

DIET watch

**Dr Hirsch's Guide to
Scentsational Weight Loss**

I have found it at last — the diet book that claims you don't have to change the way you eat and really means it. There are no food lists and no strict guidelines. You like doughnuts? Go ahead and eat them. Can't resist chocolate? Fine, dig in. There is just one rule — sniff before you scoff.

Sniff? Yes, sniff. For according to Dr Alan Hirsch, author of *Dr Hirsch's Guide to Scentsational Weight Loss* (Element £6.99), the urge to eat too much is governed not by the stomach — as most people believe — but by a specific part of the brain called the satiety centre. Once you understand how taste and smell affect this centre, you can satisfy it by sniffing certain scents whenever you feel the urge to overeat.

Sounds ridiculous, I know. Even the author, who is a neurologist, psychiatrist and director of the Smell and Taste Research Foundation in Chicago admits he could not in his wildest dreams have imagined writing a book on the links between dieting and smell, but that was before he made the connection that patients who had lost their sense of smell frequently put on weight then shed it when their olfactory sense returned.

Realising that he could be on to something, he commenced a study of more than 3,000 overweight patients who were given odour sticks containing blends of aromatic ingredients and instructed to inhale three times in each nostril whenever hungry. Each month, their inhaler was replaced with a new blend of the aromas of, variously, peppermint, banana and green apples. Some shed up to 18lb a month, although the average weight loss was about 5lb.

Barbara was a typically sceptical participant in this study. A confirmed yo-yo dieter and 70lb overweight, she was a hostage to food cravings and certain that the odour devices would not work. She gave them a try and for the first time in her life found herself leaving half her food and not feeling hungry. She lost 25lb.

Chapter 4, Sniffing without the Device, reveals how we can use smells in our daily lives to emulate the odour sticks employed in these experiments. Try, for example, sniffing food before you take a bite. The odour stimulates the satiety centre in the brain, helping you to eat a little less of the meal.

Chew thoroughly, as this action releases the odours of the food and fools the brain into thinking more food has been eaten, and go for hot foods, as the odours are stronger than with cold.

Catherine Collins, chief dietician at St George's hospital, London, found this novel approach to dieting fascinating: "Anything that helps people lose weight and keep it off long term must be taken seriously.

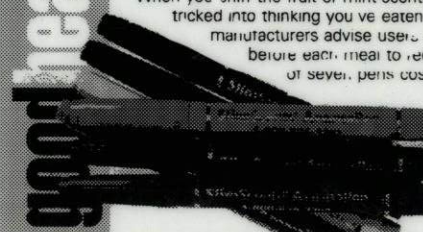
"I would, however, emphasise that this technique must be underpinned by a nutritionally sound diet. The success of these odour sticks may be due to a direct effect on the satiety centre, but they could also help by distracting usual eating habits and making people think before they eat."

Amanda Ursell

woman's own

Sniff... and shed pounds

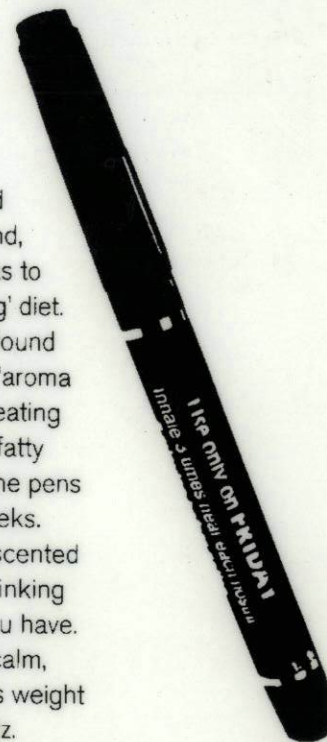
Losing weight could be as easy as signing your name. SlimScents AromaPens are designed to reduce appetite and help weight loss. When you sniff the fruit or mint-scented pen, your brain's tricked into thinking you've eaten more than you have. The manufacturers advise users to sniff a pen five minutes before each meal to reduce their appetites. A set of seven pens costs £19.95 and will last a month, and research shows that apple, banana, spearmint and peppermint are the most effective.



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COMPANY NOSE JOB

There are some really weird weight loss methods around, but the most bizarre yet has to be the 'miracle pen-sniffing' diet. American scientists have found sniffing specially-scented 'aroma pens' while on a sensible eating plan reduces cravings for fatty snacks. Volunteers using the pens lost over 19lb after 16 weeks. Why? The fruit- and mint-scented pens trick the brain into thinking you've eaten more than you have. 'Smells can make us feel calm, aroused, hungry or full,' says weight loss specialist Dr Joan Katz.



Daily Mail

Can a smelly pen help you lose weight?

REVOLUTIONARY aroma pens have been found to reduce appetite and help weight loss. When you sniff the specially-scented fruit and mint-flavoured pens, you supposedly trick your brain into thinking you have eaten more than is the case.

The idea is that users sniff a pen five minutes before each meal to reduce appetite. It should also be sniffed to stave off the temptation to snack. The manufacturer of SlimScents claims this means you don't have to try to diet or avoid certain foods.

A double-blind study involving 60 people found that those using the SlimScents pens lost an average of 19.15lb after 16 weeks. Those using the SlimScents pens reported eating less at meal times, and said they had fewer cravings and were able to curb snacking. Study results will be published next month in the *Journal Of Advancement In Medicine*.

A set of seven pens costs £19.95 and will last a month. With four different flavours, the smells can be alternated from day to day. This avoids olfactory fatigue, which occurs when we smell the same scent so often that we are no longer aware of it. It is the particular fragrances of the pens which is thought to affect appetite. After testing many smells, it was found that banana, apple, spearmint and peppermint were the most effective.

Dr Joan Katz, a U.S. physician who specialises in weight loss, says different smells can have all sorts of effects on the body, including appetite reduction. 'Certain smells can make us feel calm, alert, aroused or hungry. And some smells make us feel full.'

The nose has thousands of olfactory receptors which are specific for different scents. Each receptor is microscopically wired to different sections of the brain. All smells go to the limbic system of the brain, and some are redirected to the hypothalamus, then onto the appetite-control centre.

Rebecca Paul, 18, a business studies student from Ilkley, West Yorkshire, lost half a stone in four weeks with the SlimScents pens. 'I just didn't feel as hungry when I used the pens,' she says. 'And I went down from a size 14 to a 12.'