

expressyourself

The de-clutter diet

Streamlining your home could have a similar effect on your waistline, says **KIM JONES**

A MESSY home bursting at the seams can feel overwhelming but according to experts a chaotic house can affect more than just your state of mind. They argue that mess, clutter and disorganisation could be the reason you are overweight.

"To set yourself on the path to a healthy lifestyle you must get your home environment organised first," says Steve Halsall, founder of Fitness 12 Retreats.

"A messy house lends itself to a culture of fast food and unhealthy living. Aim for a comfortable, clean and ordered environment and you'll more easily change bad habits into good ones and get the body and lifestyle you want."

Follow our advice to tackle your home – and your dress size.

CLUTTER ZONE: THE KITCHEN

Clutter effect

Is your bag of healthy brown rice hidden behind piles of other half-eaten packets while your fennel festers in the fridge under other unused vegetables?

It is far easier to reach for a frozen pizza, ready-meal or get a takeaway than to cook something nutritious and delicious from scratch when you can't find your ingredients.

"Planning menus ahead, buying the relevant foods needed to create healthy meals and having a clean

fridge once a week too, setting aside five minutes at the same time every week.

CLUTTER ZONE: THE WARDROBE

Clutter effect

Keeping clothes which don't fit because you've put on or lost weight can make your wardrobe resemble an overpacked junkie

Recent research found that overweight women with positive body images who liked the way they looked in their clothes were more likely to lose weight than those who had body image issues.

Tackle it

"Take everything out of the wardrobe and place all your clothes on the bed. Next, sort through them

is great for confidence and self-esteem."

CLUTTER ZONE: THE BEDROOM

Clutter effect

Studies have shown that a cluttered, messy bedroom can stop you

Pictures: ALAMY; SPLASH



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It is far easier to reach for a frozen pizza, ready-meal or get a takeaway than to cook something nutritious and delicious from scratch when you can't find your ingredients.

"Planning menus ahead, buying the relevant foods needed to create healthy meals and having a clean and tidy area in which to prepare and cook are vital for creating good eating habits," says Steve.

Tackle it

Empty out one cupboard at a time, suggests professional organiser Sandy Garfield. "Place everything on a table then throw out any packets, tins or herbs that are out of date.

"Reorganise what is left so everything is clearly visible and accessible with labels facing outwards. Invest in drawer tidies and spice racks." Clear out your

fridge once a week too, setting aside five minutes at the same time every week.

CLUTTER ZONE: THE WARDROBE

Clutter effect

Keeping clothes which don't fit because you've put on or lost weight can make your wardrobe resemble an overstocked jumble sale.

It can also be demotivating since retaining your big clothes sends out subconscious signals that you may put on weight in the future and staring at too small items could torment you. "Throw out all negative reminders of when you were overweight," says Steve.

Adds Sandy: "You have to make a conscious effort to fit into the clothes you have now. The key is to have a neat wardrobe full of clothes that look and feel good right now."

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Tackle it

"Take everything out of the wardrobe and place all your clothes on the bed. Next categorise them into tops, trousers and skirts for example so it's easier to whittle things down," says professional organiser Cory Cook.

"Try everything on and if something isn't flattering or makes you feel bad then let it go. If it doesn't fit but you're determined to get back into it one day I'd still suggest letting it go.

"Invest in good-quality hangers and shoe racks. Give your clothes dignity and you'll feel and look better in what you're wearing which

is great for confidence and self-esteem."

CLUTTER ZONE: THE BEDROOM

Clutter effect

Studies have shown that a cluttered, messy bedroom can stop you from nodding off at night and if you're not getting enough sleep you could be prone to weight gain.

Scientists at the University of Columbia in the US found lack of sleep lowers levels of the hormone leptin, responsible for regulating appetite and making you feel full, while raising levels of the hormone ghrelin, which stimulates appetite.

Tackle it

"Your bedroom should be defined as a space for rest and relaxation," says Cory. Remove electrical equipment such as televisions and laptops since studies have shown the electro-magnetic fields they give off can interfere with sleep.

"Tackle the clutter that's amassed on the floor or is heaped up under the bed," says Cory.

"Assess what really belongs in the bedroom. Everything else should be put in a box by the door ready to be put away in its rightful place afterwards."

Next sort out your bedroom storage, for example placing handbags in a pretty box in the wardrobe or your scarves in a drawer. Keep it as minimal as possible so there's less to distract you from drifting off.

CLUTTER ZONE: THE DINING ROOM

Clutter effect

If your dining room is a dumping ground and the table is a space for paperwork you are more likely to end up eating in front of the TV.

A US study found that watching the box can make you overeat by 44 per cent because it encourages so-called "mindless eating".

The television distracts you from what you're tasting, interrupting messages to the brain that tell you when you're full."



CLEAR OUT: Get rid of any mess or unused items as these can affect eating and sleeping habits

Tackle it

"Keep the dining table clear except for flowers or plants," says Sandy. "Clear all bills and paperwork and set up a simple filing system: one file for utility bills, one for school stuff and so on. Deal with mail as soon as it arrives. Throw away junk mail immediately and place your paperwork into the relevant file so the clutter doesn't amass again."

CLUTTER ZONE: THE LIVING ROOM

Clutter effect

Everyone needs a room where they can relax and wind down but if your living space is cluttered then you won't be comfortable there.

An Australian study found that four in 10 people feel anxious, guilty or depressed about the clutter in their homes. For those who reach for a biscuit when they feel bad, this can lead to comfort eating.

Tackle it

"Begin a routine for all the family in which you put away the things you've been using in the living room by a certain time each evening, say 6pm," suggests Cory.

"Install adequate shelving or drawers for CDs and books. Then decide on what you can live without such as ornaments. You should be surrounded by things you truly love so have an honest purge.

"Anything that's not in good condition or you don't treasure should go. Put things you're unsure about in the attic and mark a date for six months time. If you haven't missed those items, they can go."

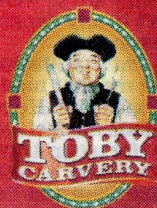
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