

# Hard to shed load with all the blackouts

**SUTHENTIRA GOVENDER**

ESKOM'S rolling blackouts are leading to expanding waistlines, pot-bellies and ample hips.

Dieticians warned this week that South Africans are likely to pack on the kilograms feasting on fast-food meals while the power is out.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation cautioned South Africans not to use load-shedding as an excuse to eat out. "An increase in fast foods can most certainly result in an increase in sugar, salt and fats," it said.

The Association of Dietetics in South Africa said while no hard numbers were available, "observation at restaurants and takeaway establishments during these periods shows that eating out becomes a default, convenient meal option".

Said spokeswoman Monique dos Santos: "Fast foods are known to be generally high in energy and total fat. Some are

also high in bad fats called saturated fats."

According to a 2011 study, 11% of South Africans eat fast food every day. Burgers, pizza and fried chicken are the most popular choices.

"South Africans should get creative with their meals during load-shedding, including using an app like Grid Watch to get notifications when to expect load-shedding and plan ahead as much as possible," she said.

Famous Brands, which has Steers, Debonairs, Wimpy and

FishAways in its stable, said it had not seen any fundamental consumer behaviour changes.

"Load-shedding is unpredictable and takes place at varying times across the country," said Darren Hele, CEO of Famous Brands' food services.

But Durban North administrator Charmaine Smith said load-shedding was having a "major impact" on her eating habits as well as her wallet.

Load-shedding usually occurs in her area between 4pm and 8pm during the week and

between 8pm and 10pm on weekends.

"This is prime dinner preparation and dinner time, so the most convenient thing to do is to go out for a quick bite. At a restaurant, you [might have] a glass of wine or a pudding, which you wouldn't do when you are at home.

"Luckily I am active—I swim and gym frequently so I don't put on weight. However, it isn't healthy to be eating takeaway and restaurant food all the time," said Smith.

Johannesburg dietician Tabitha Hume said that load-shedding had had a "huge impact" on people trying to shed weight.

Some of her clients are skipping sessions with her because of the unhealthy eating habits that had been brought on by the blackouts.

"I am finding that this is causing people to skip sessions because they are saying things haven't been as successful because of all the load-shedding."

Hume said the poor eating habits would be harmful for diets.

"People who have taken two steps forward and committed to eating healthily have had to take one step back."

Load-shedding can remove the option of a quick, healthy home-cooked meal.

"To get something warm, tasty and rewarding during the dark periods, takeaway becomes the first port of call."

## Four square ways to diet in the dark

THE Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa's tips to beat load-shedding weight:

● Go for dinner at friends who live in a different zone and have them over when

they are being load-shedded;

● Cook one-pot meals or soups on gas, heat soup up before the lights go out and keep it warm in a flask;

● Make home-made wraps with tinned tuna, chopped

cucumber, tomato and carrots — no cooking required; and

● When you do go to a restaurant, especially if it's more frequently than before, go for the healthier choices.