

HEALTH

EDITED BY
SIMON ROUND
editorial@thejc.com

● I went on a diet based on eating watermelon

● I exercised with the world's most expensive personal trainer

● I completed several triathlons and half marathons

● I attempted to eat only foods low on the glycaemic index

BY CAROLINE PHILLIPS

THE BATTLE has begun. I have hit 50. Soon I will have not so much a "muffin top" – that unsightly circle of fat around the middle – as a "padding pool top".

Normally losing weight is easy. It is keeping it off that is tricky. But what to do with this middle-age spread appearing about my girth?

Years ago, I did every diet known to womankind – including one based on watermelons. I have been to spas the world over and lost seven pounds. Generally the same seven pounds I lost and put on the previous time. I have followed low GI dietary tips and exercised with Tim Bean, the world's most ludicrously expensive trainer cum nutritionist. (He charged clients £30,000 per month to live in and oversee cooking and training.)

I have also competed in triathlons and run half marathons. These days – on expert advice – I take regular, moderate exercise and never diet. Instead I try to avoid coffee, alcohol, sugar and refined carbs. This keeps the blood sugar stable and avoids cravings. It is refined carbs which stimulate insulin

Caroline wages war on her muffin tops

So, why can't I get rid of my rubber tummy ring?

production and converts carbs into fat. So why the rubber tummy ring?

First stop is the Notting Hill Harbour Club. Here trainer, Chloe Mulvihill, says that I need to improve my diet and cardiovascular fitness. "Excess weight is 80 per cent down to what you eat and drink," she says.

First she electrocutes me – or at any rate runs a body composition analyser which reads my body composition. With this gadget, she can tell the fat per centage of each limb. She investigates its print-out on my BMI, BMR, FFM and TBW – don't ask. She says I have to lose 6.6 lbs of fat. "You cannot choose what

order the fat disappears in," she adds.

We do PT sessions with ViPR tubes (hurling rubber drainpipes around), on Bosu balls (jumping like demented frogs), TRX suspension training (hanging from straps like US commandos), kettlebells (they must have been used in Siberian labour camps), military-style body resistance training and Power Plate (like an oversized vibrator increasing muscle strength). I do moderate cardio four times a week, plus yoga and pilates. After only six weeks, I have lost six pounds and five per cent of fat.

I sprint downstairs to the Harbour Club spa for Ionithermie – a treatment guaranteeing inch-loss. I lie on a plastic mat, electrodes fixed to my back and algae mask slopped on my tummy, as muscle stimulating currents are passed through my body. A half-hour session is, allegedly, equivalent to 300 sit-ups. Afterwards my formerly 31-inch waist measures 30 inches. But to sustain it, you cannot drink anything afterwards!

There are several reasons for bulges in specific areas of the body. Fat is not laid down evenly. Most women store it around the hips and lower abdomen first. And many store extra fat on their breasts or around their waists.

"Where the weight goes on is down to genetic predisposition," explains hormone specialist Dr Marion Gluck. "The metabolism slows down with menopause. So you have to reduce your sugar and saturated fat intake. Most importantly, you must keep your blood sugar levels even." But the biggest problem is

age-related hormonal imbalance. "You can only maintain hormonal balance by individually tailoring a hormone preparation."

And those muffins? "Many women who had washboard tummies become thick around the middle in the lead-up to menopause," says nutritional therapist Vicki Edgson. "It's mainly due to the lowered efficiency of the digestive system which occurs as oestrogen falls. I recommend a good digestive enzyme to help digestive function and a CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) – a proven

fat-burner. Eat smaller meals, particularly in the evening when the digestive function is at its lowest."

As for me, I have lost some of my middle-age bulge. I have turned into a pill popper (vitamins and bio-identical hormones) and am eating smaller meals. The battle has been won. But the war has only just begun.

Harbour Club: 020 7266 9320 www.harbourclub.com. Marion Gluck: 020 7402 2151 www.drmariongluck.com. Vicki Edgson: 020 7727 4376 www.vickiedgson.com

