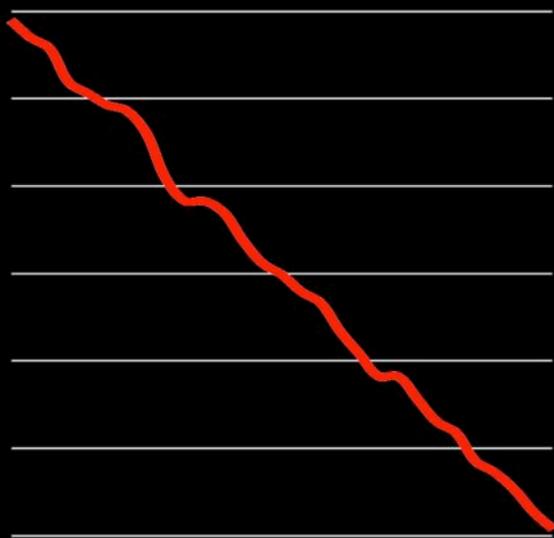


# THE FAT HANDLE

*How I took control of my weight*



*Curve showing my first four weeks and 20 pounds of weight loss*

BY OLIVER HOWARD

Oliver Howard

# **THE FAT HANDLE**

*From lo-carb to NO-carb*

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# INTRODUCTION

This is a very simple book:

- I have been overweight for 20 years and obese for 10.
- I have tried everything they say we should do to lose weight.
- Nothing worked; in the end it only made me fatter.
- Then I tried an idea of my own.
- It worked.
- Now I am telling you about it.

That's it, really. I claim no specialist knowledge and simply know what I know from books I have read (many of which are listed in the appendix) and especially from things I have done myself. It often feels like a lot of weight advice comes from people who have been skinny all their lives and have no real idea what it's like to struggle with overweight and obesity.

But if I say something in this book you don't believe, then go and check it out for yourself. Don't just say "I don't believe it." Be curious, see if there are others who agree with me. It'll be the easiest thing in the world to find people who disagree, but scratch a little deeper and you'll find plenty others who say what I am saying.

Or try it out for yourself. Remember, the Earth isn't flat, or at the centre of the Universe, as people used to be told very firmly to believe. Look around you and draw your own conclusions.

One of the things I have come to realise is how different we all are. Many of the ways I have tried to lose weight work for others but not for me. So what I am telling you here may not work for you. There's no one-size-fits-all.

But if you are like me and have tried everything else short of surgery, you'll want to try this. Because it might work, and if it does, you're on your way to a lighter, healthier life. For good. No more yo-yoing, no

more embarrassment, no more nightly heartburn, no more messing around with diets that don't work.

You'll have found the handle that controls your weight. I call it the fat handle.

*November 2014*

***Oliver Howard***

# 1. How we get fat

We are told all the time that gaining or losing weight is a simple game of numbers. Numbers of calories. If you eat more calories than you use then you gain weight, and if you eat fewer calories than you use then you lose weight.

I wish. And I bet that so do you.

No doubt this is a very fine theory, but it ignores the complexity of our metabolism and how it messes up that simple logic. It may work for weight *gain*, but weight loss is not simply weight gain in reverse as seems to be the conventional thinking.

Besides, this book is not so much about how to keep from getting fat but more about what to do once you are, and the experience of countless people trying desperately to lose weight—and keep it off—shows that it's not that simple. If it were, then dieting would not be such a huge industry and obesity would not be the health problem it is.

Don't know about you, but I have always been able to lose 10 pounds or so on a low calorie diet. But absolutely no more. When I've lost those 10 pounds, my body starts reacting to getting fewer calories than it needs, and by whatever metabolic trickery I then can't lose any more weight no matter how much I starve myself.

And of course I can only keep that up for so long. Then when I go back to eating normally, I gradually gain not 10 pounds but 12. It is as if my body got such a shock from starving that it now wants to put even more aside for next time.

I should mention here that "eating normally" for me doesn't mean gorging on huge portions or stuffing myself with junk food. I'm the cook in the family and I make most things from scratch. No processed meals here but proper food made mostly from fresh ingredients, preferably organic and many self-grown, and in sensible amounts. I have had

precisely two fast food meals in the last ten years and I don't drink things full of sugar. I don't even use the stuff in my tea.

I say this, not to be holier-than-thou but to point out that the reasons we get fat aren't as simple as many weight gurus would have us believe.

Then there's the other argument: eating fat makes you fat. Yeah, right, like drinking water makes you all runny? There's more to our metabolism than this simple "you are what you eat" mantra. But we believe it, in our droves, and we buy tons of low fat food as a result. Food with less fat, but the problem is that it has more of something else, and that something else is positively deadly: SUGAR.

Which brings me to why we get fat.

Everything we eat ends up in our stomach where it is digested. This is where it gets interesting, because what digestion does is break down the nutrients in the food so they can be absorbed into the bloodstream. There are three main groups of nutrients: carbohydrates, fat and protein.

I won't be dealing with the details of fat and protein here because they play little role in the fat that gets stored away in our fat cells. It is now accepted that *eating fat does not make us fat*, and Dr. Ancel Keys' "Seven Countries" study which started that wild goose chase 50 years ago is now widely discredited as bad science. For details, please see the books referred to in the appendix.

It's the carbohydrates that are key to weight gain and loss, and this is how it works. There are many different kinds of carbs, but our digestion breaks them all down into exactly the same stuff: glucose. Which is sugar to you and me, and that goes straight into the blood.

**Let me say that again, because it is the single most important piece of information in this book and the key to everything else, so you really must get your head around it: ALL carbohydrates we eat end up in the blood as glucose, or blood sugar.**

It doesn't matter if they come from supposedly healthy things or from the worst junk food, or even pure, refined sugar. OK, there is one

## 2. How we lose the fat

I did not invent or discover the process I describe in chapter 1. I read about it in a lot of other books, some of which are listed in the appendix. I didn't invent ways to reverse that process, either. Others did, and you can read about them in those books, too.

What I DID find out, however, is that those ways don't work for me, and thereby hangs a tale which is at least as important as anything to do with my weight, so please bear with me.

Most of my life I have suffered from respiratory infections. Everything from sore throats to bronchitis and pneumonia, and I had them 3, 4 or 5 times a year.

But then I also did something that perhaps I shouldn't have done. I drank a lot of milk. People told me that wasn't good for me, so in 2001 I stopped drinking milk, just to see if that would make a difference. Voila! My throat infections stopped and I haven't had one since.

That was great, of course, but then the following year I got bronchitis three times and in between those I had pneumonia twice. It was as if infections, no longer taking hold in my throat, had free access further down my airways.

The first pneumonia, in the spring, was double sided but bacterial, so it responded to antibiotics but still took months to get over. In the autumn I got pneumonia again, and this time it was viral which means antibiotics didn't work. I was already weakened from two attacks of bronchitis within a short space of time plus the previous pneumonia, so if this viral pneumonia had been double sided, I might not have survived. I was 52 years old.

Luckily my last pneumonia was single sided and I recovered, only to finish off the year with a third bout of bronchitis. All that left me deeply shaken, both physically and mentally. I had to do something or I feared I wouldn't get to 60.

Then my wife told me about a book she had read, and suggested I read it. It was called *Life Without Bread*, and I don't think I exaggerate if I say that book saved my life.

I'm not going to try to tell you everything that's in it but I strongly recommend you read it yourself. Suffice to say that it deals in great detail with the health effects of eating too many carbohydrates. On the strength of that and a few other books, I cut, not milk this time, but nearly all the rest of the carbohydrates I was eating: bread, potatoes, pasta and rice.

In other words I started eating low-carb, as was becoming fashionable at the time.

For me, that was like throwing a switch. My immune system kicked into action, and in the 12 years since then I have had bronchitis once, but not very seriously. In the 20 or 30 years before that I had one respiratory infection or another four times a year on average, so the difference is there for anyone to see.

That was wonderful, of course, so the fact that I didn't lose weight eating low-carb, like all the celebrities, didn't bother me too much at the time.

Fast forward 12 years. Still healthy, but also still overweight. Nay, obese, with a BMI pushing 35. My blood pressure, cholesterol and other vital statistics were fine, but I knew my obesity meant I was at increased risk of heart problems and diabetes, and maybe even some types of cancer. Types of cancer people around me were dying from.

It was also hard to buy decent clothes, and more and more aspects of life were getting to be a drag. On top of that there's the social stigma. Fat people are increasingly looked down on as losers and scroungers on society. They are seen as being out of control, and we hear more and more about the costs, especially to a health system buckling under the weight of an obesity epidemic.

For all those reasons, and many more, I was getting desperate to find a way to fight the flab that would work for me. I had read the books

listed in the appendix and was convinced that there was a link between eating too much carbohydrate and obesity, but I had cut the carbs and nothing had happened to my weight.

So I started thinking. Since a lot of people lose weight on low-carb diets, why wasn't it working for me? Assuming it's true that we can't take fat out of storage while there is too much insulin in the blood, then an obvious question is: *how much is too much?*

Could it be that the insulin level at which the fat process can run in reverse is different for different people? Why not? So many other things are different for different people, so why should this be the same for everybody? The more I thought about it, the more it made sense.

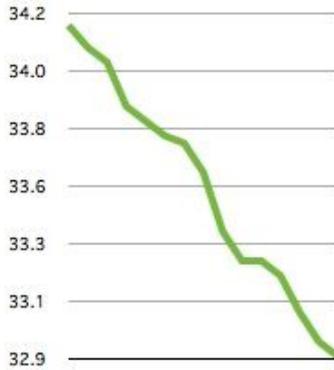
Not only that, but the simpler it seemed to check if it was true. I just had to reduce carbs *even more* than I already had and watch what would happen.

So I decided to go from *lo-carb* to *no-carb*, or as near as I could get. Even the greenest of greens have small amounts of carbohydrates in them, but when I did my sums it looked like I could bring my carb intake below 10 grams a day.

That's half of what even the most restrictive low-carb diets prescribe, and I couldn't get lower while eating normal, healthy and tasty food. I didn't want to start eating in a way that was either going to affect my health or that I hated so much that I couldn't keep it up. I had tried that before and didn't want to go there again.

To keep it simple to begin with, I decided to eat only eggs, fish, meat and low carb vegetables and drink nothing but water, tea and coffee. I knew I could keep that up for a while to see what happened.

And this is what happened to my BMI over the next two weeks:



First two weeks' weight loss in BMI

Expressed as weight this is 10 pounds, which is an impressive enough weight loss for two weeks, but what was just as eye-popping was the sheer slope of the curve. This was weight loss as I had never seen it before, and whenever it threatened to level out I had a pretty good idea why, which meant I could quickly do something about it.

To me that felt like finding a handle that controlled my weight, for the first time ever. What's more, it was fitting in with health professionals beginning to talk about *metabolic types* (see chapter 4).

My weight kept plummeting at the same rate for the next two weeks, by which time I had lost 20 pounds. Then I hit a few bumps, but it was mainly because I had started relaxing a bit, so I just had to learn to control that.

By then I had started fitting clothes I had not worn for years, the nighttime heartburn had stopped and I was beginning to like what I saw in the mirror, so the motivation to continue was sky-high. Was it hard to get back on the straight and narrow? You bet it wasn't!

You can see from the next curve that the first four weeks were the easiest. Then there were some ups and downs the next couple of months, often because I started adding a few things back into what I ate or drank. While it wasn't not hard to eat the way I did, I wanted to eat as

# 5. Carbohydrate tables

The following tables list the digestible (net) carbohydrate contents for over 500 common foodstuffs. Non-digestible carbs (fibres) are not counted as they are not digested and therefore do not affect blood sugar or insulin levels.

The numbers in the tables are grams of carbohydrate per 100 grams of the food, or per 100 ml for liquids. In other words, they are percentages.

The tables are colour coded as follows:

Green	Less than 5% carbohydrates
Yellow	5% or more but less than 10%
Orange	10% or more but less than 20%
Red	20% or more
Purple	Alcohol

There are two tables, each with the same information, but arranged differently.

The first table is sorted into groups of food—dairy, fruit, meat, vegetables and so on—then alphabetically within each group to make it easy to find what you are looking for.

The second table is first sorted into the five colour categories. The green category at the top is then sorted into food groups like the first table to make it especially easy to identify the foods you want to eat most of.

The remaining categories are then sorted alphabetically on food names.

The green category are the foods I live on.

The yellow category are foods I am more careful about eating and only in small amounts.

Product Name	Carbs Per 100g/ml	Product Name	Carbs Per 100g/ml
<b>- CHEESE -</b>		Milk, chocolate	11.2
Cheese spread	4.4	Milk, goats	4.4
Cheese, blue	2.4	Milk, semi skimmed	5.0
Cheese, cheddar	1.3	Milk, skimmed	5.0
Cheese, cottage	2.1	Milk, soya	0.8
Cheese, cottage, low-fat	4.0	Milk, whole	4.8
Cheese, cream	6.7	Milkshake, thick	20.0
Cheese, Feta	1.5	Yogurt, fruit	18.9
Cheese, hard and brie types	0.0	Yogurt, plain	6.2
Cheese, mozzarella	3.6	<b>- DRINKS -</b>	
Cheese, parmesan	4.0	Apple juice, unsweetened	10.2
Cheese, provolone	2.1	Bournvita, semi-skim milk	7.8
Cheese, ricotta	4.0	Bovril	2.9
Cheese, Swiss	2.1	Chocolate, Cadbury Instant Drink	66.8
<b>- CONDIMENTS -</b>		Coca-Cola	10.5
Blue cheese dressing	3.3	Cocoa, Cadbury	10.5
Brown sauce, No Frills	20.3	Cocoa, semi-skim milk	7.0
Fruity sauce, HP	31.0	Coffee	0.0
Gravy	5.0	Coffeemate	57.3
Horseradish sauce	17.9	Cranberry juice	13.4
Ketchup	26.7	Creamer	75.0
Marmite	1.8	Drinking chocolate, Semi skim	10.8
Mayonnaise, full fat	1.3	Fizzy drink, diet	0.1
Mint sauce	18.5	Fizzy drink, sweet	11.0
Mustard, smooth	9.7	Grape juice	12.4
Mustard, wholegrain	4.2	Grapefruit juice, unsweetened	8.3
Pickle	3.1	Horlicks + semi-skim milk	12.9
Salad cream	16.7	Horlicks, instant, water	10.1
Salt	0.0	Horlicks, low fat, inst, water	72.9
Sauce, brown HP	27.1	Lemon juice	8.3
Sauce, tomato ketchup, Heinz	24.7	Lemon juice, unsweetened	1.6
Soy sauce	8.3	Lemonade	8.9
Taramasalata	4.1	Lucozade	18.0
Tomato sauce	21.7	Orange juice	11.2
Vinegar	0.0	Orange juice, unsweetened	8.8
<b>- DAIRY -</b>		Ovaltine w/milk	13.0
Buttermilk	4.9	Pineapple juice, unsweet	10.5
Cream	3.3	Squash, orange	28.5
Cream, clotted	2.3	Tea	0.0
Cream, double	2.7	Tomato juice	3.7
Cream, single	4.1	Water	0.0
Cream, sour	4.0	<b>- FAT -</b>	
Cream, soured	3.8	Butter	0.0
Cream, whipping	2.8	Lard	0.0
Fromage frais	5.7	Margarine	0.0

Product Name	Carbs Per 100g/ml	Product Name	Carbs Per 100g/ml
<b>- CHEESE -</b>	<b>0 - 4.9</b>	<b>- FAT -</b>	
Cheese spread	4.4	Butter	0.0
Cheese, blue	2.4	Lard	0.0
Cheese, cheddar	1.3	Margarine	0.0
Cheese, cottage	2.1	Oils (all types)	0.0
Cheese, cottage, low-fat	4.0	Shortening	0.0
Cheese, Feta	1.5	<b>- FISH -</b>	
Cheese, hard and brie types	0.0	Clams	4.7
Cheese, mozzarella	3.6	Cod steaks, in butter sauce, Birds Eye	3.9
Cheese, parmesan	4.0	Cod, fillet	0.0
Cheese, provolone	2.1	Crab	0.0
Cheese, ricotta	4.0	Fish, boiled or fried	0.0
Cheese, Swiss	2.1	Haddock, fillet	0.0
<b>- CONDIMENTS -</b>		Herring, raw, smoked or fried	0.0
Blue cheese dressing	3.3	Lobster	0.0
Marmite	1.8	Mackerel in oil or brine	0.0
Mayonnaise, full fat	1.3	Mackerel in tomato sauce	1.8
Mustard, wholegrain	4.2	Oysters	2.4
Pickle	3.1	Salmon	0.0
Salt	0.0	Sardines, tin, tomato sauce	0.7
Taramasalata	4.1	Shrimp	0.0
Vinegar	0.0	Trout	0.0
<b>- DAIRY -</b>		Tuna	0.0
Buttermilk	4.9	<b>- FRUIT -</b>	
Cream	3.3	Gooseberries	3.0
Cream, clotted	2.3	Grapefruit, raw with skin	4.6
Cream, double	2.7	Lemon, with skin	3.2
Cream, single	4.1	Melon, cantaloupe	4.2
Cream, sour	4.0	<b>- GRAIN -</b>	
Cream, soured	3.8	Sesame seed	0.9
Cream, whipping	2.8	<b>- MEAT -</b>	
Milk, goats	4.4	Bacon	0.5
Milk, soya	0.8	Beef	0.0
Milk, whole	4.8	Chicken, flour & fried	1.6
<b>- DRINKS -</b>		Chicken, meat only	0.0
Bovril	2.9	Corned beef	0.8
Coffee	0.0	Duck	0.0
Fizzy drink, diet	0.1	Egg, raw	0.6
Lemon juice, unsweetened	1.6	Frankfurters	3.0
Tea	0.0	Goose	0.0
Tomato juice	3.7	Ham	2.6
Water	0.0	Ham, honey roast	2.4
		Ham, smoked	0.8
		Hotdog	3.4

# 6. Picture cookbook

What follows is not a conventional cookbook. I won't be giving you lists of ingredients or tell you how to cook, apart from a few personal pointers. This food is so simple and easy to cook it's not necessary. Anyway, I have always thought cooking was best based on using good ingredients and doing as little as possible to them so as not to ruin them, and this is no less true for no-carb cooking.

So I'll let my pictures of the food I am eating tell most of the story and add just a few comments in the hope that you will be inspired to cook and eat similar things.

Some people may think that the portions in the pictures aren't very large. Maybe, but remember that these pictures are of breakfasts, lunches and dinners, so some portions will be smaller and some larger.

Besides, these are the portion sizes that fill me. If they don't fill you, make them bigger without making them huge.

This is not a calorie restricted diet, but the simple fact is that protein and fat are more filling than carbohydrates, and fill for longer, so chances are that these portions will also satisfy you.

I didn't eat a lot more before I started eating no-carb, and I've been eating smaller portions than this on calorie restricted diets without losing much weight, so it's not the smaller portions that make me lose weight now, or at least not those alone.

Maybe it's these portion sizes in combination with the loss of carbs that do it for me, and this is something you should consider if you think you are not losing enough and you are eating significantly larger portions than shown here.

Bon appetit.



### **Chicken breast with red cabbage, coleslaw and cucumber**

The chicken is cooked in its own juices in a slow cooker and the red cabbage is fried for 5 minutes in olive oil, with salt, white pepper and a tablespoon of vinegar added halfway.

The coleslaw is a low-carb version from my local deli, but read labels carefully as some coleslaws have a lot of added sugar.

The cucumber slices are raw.



### **Ham omelette with creamed avocado, tomato and chives**

This omelette is made from one medium size egg and a couple of chopped slices of ham.

I fry the ham in a little olive oil while I whisk the egg with about a tablespoon of double cream and a teaspoon of water (using one of the half eggshells as a measure to make things simple and keep down the washing-up). I like my omelettes slightly on the runny side, but of course you will cook yours to your own taste.

The creamed avocado is made from half an avocado chopped into cubes and whizzed for ten seconds in a small food processor.

Top off with chopped chives for taste, texture and colour.



### **Pan fried cod with steamed vegetables and guacamole**

The cod is lightly fried in olive oil until tender, and as always with vegetables, I am careful not to overcook them.

I call the accompaniment guacamole, but it isn't really. Guacamole takes a long time to make and needs a lot of things that I don't normally have, so this is my own take on it:

I cube half an avocado, a piece of cucumber and a tomato, then whizz that mix for a few seconds in a small food processor. If you want the bite of real guacamole, add a pinch of chili, but I don't so I just add salt, white pepper and maybe some garlic.

It takes 20-30 minutes to make real guacamole. This takes 2.