

Do some people have a lean gene?

Your friend eats whatever catches her fancy and still remains as thin as she was in school, but you gain five pounds if you as much as look at that enticing chocolate cake.

Before you sign up for a crash diet and gym membership, though, you may want to look at a recent study from Tel Aviv University and save yourself a small fortune.

A woman's waistline may have less to do with rigorous exercise and abstaining from sweets than it does with the genes of her parents, according to the study.

Gregory Livshits and collaborators from King's College, London, have found a scientific link between the lean body mass of a woman and her genes.

Thinness, like our smile or eye colour, is an inheritable trait, he concludes.

'Many of our physical features, including our weight, are dependent on our genes. The good news is that women still have an opportunity to go against their genetic constitution and do something about it,' said Livshits.

He conducted his study on more than 3,000 middle-aged women in Britain who were either identical or a fraternal twin pair.

He measured their 'total lean mass', one of the three major components of body weight, and compared it to markers in their genes.

Those without the lean genes, however, will always find it harder to stay slim, predicted Livshits. But before your diet falls by the wayside, consider his contention - genetics can be overcome.

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