

Resources

Sep 01 2010

Losing Weight without Going on a Diet

How many diets have you been on? According to Statistics Canada two-thirds of Canadians are overweight. And the never-ending supply of new diet books and programs is proof that we are on a quest to find the perfect diet that will help us melt away those extra pounds. Diets only offer temporary solutions:

- They don't change our long-term eating patterns, so when we stop dieting, we usually gain all the weight back, and sometimes more.
- Diets promote rapid weight loss, but when we lose weight too quickly we lose muscle as well as fat, which is counterproductive since muscle burns more calories than fat.
- When we severely restrict calories we put our bodies into "survival mode" and burn less calories doing the same activities. When we try to return to normal eating patterns, we gain weight because of our reduced metabolism.
- Diets create an unhealthy relationship with food, which can lead to deprivation, binge eating, and ultimately weight gain.

The truth is we live in an obesogenic culture. This means that our lifestyle and environment promote weight gain. There is constant pressure to eat too much, and to eat too much of the wrong foods.

To achieve real weight loss we need long-term healthy eating patterns that we enjoy and that satisfy our hunger. And to maintain weight loss, we need to lose weight slowly – about one to two pounds a week.

No more diets!

Use the following checklist as your daily guide to help you achieve your weight goals:

- **Eat Less.** It's no secret that if you eat more calories than you burn you will gain weight. We eat 30% more if the plate is bigger. Get in the habit of ordering the small size, sharing your appetizers and desserts, and bringing half your restaurant serving home for another meal.
- **Listen to your hunger.** Stop eating when you're full... you can always have more tomorrow, because you're not on a diet!
- **Eat healthy, nourishing foods.** Minimize processed and junk foods, and choose foods in season when you can.

- **Load up on fruits and vegetables.** Start your meal with a salad, load up your main course with veggies, and finish your meal with a little fruit.
- **Choose whole grain carbohydrate foods.** Whole grain breads, barley, brown rice, oatmeal, and high fibre cereals are delicious and offer substantial health benefits.
- **Choose lower fat.** Fat has twice as many calories as protein or carbohydrate, so it makes sense to keep your fat intake moderate if you're trying to lose weight. Choose lower fat dairy products, leaner cuts of meat and poultry, and use a light hand when adding salad dressings or cooking oils.
- **Structure your days.** Eat about every 4 hours. This will keep your metabolism up, support stable blood sugar levels and keep you from being hungry and overeating at the next meal.
- **Eat some protein at each meal to control your hunger and optimize your weight loss.** Protein foods include animal sources like meat, fish, poultry and dairy products, and vegetarian sources like nuts and seeds, peanut butter, legumes, tofu and soy beverage.
- **Love everything you eat.** You don't have to eat foods you don't like to lose weight. It's your day to day patterns that will determine your weight, not small indulgences.

A word about physical activity

Eating well is the cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. But being active is another important part of the equation. You don't need structured time at the gym if that doesn't suit you. You can walk, run, roller-blade, dance, swim, play tennis, walk the stairs, take a yoga or Pilates class... just get moving and burn some calories. You'll feel great!

What is your healthy weight?

With the help of your doctor or dietitian, you can calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI) and your waist circumference. These measures should indicate whether your weight is putting your health at risk. To use a quick and easy on-line BMI calculator visit Eatracker (www.eatracker.ca). This interactive tool not only calculates your BMI, it also helps you track your daily food and activity choices and gives you personalized feedback.

Weight Wisdom

- **Weight loss doesn't happen in a straight line.** Some days or weeks will be better than others. Keep your eye on your long-term goals.
- **The scale can deceive you.** Time of day, salt intake, even time of the month for women all affect the number on the scale. Don't weigh yourself more than once a week.
- **Plateaus.** They do happen. If your weight loss stalls try upping your exercise, and be patient. You'll pass through it.
- **Friendly sabotaging.** Sometimes friends and family can be less than supportive. Stay focused on your own goals, and remember that we all have our own issues around food.
- **Emotional eating.** We sometimes use food to fill the gap when we're bored, lonely, or depressed. Try to recognize when

• you're eating emotionally, and work on finding substitutes, like going for a walk or visiting a friend.

- **Socializing.** Try to follow healthy eating patterns when you're a dinner guest, at a party or wedding, or on vacation. These are on-going events in our lives and we need to enjoy them to the fullest while staying focused on our weight goals.

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