the fresh coastal air.

Stopped in King's Lynn for provisions. Well, actually, Graham shopped while I spoke to my sister on the mobile. As I had not influenced him, we arrived at our holiday cottage in Burnham Market with plenty of fruit and vegetables, yogurt and skimmed milk.

A tour of the village uncovered a wonderful bakery, fish shop and delicatessen. I was made to stand outside the bakery by Graham, as they sold a variety of tarts and gateaux and I am not to be trusted (apparently).

In the delicatessen, I was lost in wonder. The only items that I did not like were olives and feta cheese. I was not allowed to buy cake, as Graham reminded me I had yogurt in the fridge. I knew that, but it was a good try anyway.

For the record, I had plenty of exercise walking about in various pretty villages. Some days, we took healthy homemade sandwiches for our lunch. But I have to be honest and say that we also took advantage of the individual specialist food shops and farmers' markets to buy a mini pork pie, crab pâté, crusty granary loaf, fresh fish for a delicious pie, mixed seeds coated in orange and honey and flapjack. Plus, we also bought a bar of chocolate from the Sandringham estate and usually had a "little something" cake-wise in the middle of the afternoon, wherever we happened to be visiting at the time.

Extra Calories

Graham's brother and his wife arrived (well, it is their cottage). I asked if I could go back to the deli to buy pear and almond tart for dessert. Sometimes, it is better not to raise Graham's ire. We ate stale gingerbread under custard.

The in-laws drink wine at weekends. I consumed extra calories by joining them. To be fair, no one made me. My mouth could not form the words, "No thank you". Both the in-laws are very slim. Although they drink wine and indulge in some desserts, they do not snack, do not have spread on bread, use only skimmed milk and never, ever, ever have salt. Plus, they are disciplined people and not easily swayed!

Brother-in-law has 2 Weetabix, bran flakes, cornflakes and golden syrup at breakfast, so he must burn it off somewhere, somehow! I am sure there are lessons to be learned, but part of me would love to see them tucking into a plate of banoffi pie.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

Back to work

Back home in Scotland, the doctor signed me off, so I returned to work - and to sensible eating at lunch. I was so excited that I could use both hands again that I made a low-fat mackerel pâté with home-baked wholemeal bread for lunch. I also used my new silicone bakeware to make a sponge cake. I am very suspicious of new technology, but I have to move with the times, and I have to say that the cake was up to its usual standard. Perhaps Rosemary could have a word with the manufacturers and ask them to make a smaller tin - then there would be less cake made and subsequently eaten (one would hope).

But for now I have to address the fact that I have been doing a lot of eating again, and not sufficient exercise to burn off the excess calories.

Halfway through the month and I've not yet got on the scales. Worse, I am extremely cross with myself - I've had to unpick the darts that I sewed in my linen skirt last year when it was too big. You don't have to say anything - I know.

Heart - to - heart

Son James and I had a heart-to-heart about eating, emotions and why I am shaped like an apple and he is shaped like a barrel (his words). I have realised that I only use the "tools of the trade" when I am already motivated and behaving myself, as I like confirmation of positive behaviour.

If I put on weight, my mood plummets, I avoid scales like the plague, I eat any old rubbish in the knowledge that I am already fat and I stop writing things down because who is going to write down "had fish and chips, as tired and lazy"?

Then I realised that I am going to have to write this diary and my "support and abuse" group will know that I am pathetic - as will Rosemary and all her readership. No pressure there then.

Having bared our souls, James and I then continued our chat walking up the lane, which benefited us, put 3,000 steps on the pedometer and made the dog very happy.

New enthusiasm

Fired with new enthusiasm that only I can change how I look, feel and behave, I packed a salad lunch, clipped on my pedometer and set out for the day to see some students. Although one works in a hotel and another in a tearoom, I did not weaken. On the way home (to a planned meal), I stopped off at a National Trust shop to buy a present. Emerged with said present and 3 hollow Easter eggs being sold off at 10p each. I could have bought 10 for £1. I could have turned on my heel and bought none.

I put them in the salad drawer of the fridge. One was grated over banana and frozen yogurt for tea. I shall have to admit that there are another 2, so that they can be shared, otherwise I shall eat them in secret and that would be very, very, very bad.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

Sorry accolade

Logged on to rosemaryconleyonline to discover that, on day 120 since I joined, I am now precisely 1lb heavier than the start date. I wonder if there is anyone else who could claim that sorry accolade?

I think that I have been trying to be slim and healthy for so many years that I have completely lost the plot. I immediately wrote to my buddies, so that they could inspire or berate me.

I hadn't lost the excess weight from my jaunt to Norfolk when bank holiday weekend arrived, and with it friends from Wales - bearing gin, wine and homemade chocolates.

I believe that I did not sin too badly with my choices of food, but not sure I've accounted for the extra calories in the pre-dinner drink, wine with the meal, "seconds" and chocolates afterwards. The proof of socialising will be on the scales. Visitors left, and I worked for 3 days at a school. I lunched on salad wraps, grapes and bottles of water from the canteen. My tummy is relieved. I was also saved from a dangerous hour when I got home and could have finished up leftovers because Graham had obliged me by doing it earlier in the day.

Silver lining?

Back at the school, a teacher brought coffee and an old favourite - shortbread biscuits. I put the biscuits on a piece of paper towel "for later" (a brief attempt at not eating them), then spent the next hour watching all the fat ooze out of them and on to the paper.

Was just congratulating myself for ignoring them, when a 6th-former performed a coup de grâce by producing a homemade Victoria sponge, complete with icing, "to help us all through today". Is that a reflection on my training abilities?

It would have been churlish to refuse, and I needed to reward a teenager for knowing how to make a cake, generosity of spirit and ingredients.

Now, not only am I fat and lazy but I have also accommodated my boss by being ill on a Saturday. My face has swollen up like a balloon. I have erysipelas, and left the out-of-hours GP clutching a prescription for penicillin, and with no appetite. There is a silver lining to every black cloud.

Out and about

It's hot, very hot for Dumfries, but I have promised myself that I am going to walk about at lunchtime, because I need every bit of exercise that I can get. I have a face that looks as though I have spent 3 weeks under a sun lamp and my glasses are uncomfortable on my swollen nose.

Even without glasses, I can see that there are many, many people walking about with too much fat and too little clothing.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

Once recovered, I had to seriously practise time management and get up at 5.30am to do two hours' work before leaving for the office. So, if I can get out of bed to tick boxes, why can't I get up at 6.30am and do 30 minutes of exercise?

Reminded of my promise to walk about at lunchtime, and genuinely in need of a break, I went out and, avoiding my usual haunts, headed straight into a sandwiches-made-to-order shop. I bought a long, crusty, granary ham salad baguette (no spread or mayonnaise). I tried to work out the calorie content, but I didn't know how much it weighed, so failed. Anyway, it was healthier than a Snickers bar and kept me full until tea.

How have my good exercise habits managed to dwindle away? It's not good enough. I power-walked the dog up the lane and really stretched myself, as I did not need my breath to speak to anyone.

On the way back, I even started a little jog (it would have been more energetic if I had been wearing more appropriate bra and footwear).

Brachan (dog) nearly catapulted me over a 5-bar gate by stopping dramatically because he had obviously discovered a blade of grass that he had not sniffed a thousand times before. Arrived home overwarm but ridiculously pleased with myself for having made a start (as I do regularly - most days, in fact).

The camera never lies

I laughed when I read that some celebrities are advocating the camera diet, where you snap a picture of the food you propose to eat. This is supposed to make you think twice.

When I looked into this further, it appeared that an American university had been paid thousands of dollars research funding to create software that can recognise food and portion sizes and "guesstimate" how much you have eaten. Dieters then pay money to access this service and be told that they have eaten too much.

I am torn between being impressed and thinking the whole idea is totally ridiculous. Must remember to charge my camera-phone tonight.

I have been trying to get my act together, as I am soon off on another jaunt. My holidays are all close together this year to fit in with family events. My son Philip is due home from Thailand for a week and then we are going back to Norfolk and on to Canterbury. This is not meant to be a tour of Britain, just how it is. I simply cannot afford to let the weight continue to creep on.

I don't care what I look like, but I can't bear so much hard work being undone. My mantra has to be: "Puddings are bad - they make me fat. Instead of big meals, have a walk and a chat." I commend that thought to the House!

Graham has a mantra, too, which he uses when he wants to press my instant anger button: "Jump out of bed, running on the spot - exercise is good for you and laziness is not." That's wearing a bit thin after 16 years.

Gwyneth's diet diary cont:

Scales of justice

I've done it. I've faced up to the scales and have put on 5lb - I'm sorry, that's not a misprint - in as many weeks. My hand is better, my face is better - and I had better work seriously on toning up the rest of me. Onwards and upwards!

Weight lost to date : 2st 5lb

Gwyneth now weighs 12st 13lb

Top tips

- Buy new nail varnish and spend ages on a home manicure. Don't use the speed-drying variety
- "Jump out of bed, running on the spot - exercise is good for you and laziness is not"

Inspiration

- Sir Ranulph Fiennes on his Everest climb: "Plod for ever. Don't expect there to be a top to the mountain - just plod"
- All those successful slimmers in the magazine who got over all the excuses and lost weight

High points

- The joys of eating on holiday
- The pleasures of socialising with family and friends

Low points

- The effects of eating on holiday
- Discovering that I weigh more at day 120 weigh-in than on day 1 of dieting (online)

What I have learned this month

- I eat too much, and I need to relearn that every day
- If I didn't eat so much, I would save more money and look great
- Puddings are bad - they make me fat. Instead of big meals, I must walk more and chat
- You do not need to gain many pounds to go up a dress size. I am not going there