

# SHAPE

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# REV *up*

The hormone-metabolism connection influences calorie burn, muscle building, and even mood. Here's your maintenance plan.

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**Tully Lou** Jessie sweatpants (\$160, [international.tullylou.com](http://international.tullylou.com)). **Athleta** Point Reyes Bomber jacket (\$158, [athleta.gap.com](http://athleta.gap.com)). **Athletic Propulsion Labs** Techloom Pro sneakers (\$140, [athleticpropulsionlabs.com](http://athleticpropulsionlabs.com)).



Styling by Brooke Ely Danielson. Hair by Brittan White/Bryan Bantry for Fatboy; makeup by Deanna Meluso/See Management for Glossier; manicure by Kelly B./DeFacto Inc. for Deborah Lipamann

**YOUR HORMONES** and your metabolism are deeply intertwined. "Metabolism isn't just about how quickly you burn calories—it encompasses all the ways your body stores and uses energy from food," says Rocio Salas-Whalen, M.D., an endocrinologist in New York City. In addition to the calorie torching, your metabolism turns protein, fats, and carbs into compounds like amino acids, fatty acids, and simple glucose, then transports them into your cells; grows and maintains your muscles; and breaks down the fat stored by your body. "All these metabolic functions are completely controlled by your hormones," she adds. To keep your body's systems humming along smoothly, your hormones need to be in balance. If one shoots up too high or dips too low, your metabolism can get thrown out of whack, which can affect your workout, your mood, and your weight, says Liz Lyster, M.D., an ob-gyn in Foster City, California, who specializes in hormone imbalances.

The tips on these pages will keep your hormones in sync and your metabolism stoked.



## EAT MORE OFTEN

Waiting until you're super-hungry to eat your next meal can backfire. "It puts your body into stress, which can contribute to elevated cortisol levels and slow your metabolism," Dr. Salas-Whalen says. It also makes you more likely to overeat, which can lead to blood sugar dips and spikes that throw off your levels of insulin, another key metabolic hormone. Too much insulin can cause your body to store more fat, Dr. Lyster says. Experiment with timing your meals to figure out what works best for you. "You can have six a day or three—just choose whatever meal schedule keeps you from feeling famished in between," Dr. Salas-Whalen says.

## MODEL BEHAVIOR

"I begin my morning by going to the gym, even if it's just for 15 minutes. It makes me feel more focused and energized to kick-start the whole day." —Linda Vojtova (@lindavojtova)



## HIIT IT TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK

"Exercise has a very positive effect on metabolism," Dr. Salas-Whalen says. "Being active keeps all your hormones in harmony, which allows your metabolism to crank." High-intensity interval training is especially powerful. "Studies have shown that short bursts of intense exercise cause the brain to release growth hormone," Dr. Lyster says. This hormone encourages the body to break down fat and build muscle, and it also enhances the activity of all your other hormones. In research from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, women who sprinted for 30 seconds three times, with 20 minutes of active rest like walking or a slow jog between the intervals, boosted their growth hormone levels.

**Reebok** Work Out Ready MYT bra (\$35) and CrossFit Lux Science tights (\$70, reebok.com). **Athletic Propulsion Labs** Techloom Breeze sneakers (\$200, athleticpropulsionlabs.com). Opposite page: **Athleta** Agile Crop top (\$69), Contender 9-inch shorts (\$59, athleta.gap.com). **Tully Lou** Marcus jacket (\$180, international.tullylou.com). **Ash** Flash sneakers (\$320, ash.com).



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## EXPAND YOUR FOOD BOUNDARIES

There are several types of dietary fiber, and they all directly affect many of the hormones that govern metabolism. "Getting enough soluble and insoluble fiber helps keep levels of estrogen steady," says Zandra Palma, M.D., a physician specializing in functional medicine and hormonal health at Parsley Health in New York City. (Soluble fiber breaks down in water and slows digestion; insoluble doesn't break down and helps you feel full.) Too much estrogen can slow the metabolism of fat and lead to weight gain. Aim to

get around 28 grams of fiber a day from foods like healthy whole grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit.

Prebiotic fiber, found in foods like artichokes and raw onions, feeds the healthy bacteria that live in your gut. That's important because new studies show that your microbiome has a direct impact on your hormone levels. In one review in the journal *Molecular Endocrinology*, researchers discovered that inulin (a prebiotic in foods like asparagus and leeks) positively influenced the production of ghrelin, leptin, and peptide YY, three hormones that affect metabolism and help keep it revved.



## WIND DOWN AT NIGHT

The stress hormone cortisol is one of the major drivers of metabolism, Dr. Salas-Whalen says. "Its main function is to prepare the body in times of stress. One way it does this is by blocking the absorption of glucose in order to provide an easy energy source if you need to fight, run, or think quickly," she says. But if stress becomes chronic, your cortisol levels stay elevated, which drives up your blood sugar levels. The result: Your metabolism slows, and you gain weight, feel fatigued, and have trouble sleeping.

Nighttime stress is especially harmful because it can disrupt sleep, which also raises your cortisol levels—and a new study from Stanford University found that a cortisol spike at night prompts your body to produce fat cells. Dr. Salas-Whalen recommends doing something relaxing an hour or so before bed: yoga, listening to music, reading, showering. Do any activity that gets you close to Zen.