

Old year, new you?

December is our favourite time of year to indulge in gluttonous pursuits. Weekly units and calorie counting become things of the past. Enjoy it while you can, says **Fiona Adams**



Leonie Wright of EatWright

So, Christmas looms. The festive season starts early these days – you may even have wended your merry way through a few seasonal lunches and office parties already. Lowering your cholesterol, giving up alcohol and finding a healthy new you is probably the last thing on your mind.

However, with *NHS* findings that a quarter of all UK adults (over 16s) are now obese, and conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease on the rise, December is as good a time as any to think through a clear plan for a healthy 2011. Five years ago, following a depressing trip to the doctor's, Leonie Wright from Leatherhead made a firm decision to change her lifestyle for the better. Now she has started her own company to help others do the same.

Dutch-born Leonie had suffered from high blood pressure – a condition that ran in her family – for several years. When she was subsequently prescribed Statins for very high cholesterol, she decided to take matters into her own hands.

"There had been a huge anti-Statins lobby in the Netherlands. My parents had also had to take them, but with mixed results," she explains. *"I told the doctor I wanted to bring down my cholesterol by myself."*

Leonie signed up to a programme run by renowned Dutch nutritionist Coby Bouwkamp, which involved a complete body detox and a six-week eating plan.

"I thought I was reasonably healthy," she recalls. *"I wasn't really overweight, but after about six weeks following Coby's guidelines my blood pressure and cholesterol came down and the migraines I used to endure had disappeared."*

So impressed was Leonie that she approached Bouwkamp about securing a UK franchise. She retrained as a coach, qualified in nutritional awareness, threw in some life coaching for good measure and, after a year of trying out her newfound knowledge on family and friends, launched her own *EatWright* company.

Leonie provides a personal service, with initial face-to-face consultations as well as daily emails and phone calls. For her, the life coaching aspect is key.

"Not everyone has weight issues; many are concerned about conditions such as diabetes or arthritis, though these are often linked to being overweight. However, it's important to ask people what makes them fail to follow a healthy lifestyle. What are the triggers? We feel it's vital to give people support, to keep them motivated so they can achieve the right results."

Six months into the project and business is booming.

"I have around 25 clients at the moment," says Leonie. *"I meet everybody in person and then complete a profile of how they live, eat and drink. I also assess their BMI (body mass index) and take into account any medication they may be taking."*

"After that they follow a six-week plan from our approved food list, as well as take proteins, omega and vitamin supplements. And there's no alcohol allowed!"

At subsequent stages of the plan the rules are relaxed somewhat, with the reintroduction of previously banned food. However, Leonie is keen to emphasise that the aim of her programme is to *"achieve a lasting, healthy and balanced eating pattern"* – not just a quick fix.

But if you really can't face all this before the groaning of the festive board, take heart. For once, time is on your side.

"The best time to start a programme like this is actually after the festive season," reveals Leonie. *"You have more bad things in your body to get rid of!"*

Now there's Christmas spirit for you.

■ For further details visit: www.eatwright.co.uk. Alternatively call Leonie on (01372) 386028