

NEWS

## Your top five diet danger zones

Experts recently pinpointed the five lifestyle hurdles most likely to make you put on weight. Here's our guide to what they are – and how to survive them

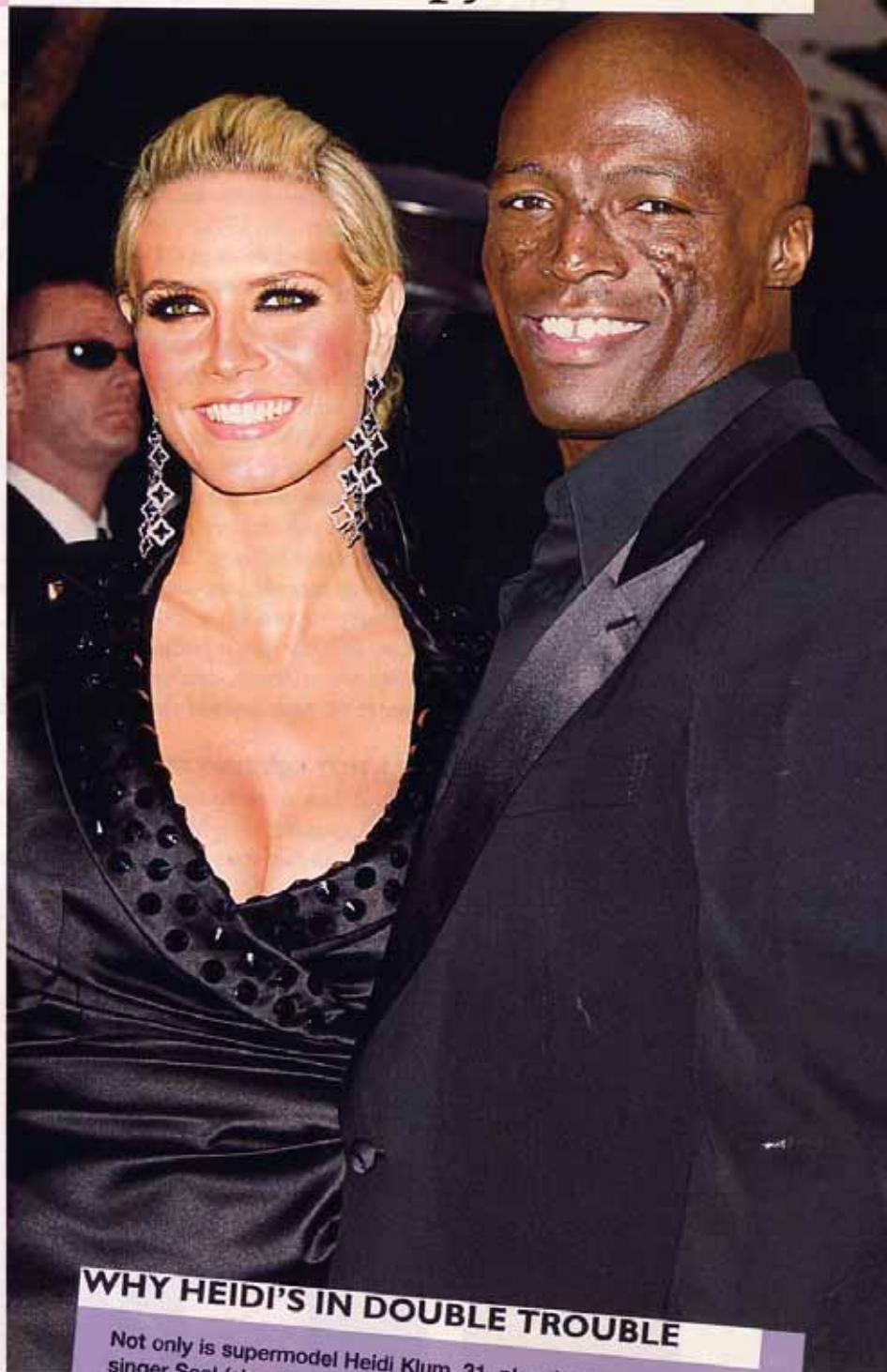
### 1. GETTING MARRIED

You may be a vision of perfection as you walk down the aisle, but studies show women gain weight after marrying. Eight out of ten women try to drop a dress size before their big day but, once the honeymoon is over, they're four times more likely to become overweight than their single sisters. Newly married people often stay in more, which can mean more snacking. *Newlyweds* star Jessica Simpson and her husband Nick Lachey told Oprah they love to share fried chicken, which Jessica calls 'food that puts hips on you'. And, according to reports, she's now having to put in some serious gym work to get into her teeny denim hot pants for the role of Daisy Duke in *The Dukes Of Hazard*.

- Survive the fat trap by planning activities you can do together, like long walks at the weekend. And make sure you're not matching his meal size – you need just three-quarters of what's on his plate.

### 2. BEING TOO BUSY

The most common symptom of Hurried Woman Syndrome (HWS) – the new name for ▶



### WHY HEIDI'S IN DOUBLE TROUBLE

Not only is supermodel Heidi Klum, 31, planning to marry singer Seal (above), 42, this year, she's also expecting his baby in September. And that means she's about to hit two diet danger zones – post-wedding and post-baby. However, somehow we think it's unlikely she's going to start piling on the pounds. As well as being blessed with good genes, she can expect to be whipped back into shape by tough personal trainer David Kirsch. In fact, Heidi modelled for lingerie giant Victoria's Secret when she was three months pregnant with her first child, daughter Leni, and, after giving birth in May last year, quickly regained her figure. Which is enough to make you start comfort-eating...

Sleep deprivation upsets the hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism



women who juggle a career, children and a social life – is weight gain. HWS happens when lack of relaxation and constant guilt leads to a lack of interest in your appearance and a state of 'pre-depression'.

Nicki Waterman, a mother of two and personal trainer to stars including Denise Van Outen, says, 'At one stage, I was so busy I was hooked on sugar. I only stay slim by exercising like a demon. I'd eat 1lb of pick 'n' mix, several chocolate bars and a packet of biscuits in one day. I needed it to keep going.' You may also gain weight if you're stressed or in a career rut, because you release the fat-storing hormone cortisol. Geri Halliwell famously struggled with her weight when she hit a career low after the Spice Girls split.

- Avoid this danger zone by only eating when you're truly hungry. 'Before you put something in your mouth, stop and ask yourself how hungry you are on a scale of one to 10,' says diet and life coach Judith Verity. 'If it's less than six or seven, don't eat. Have a drink of water or walk around the block instead.'

3. NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP

A lack of sleep could be the reason you're gaining weight. In her rounder days on her eponymous TV show, Anna

STAR SURVIVORS



Clockwise from left: Davina McCall, Jessica Simpson (with husband Nick), Geri Halliwell and Penélope Cruz have all survived the major diet danger zones

Nicole Smith often complained of insomnia. The latest research shows regular sleep deprivation upsets the hormones that regulate your appetite and metabolism, so you can't tell when you're full, plus you store fat more easily. And you're more likely to reach for the biscuit tin, too. One study found that those who clock only four hours' shut-eye crave high-fat and sugary foods.

- Penélope Cruz swears by a good night's sleep (she once slept for 18 hours solid) – and it seems to work for her. If it's hard to switch off, try a spot of visualisation. Picture all your worries inside a helium balloon, then visualise letting it go and watching it float away.

4. HAVING A BABY

'I feel fat and depressed,' moaned Davina McCall eight weeks after giving birth. And she's not alone. Having a child is one of the major reasons women gain weight. Kate Hudson, for example, gained 60lbs while pregnant – 35 more than is recommended! But wait until you've stopped breast-feeding before dieting. In fact, breast-feeding itself can have a fabulous effect: it burns calories as well as making you release the hormone oxytocin. This makes your uterus contract, helping you regain your pre-pregnancy shape.

- Eat more vegetables and drink more water – you'll feel fuller as well as getting nutrients. And don't use your child as an excuse not to exercise. 'Push them through the park,' says fitness coach Jeff Archer. 'Or use them as a "weight" by lying on your back and lifting them up in a reverse push-up – they'll love it.'

5. HITTING 40

It's unavoidable – as you age, your metabolism slows down. Once you hit the perimenopause (about 10 years before the menopause), it drops by up to 15 per cent. So you can eat the same amount of food but, unfortunately, you'll gain weight. 'After 40, you replace calorie-burning muscle with do-nothing fat,' says Cathy Nonas, author of *Outwit Your Weight* (£9.99, Rodale). So staying in shape takes a lot of hard work. Sharon Stone, 47, said that as soon as she was cast to wear a catsuit opposite Halle Berry in *Catwoman*, she took up residency at the gym.

- Survive by strength-training. Studies show that women who lift weights maintain muscle mass and stay slimmer than those who shun the gym. And US research shows older women burn fat faster when they stick to regular small meals of 250 to 500 calories. ■