

DIETING

An eDiets.com Exclusive

by Edward Abramson, Ph.D.

Why do you eat? Silly question you think, but bear with me for a minute. You eat because you are hungry.

We all need to eat for nourishment. It's certainly better than starving to death. But many times we eat for enjoyment. We try a new recipe or go out for a special meal in a nice restaurant. Other times we may eat primarily to socialize. We enjoy the company of friends or family while eating. All of these are legitimate reasons for eating... in moderation.

Now, have you ever found yourself standing in front of the refrigerator eating quickly even though you're not hungry (you finished dinner half an hour ago)? You are not socializing (you're by yourself and would be embarrassed if anyone saw you eating), and you're not enjoying the food (you're gobbling so fast that you don't even taste it). So why are you eating it?

More than likely, you have been experiencing a negative emotion and are using food to make yourself feel better.

Several years ago, Dr. Richard Ganley reviewed the scientific research on emotional eating and concluded that negative emotions such as anger, depression, boredom, loneliness and anxiety are most likely to trigger eating.

For example, one woman told me about an eating binge she'd had the day before our chat. When I asked what was going on before she started eating she described her visit to her doctor. She asked him a reasonable question but he refused to answer, implying that she wasn't smart enough to understand. She didn't say anything to him, but went home and headed straight for the pantry.

When we discussed what she was feeling before eating, it became apparent that she was angry with the doctor... and with herself for not sticking up for herself.

Feeling angry made her uncomfortable; eating soothed that negative feeling.

With some practice she was able to identify when she was upset and learned to make herself feel better without eating.

When you find yourself eating even though you're not hungry, stop and ask yourself, "What am I feeling?" Sometimes it's hard to recognize exactly how we're feeling. If you're not sure, recall what was going on before you felt the urge to eat.

Did someone treat you unfairly? You're probably angry. Are you worried about something in the future? You're probably anxious. Have you been by yourself for a while? You may be lonely or bored.

Learning to identify your feelings when you have the urge to eat is the first step in controlling emotional eating.

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An eDiets.com Exclusive

by Dr. Matthew Anderson

My dictionary has a three-word definition of self-esteem: Pride in oneself. I think I will have to find another dictionary or write to the editors and bring them up to date.

Yes, self-esteem means pride in oneself, but it also means a heck of a lot more. We need a bigger, more significant definition because self-esteem is an extremely important element in our general well being, especially in regard to weight loss.

The truth is no one sustains meaningful weight loss without increasing self-esteem first. Individuals with low self-esteem have an impossible time losing weight and keeping it off. Yes, we do need to have pride in ourselves but self-esteem is more complex than that.

Here is my definition of self-esteem: The ability and willingness to identify, experience, accept and act on one's true worth, value and competence.

If I have real self-esteem, I know in my heart that I am a valuable and worthwhile human being. I am willing to see and acknowledge my skills and competencies in every aspect of my life. I know that I am loveable and respectable. I am able to accept the love and compliments that others send my way... without denial or deflection. True self-esteem contributes to my self-confidence, self-acceptance and my healthy pride in who and what I am.

Real self-esteem does not ever cause a person to have an inflated ego. In fact, inflated egos are actually cover-ups for low self-esteem. High self-esteem usually generates behavior that is appropriate and attitudes that are conducive to positive and productive relationships. High self-esteem gives us the energy to set and achieve meaningful and healthy personal and professional life goals.

Best of all, for those of us who want to lose weight, high self-esteem is very low in fat. This means that high self-esteem gives us the strength to avoid self-sabotage with food. If I feel good about myself, I will be better able to sustain eating patterns that are good for me.

If I have high self-esteem, I will have fewer and less intense episodes of fat-generating emotions like self-criticism and self-hate. High self-esteem will increase my ability to be disciplined and to make decisions that are most supportive of my long-term mental and emotional health.

Low self-esteem produces the exact opposite effect. It is the major cause of diet failure and self-sabotage. Low self-esteem, therefore, is extremely high in fat and requires our special attention if we are to ever achieve and sustain weight loss.

My guess is that you already know enough about low self-esteem and don't need me to give more details about it. I think that it would be more productive if I focus on how to create higher self-esteem.

No matter how you feel about yourself, you can increase your self-esteem if you follow these directions. Put your hopelessness aside for a few moments and just think seriously about what I am going to tell you to do.

If you don't feel hopeless, that's great. Do the exercises anyway. All of us could use a bit more self-esteem and most of us could use a lot more.

To quote my wife: "Anything worth doing well is worth doing badly at first." This means you must not give up if you initially have a hard time with these exercises. Keep on keeping on. The payoff is immense.

Step One: Write a "Kiss-Off" letter to your Inner Judge.

We all have an inner voice that judges us and contributes to our low self-esteem. I call this the Inner Judge. The first step in increasing self-esteem is to begin to shut down that voice. I have had great success with clients (me included) with this exercise. Write a letter that goes something like this:

"Dear Inner Judge, I am writing to inform you that you are no longer the authority on my self-worth. In fact, you are fired. I will no longer ask you for your opinion of me and I will no longer listen to your harsh and condemning judgments." (Continue on with as many strong and self-assertive statements as you can. Write as many letters as you like.)

Step Two: Forgive yourself for past failures and mistakes. Make a list of your failures and mistakes and begin the process of forgiving yourself **WHETHER YOU THINK YOU DESERVE IT OR NOT**. You will never make major progress in increasing self-esteem if you refuse to forgive yourself. If you have major problems with this step then I highly recommend a therapist, a rabbi, a priest or a minister.

Step Three: Ask yourself this question before all important (and medium sized) decisions: What decision will best support my self-esteem? When you get the answer, do it. The more you act in accordance with this question, the faster you will like yourself a lot better than you do today.

There are many more exercises I could suggest but these are enough for today. Try all three and let me know how you are doing. Share the exercises and your results with your friends and family. Find all the support you can get. Higher self-esteem is worth all the effort you can give.

Now... go do the exercises.

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WRITE IT DOWN!

When it comes to keeping close tabs on your diet, perhaps it's time to become your own disciplinarian. Unless you're a zillionaire movie star, your personal trainer probably cannot be at your side 24 hours a day to make sure you are eating the proper foods. So, there's a simple way to insure that you are behaving on your diet. Start logging your daily food consumption in a journal.

Create three columns in your journal and label them "food," "calories," and "fat grams." For each day, you will specify exactly what you've eaten, how many calories it consists of, and how many fat grams are stored within the meal. If you would like to be even more detail-oriented, make another column and call it 'time of day,' this way you can monitor any stumbling blocks caused by late-night binges or oversized meals.

Many experts have determined that keeping tabs on your diet through the use of a journal promotes healthy eating and stresses the old sentiment, "You're only cheating yourself." Subconsciously, the dieter who decides to sneak that late-night slice of pizza knows that he or she will have to write it down. Thus, he or she thinks twice about sneaking a cheat. Also, logging your nutritional intake can help you to monitor certain tendencies and patterns, allowing you to make conscious, intelligent changes in your eating habits .

Fortified Tip--The Dangers Of Scales!

How The Scale Can Be Either Friend or Foe in the Battle Against the Bulge!

The scale can be like a lousy personal trainer. It can be giving you bad information. In other words, do not become too dependent on this devilish, little device sitting on your bathroom floor.

It happens every morning when you mosey out of bed, somewhere between the time you take off that robe and the instant you step into the shower. For others, it happens immediately after a workout, as soon as you peel off those sweaty clothes and stand aimlessly in your birthday suit.

Then, the big moment arrives. The excitement, the tension, it all forms a giant knot in your throat. This experience is a lot like playing the roulette wheel and you know you have plenty riding on this one. Hence, the numbers that come up can spree a variety of reactions.

You step onto the scale in your bathroom and peek through your fingers at the fate staring back at you. To some, you jump up and down like you just hit the jackpot. Others shriek as if they'd just crapped out.

Well, the scale is indeed a useful tool to monitor your weight-loss developments. What other method is there to track specifically how much you've progressed in your endeavors to lose weight?

Yet, the scale can be like a lousy personal trainer. It can be giving you bad information. In other words, do not become too dependent on this devilish, little device sitting on your bathroom floor. Here are two reasons why:

* Scales are not perfect. At any given moment, it can go from being your best friend to your worst enemy. If the scale isn't tipping your way, it can throw your entire mental state off the mark. Scales can often deceive you into thinking you're heavier or lighter than you actually are. In more case, it's the latter. And by thinking that you're that far ahead of the game, the only one you'll be fooling is yourself. Instead, try going by how your clothes fit on your body or how you feel internally than relying on some imperfect machine. Take a picture of yourself at the beginning of the month and then at the end of the month to evaluate the progress. Obsession with the scale is not unlike other fixations it's certainly not healthy.

* Scales tend to dictate. Too many people are consumed with the numbers on the scale. It's not unlike the scenario of a baseball player who is completely engrossed in his batters' average. The average is just a number. He should be more concerned with winning the game. The same goes with the battle against weight loss. The goal should never be a number. If you become too concerned with reaching a specific number, by a certain time, it can lead to starvation, bulimia, malnutrition, many conditions that are not beneficial to your body or your health.

Remember, the best scale you can have is your mind. If it's telling you that the unwanted fat is disappearing from your body, chances are that you're right. For a more accurate statistic to hang your hat on, have your body fat tested every two-weeks! Your body fat percentage is a much more important number than your overall body weight!

Weighing The Pros & Cons of the Scale

by Dr. Susan Mendelsohn
eDiets.com Psychologist

Do you use your scale as a way to seek approval? Or to tell you how "good" you are doing on your diet? Do you feel the scale is your best friend or your worst enemy?

Some of us may use the scale to tell us how we are supposed to feel, but at times it may result in a form of punishment.

Let me relate an example of what I'm talking about. Let's say we overeat in a certain situation. At this time our thought process kicks in telling ourselves that we are a failure, we have no willpower, etc. This in turn, compels us to jump on the scale solely to prove what a failure we are, giving support to our irrational thoughts in the first place. This vicious cycle only serves to punish us over and over again for being human. In this case, does the scale really seem like a logical tool in helping us improve?

If this pattern of behavior sounds like you, I strongly suggest that you get rid of the scale! It is now time to listen to your own feelings and start to focus on the process of becoming healthy and listening to your own internal messages. You can trust yourself!

The scale really only tells you how much your physical body weighs. It does not take body composition (muscle weight, fat tissue, water, etc.) into account, nor does it account for your bone structure. The scale tells you how many pounds you may have lost, but certainly doesn't tell you how much fat tissue you have lost, how much muscle weight you have accumulated, what types of nutrition you are getting, and so on.

In addition, the scale will even show when there is an increase in weight but not give you any indication that it may be muscle mass (which weighs more than fat) that you have gained. (Muscle actually takes up one-fifth of the space of fat which results in inches lost, not weight lost.)

In my opinion, I'd much rather lose inches than pounds because feeling good in my clothes is far more important to me than what the scale tells me. Losing pounds does not guarantee comfortable fitting clothes.

Most importantly, the scale does not account for your emotional weight. Emotional weight refers to the 5 pounds of guilt, 20 pounds of loneliness, 10 pounds of pain, and so on, that also becomes a physically visible part of your body. Beauty comes from within and projects outward. The emotional pain of gauging your process through the scale may be what is keeping you from seeing that internal beauty.

For many individuals the scale only serves to make you feel more frustrated, guilty, anxious and worst of all it makes some feel like a failure. Thus, the vicious cycle of emotional weight gain continues.

Here's the problem with relying on external cues. After someone compliments you on how good you look, this euphoric feeling disappears after a couple of hours and you find yourself searching for another "fix." This can cause that dangerous roller coaster effect. By this I mean if you are looking for another compliment and not getting one for a great deal of time, this may cause you to spiral back into your old habits of negative thinking, overeating and sabotage.

The scale also serves as an external control. Jumping on it all the time in hopes that you will find a loss of pounds, only to find that you have maintained your weight one time, and put on a pound the next, will cloud your perception of your true success. Constantly searching for that external reinforcement prevents you from focusing on what is truly important for your health and well-being.

Therefore, internal controls will serve to help you accomplish not only your weight loss goals, but your internal happiness objectives as well.

By sticking to internal controls, you and only you are in charge of how you feel. No one or nothing else has that control over you! Looking inside yourself will provide more consistency and more hope for the future. When using your internal controls, you take full responsibility for your behaviors without blaming others for your failures. There isn't a person or thing that can make you think or act in a negative manner unless you allow them to.

Relying on the scale is not a good measure of whether or not you are a successful dieter. The scale only has the power you give it. It will not provide you with a sense of accomplishment. This sense of achievement comes from within. Behavioral techniques can replace your scale to provide you with the sense of accomplishment that you require to stay motivated.

Behavioral techniques include counting caloric/fat/protein/carbohydrate intake; documenting your exercises (amount of time spent, heart rate, type of exercise); journal writing; number of times you are consciously aware of your intake prior to eating; number of times you were able to say "no" to your trigger foods; number of times you were able to substitute an alternate activity for food; inches lost; fat tissue count; and so on. These behaviors will all give you that sense of control that you require to succeed.

Find peace and fulfillment from within and begin connecting with others in a more healthy manner rather than for "dieting approval."

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What the Scale Misses

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At one time or another, you have almost certainly stepped on a scale to check your body weight. But relying on the scale to tell you if you're at a healthy body weight can be frustrating. Understanding what the scale does and does not tell you will help you keep the scale's information in perspective.

The Difference Between Fat and Muscle

A scale simply measures your total body weight in pounds (or kilograms). It does not measure how many of those pounds are muscle, bones, blood, etc. and how many are fat. Exercise physiologists call this ratio your body composition, typically referred to as percent body fat.

Focusing on the number on the scale is problematic because you don't know how many pounds are from fat and how many are from muscle. You may have heard that "muscle weighs more than fat." That's not true. A pound of muscle weighs the same as a pound of fat: one pound. However, fat and muscle differ in an important way—muscle is much denser than fat. Think of it this way: Muscle is like a brick. Fat, on the other hand, is like cotton balls. It takes far more cotton balls than brick to make a pound. So a pound of fat takes up more space on your body than a pound of muscle.

Making Changes

Let's examine how judging yourself solely by scale weight can be misleading. Let's say you are sedentary and decide to start a fitness program that includes moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise for 20 to 30 minutes three to four days per week, and strength training two to three days per week. (Check with an IDEA fitness professional for guidelines on how to develop a safe and effective program.) If you combine this workout schedule with a sensible, adequate-calorie diet, research suggests you could potentially lose one to two pounds of body fat per week.

Your new fitness lifestyle could help you lose, say, 10 pounds of fat in the next three months. In addition, your strength training program could help you gain about three pounds of lean muscle weight, a very positive change. If you used the scale as your only reference point, you might be tempted to think your new lifestyle wasn't working very well, because you'd see only a seven-pound weight loss. But rest assured that you would have made truly positive changes.

Because of fat's low density, you'd probably see the 10-pound loss as smaller circumference measurements around your stomach, hips and thighs. That's why paying attention to the way your clothes fit is generally considered a better way to assess your progress than focusing on the scale.

If you went just by the scale's number, you might be tempted to skip strength training, and that would be a shame. Additional muscle tissue not only helps you become stronger, making daily activities easier to accomplish; it also has an extra long-term advantage: Muscle tissue expends calories all day long, even when you are at rest. Over the course of a year, a few added pounds of muscle can help you burn thousands of additional calories.

Getting Real About Weight

Keep in mind that your body weight can fluctuate by several pounds over the course of a day. This is especially true if you exercise fairly vigorously. The fluctuation is due to changes in the amount of water in your body. If you weigh yourself before and after an exercise session, you might find you've lost a few pounds. It's just water loss.

Likewise, if you weigh yourself right after a big meal, the scale might show you've gained weight. Additionally, women often show weight fluctuations in relation to hormonal changes during their monthly menstrual cycles. Checking the scale no more than once every week or two is usually best.

How much should you weigh? Health and fitness professionals frequently debate this question, but there's no clear-cut answer. If you have no risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol or Type II diabetes, and adopt an active lifestyle that incorporates regular exercise and sensible eating, the weight you achieve over time will likely be your healthy weight. Patience and persistence are the keys.

Accurately measuring changes in percent body fat is an excellent way to track your exercise progress. To find out your percent body fat, consult with a qualified fitness professional. He or she is likely to use either a skinfold caliper or the circumference measurement technique, both common methods.

ARE YOU STUCK WITH THE METABOLISM YOU'RE BORN WITH?

There's no doubt that you can significantly raise your metabolic rate by becoming more active and eating more intelligently. Here are some time-tested methods for speeding up the metabolism:

1. Add more muscle. Muscle is a fat-burning machine. Increasing your lean body percentages can increase your metabolism by 5, 10, even 15 percent or more.
2. Supplementing with ECA Stacks can boost metabolism and help you burn calories and fat more efficiently.
3. Last but certainly not least, you can alter your metabolism for the better by eating small, frequent, evenly spaced meals throughout the day. Shoot for having each meal well-balanced and roughly the same size in terms of calories.

At a minimum eat 4 meals per day -- 5 or 6 is even better. The absolute worst thing you can do if you're trying to drop fat is overeat at one single meal-our bodies are extremely good at storing excess calories (particularly carbohydrates) as fat.

So you need to avoid having one or two large meals per day. The best way to do this is to eat your small frequent meals throughout the day. Of course, what many people do is starve themselves at work all day and go home to a huge dinner. You'll never drop fat this way.

To eat right-frequent small meals-you should never feel hungry and never feel totally stuffed (holidays and/or every other weekend excluded).

FREE FALLING: THE BEST WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT

The best way to describe a safe weight-loss plan is to compare it to skydiving. While the free-falling portion of this breathtaking activity is nothing less than pulse-pounding, you know that eventually, you're going to have to pop that parachute. Otherwise, you'll end up a permanent part of the earth.

The same goes with your diet. While taking the excess weight off of your body is a truly gratifying experience, it must also be a gradual process. If the scale is dipping too much, too fast, you're destined to end in a fatal disaster. Losing weight is meant to be a slow, gradual process.

Those who are overzealous in their weight-loss intentions are likely to a) develop health problems, eating disorders, are vitamin and mineral deficiencies, or b) put all the weight right back on. New studies are also showing that rapid weight loss among women results in the increased likelihood of gallstones.

The best way to take the weight off - and keep it off - is to develop a strategy which will allow you to drop on the average of a pound and a half per week. Do not mistake quantity for quality. Eat enough to keep your energy levels up, yet be choosy in what you consume. Keep the saturated fats, the sodium, and the calories at a respectable level, and be sure to get some exercise into your everyday routine. By keeping these crucial elements in mind, it will allow your diet - and your weight loss efforts - to land safely on the ground.

First Steps To Weight Loss

by Cathryn Majorossy

The first step if you're trying to lose weight is to have a plan! Plan on the fact that weight loss doesn't happen over night. Plan on the fact that you will feel great as soon as you start to lose weight ! You want the pounds off once and for all, so let's try a different approach this time. Leave the "all or nothing" diet at the door and move on to smart weight loss.

Gradual changes are the smart approach to losing weight and will get you the results you want! First set up a realistic goal weight. Pick a weight you have felt good at in the past or a weight you know you, personally, would feel good at--not what Cosmo models feels good at! If you have 50 pounds to lose, start with a 25 pound goal first!! When you reach that, you will feel great and be ready for the next step!

Don't put a time limit on your weight loss, as long as you are serious about finally losing the weight, and you **START TODAY**, you will reach your goal eventually!

Second, at the beginning of each week decide what lifestyle change you will incorporate into your week; stick with it and do the same the following week. These gradual changes will help you to incorporate healthier practices and make them into habits. You will see results! Many times people start off strong only to fade out after a couple of weeks, and they ultimately end up right where they started. Making gradual, permanent changes will help you to lose the weight and **KEEP IT OFF!**

Here are a few tips to get you started: (take one a week, until you've incorporated them all into your everyday lifestyle!)

1. Eat 4-6 small meals throughout the day--this helps your body more effectively use the nutrients and gets your metabolism moving.
2. Stay away from highly processed foods, fast foods, sugary foods, sweets, and high fat foods.
3. Incorporate vegetables in place of pastas and breads.
4. Switch to lower fat food items and choices especially when it comes to items like cheese, milk, meats, salad dressings, and condiments.
5. Drink at least 8 glasses of water everyday--shy away from soda and juices.
6. Begin to incorporate daily exercise into your routine--begin with 20 minutes 4 times per week.
7. Don't "clean your plate" of all the food! Leave a little food on your plate every time you eat. Learn to eat one portion or one serving (restaurants often give huge portions!)
8. Try not to eat 2 hours before bedtime, and make your last meal of the day higher in protein and lower in carbohydrates (for example, grilled chicken with roasted vegetables)
9. Take a multivitamin each day to ensure proper nutrients and consider supplementing your program with a weight loss product that will assist you.

Diet Planning

It will be difficult to lose fat with even the healthiest foods if you overeat. Always dish up what you think will be a little less than you need to satisfy you and then pay very close attention to how you feel, wait 20 minutes before going back, etc. The Recommended Daily Calories that are figured out for you on the Perfect Diet is a good guideline, but only YOU know for sure. It's all about really listening to your body and acting appropriately.

Many diet plans tell you what to eat, how much to eat, and when to eat it. This does not teach you how to attend to your own cravings, desires, or hunger. This teaches you nothing about living and feeling healthier and happier. Everyone has different strengths, weaknesses, and eating patterns.

You will only become successful when you learn to respond to your own feelings and not to what someone else says is right for you. It is critical that you learn how to be aware of and attend to both feelings of hunger and fullness, and learn what will satisfy you both physically and psychologically.

Your own body, not someone else's routine (i.e. my meal plans), is the very best guide for how much you need to eat. Try to get in the habit of tuning in to your internal cues of hunger, and not just eating the amount of food you think you should, or tuning in to external cues like the sight or smell of food. It's okay to eat any amount of food to feel both physically and psychologically satisfied. But you must learn to stop when you feel comfortably full, not stuffed.

In addition to learning how it feels to be hungry, full, and uncomfortably full, you must learn from your mistakes. If you eat past comfortable fullness, don't beat yourself up about it. There are bound to be times when you eat too much for your body's comfort. Try to remember how eating too much feels, and remind yourself of this feeling the next time you are tempted to overeat. With practice, you will change your eating patterns and start eating when your body tells you you're hungry, and stop eating after you're gained a satisfied, energized feeling.

When deciding portion sizes for each meal, take a conservative approach. When preparing portion sizes for myself, I always choose a little bit less than I think will satisfy my hunger and cravings. If I don't quite get enough, I can always go back for more. But if I eat too much, it's too late. I already gave my body more fuel than it can use for energy, and it will likely store the excess as fat.

So, a very important key to my success has been striking a good balance between eating enough to satisfy me and to provide my body with the nutrients it needs to improve my energy, increase muscle strength, and keep my metabolism revved up, etc. But I try not to eat so much that it makes it easy for my body to turn unused food into fat. This is a skill that takes practice, but once perfected, will go a long way in helping you achieve the results you desire.

Also, if not totally satisfied, before going back for seconds, take a breather. Give your body 10-20 minutes to decide if you really are still hungry or if you are already physically or psychologically satisfied. Also, don't feel as if you must eat everything on your plate. When you start to feel comfortably full, stop and save the rest for another snack or meal. Instead of wolfing everything down, take time to savor your meal; you will notice signals of fullness much easier.

Eating more slowly, pausing throughout the meal, drinking a glass of water, and waiting before taking a second helping are not tricks to get you to eat less but rather ways for you to develop sensitivity in detecting hunger and fullness. They are strategies to encourage attentive eating that is more likely to be satisfying.

You must believe in yourself. Listen to your body with regard to physical and psychological hunger. This will help you distinguish between what you really want and what you think you want due to habit. Once you've mastered this skill, you will be greatly empowered. Mastery will allow you to make the choices and

be in charge of your life and your eating. These skills will last a lifetime, can be applied to every aspect of your life, and again, are absolutely critical to your success.

FOR EFFECTIVE WEIGHT LOSS, KEEP IT SIMPLE

Despite the countless books, articles, and television shows on the subject of losing fat, it's a fairly simple and straight-forward proposition.

If you're serious about dropping some fat in the upcoming weeks, then on a high level you have to accept only one rule: you must want to loss fat MORE than you want to maintain your usual eating and exercise patterns (or lack thereof). It's really as simple as that.

Needless to say, we often tend to over-think things. The basic reality is that if you want something bad enough, you'll make it happen. You know you will. We all have that inner strength within us.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that its easy, just that its not exactly complicated. There's a big difference there.

The hard part, of course, is staying focused on your goals and committed to making them happen. What with all the distractions in life. But you have it right there inside you. Now you just have to tap into it.

If you're prone to overeating at certain meals, then you need to get tough with yourself. Here's what you do. You decide how much you're going to eat before you even start eating. And you stick to it.

That's right, don't get caught in the trap of saying, "well, I'm not completely full yet. I could handle another portion." Remember, its not calories thats the problem for most people . . . its EXCESS calories. These are calories over and beyond what the body needs to maintain health, build muscle, etc . . . Its these excess calories that end up as fatty tissue deposits on the body.

So you need to decide before you even begin what's a sensible meal for you. I'm not talking about necessarily counting calories. I'm talking about taking reasonable portions on your plate, eating them, and then just being committed to the simple reality that you're done.

What's a reasonable portion? You decide. Just be honest with yourself.

For most people, a reasonable portion would be one potato, a slice of lean meat, and some greens. You can always use the old size of your fist example: that is, take portions that are roughly equivalent to the size of your closed hand. Forget about the all-you-can-eat buffets (at least for 6 days of the week you can splurge a bit on the seventh day if you have to).

The Real Deal on Diet Quick Fixes

by Susan L. Burke, MS, RD/LD, CDE
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Can you buy a "fat trapper?" What about a "fat blaster?" Can you lose weight without dieting?... or without exercise? Can you lose weight while sleeping?

If you listen to the radio or watch infomercials, you may think so! But, buyer beware: if it sounds too good to be true, it surely is.

Primarily, a fad diet is impossible to live with for the rest of your life. Fad or quick-fix diets, include low-carbohydrate diets, low-fat diets, high-fat diets, liquid diets and severe calorie-restricted diets. Fad diets usually make unfounded claims about weight loss being enhanced by restricting certain foods, (usually carbohydrate), and often claims rapid weight loss of more than two pounds per week.

Fad diets often promise an all-you-can-eat meal plan and are usually unbalanced nutritionally. Many are very low calorie (less than 1,200 per day). What they have in common is the yo-yo effect of dieting, losing weight, regaining the weight lost, and dieting again.

The main problem is that we're looking to "melt the fat" or "blast the fat" away, and we all know that permanent weight loss only results from making changes to our lifestyle. This includes altering what we eat, how we prepare it and how much we eat.

High protein/low carbohydrate diets are especially popular and there are more than one version on the market. These diets promote quick weight loss by severely restricting healthy foods. The diet usually doesn't distinguish between healthy carbohydrate, like fruits and whole grains which are full of beneficial fiber, and simple sugars, like white sugar, white bread and processed starches.

The advocates of high protein diets direct you to eat excessive amounts of protein and fat. This becomes unhealthy because your brain needs carbohydrate for fuel. Staying on this regimen for a period of time causes the body to go into a fasting state called ketosis.

Ketosis occurs when muscle is metabolized instead of fat. The result is quite unpleasant. Side effects include nausea, dehydration, headaches, light-headedness, irritability, bad breath, kidney problems and constipation.

Why does severely restricting protein produce quick weight loss? When you eat protein, two of the byproducts formed in the liver are nitrogen and urea. If your diet is excessive in protein, this causes the liver and the kidneys to work extra hard to metabolize the protein and to eliminate the toxic byproducts, hence the side effects. This produces a diuretic effect and an increased loss of fluid that shows up on the scale as weight loss.

Since high protein diets can speed up kidney disease, this diet is especially bad news for diabetics, who are more prone to kidney damage. High protein diets deplete calcium as well, which will increase the risk for osteoporosis.

With all the research that shows that heart disease, certain cancers, osteoporosis and obesity are related to high fat diets, why would someone want to concentrate on an animal-based diet? Research shows that populations who eat the highest proportion of whole plant foods, including fruit, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, have the lowest rate of cancers, including prostate, breast and colon cancer.

Also beware if you read or hear someone say a certain diet is "a miracle" or "unbelievable." Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it surely is.

The true meaning of the word diet (which comes from the Greek word "diaita") is "manner of living." Diet means the foods you normally eat -- it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with weight loss.

A balanced diet will provide adequate nutrition for you to maintain your weight. That's what keeps us healthy. This doesn't mean that a person cannot occasionally eat rich and fatty foods. However, it's your entire diet for the week that will prove to be healthy or not.

What's proven successful for gradual weight loss and maintenance is a meal plan that's balanced with adequate calories and nutrition, including healthy amounts of carbohydrate (preferably complex carbohydrate), protein (but not excessive amounts) and minimal fat (especially saturated fat).

Adding aerobic exercise into the plan is important, and building some lean muscle mass will improve your metabolism and appearance. Your meal plans [should be] designed to provide good nutrition and variety, which is, after all, the spice of life!

Did you know...

We take for granted that our food is wholesome and inspected by the Food and Drug Administration. But, did you know that Congress deregulated the dietary supplement industry in 1994... and the FDA does not necessarily inspect, review or approve any dietary supplements?

There are more than 20,000 dietary supplements on the market, and the FDA has reviewed only 46 or so. Dietary supplements may pack pesticide residue, chemical contaminants, or heavy metals such as lead and mercury.

Some independent tests have shown that some products contain none of the active ingredient listed, and other products do not break down in the body, or provide much more or much less of the active ingredient listed.

Just because a product is labeled "natural" does not make it safe. Not until there has been a complaint is the FDA required to restrict a substance. Over the past few years there have been many recalls involving dietary supplements.

Ephedrine, marketed as ephedra or ma huang, is a central nervous system stimulant and decongestant similar to amphetamines. Ephedrine increases heart rate and blood pressure and it is banned by the International Olympic Committee and National Collegiate Athletic Association. It has been linked to many health problems and deaths.

Most recently, Lipokinetix, distributed by Syntrex Innovations Inc., has been implicated in several cases of serious liver injury. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has received reports of at least six persons who developed acute hepatitis and/or liver failure while using Lipokinetix.

If you're taking prescription medications, always tell your physician about any and all dietary supplements that you may be taking, including vitamins and minerals, and any diet aids. Some prescription medications may produce adverse side effects if taken with certain herbs.

I don't advise taking supplements that promise quick weight loss or quick energy. What works is a healthy meal plan with good sources of protein, carbohydrate and a moderate amount of healthy fat.

I don't take chances with my health, and neither should you!

eDiets Director of Nutrition Services Susan L. Burke, M.S., R.D., L.D., CDE is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, and a Certified Diabetes Educator who

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FOR LASTING FAT LOSS, SLOW AND STEADY WINS EVERY TIME

Bob Myhal

One of the worst things you can do when trying to drop fat is to go on a severely calorie restricted diet. Its bound to fail for several reasons.

First, on a very basic level, youre clearly less likely to stick to a diet that represents a drastic change in your norm. Such a diet can inevitably lead to a rebound effect where you very quickly add back all the fat you temporarily lost and more. This is what happens to most people.

A far better route is to make gradual changes in your diet and your lifestyle . . . changes that are more permanent and lead to more permanent results.

Try the six week plan. Every week try to change just one aspect of your current diet and one aspect of your training program that needs work.

On the diet end, for instance, maybe during week one you begin by dropping the soda and the fake fruity juices (loaded with processed sugar), and you start drinking water instead. Not too difficult.

In terms of training, maybe your week one goal is to do two sessions of cardio work for 20 minutes each. Totally doable even for the busiest people.

For week two you make an additional change in your diet maybe drop the potato chips and other processed snacks for apples and natural alternatives. And you can make another small change in your training perhaps add a third day of cardio.

The goal is that by week six you will have gradually developed the permanent diet and lifestyle changes that will result in significant fat loss, and better health in general, over time.

GET TIME ON YOUR SIDE:

Watch the sweets. Watch the calories. Watch the fats. Watch the sodium. And just as importantly, watch the clock. While Americans are increasingly obsessed with what and how much they consume in their bodies, the when of such issues is often overlooked.

The ideal eating pattern for those looking to keep the excess baggage at a minimum is to indulge in five or six small meals per day, spaced at an average of three to four hours apart. The key, of course, is that big, hearty breakfast, which revs up the metabolism and keeps your machine burning fats and calories at a steady clip. Try to decrease the size of the meal the later the hour becomes.

DRINK WATER FOR FAT LOSS?

by Bob Myhal

I'm asked every day if there's a "magic" pill out there . . . something that'll help shed that excess fat tissue and keep it off for good. What if I told you that there is something that's inexpensive, readily available, safe, without side-effects, and just may be the most effective fat loss substance anywhere?

What is this mystery substance? This magic pill that you've been waiting for? Well, it isn't a pill at all. It's good old water. That's right, pure H₂O.

Water is without a doubt one of the most underrated and yet dramatically effective keys to weight loss and, in particular, body fat reduction. There's absolutely no denying that drinking a lot of pure, clean water (8-12 glasses per day) will help you get and stay LEAN.

Let me make it perfectly clear here that we're talking about plain water . . . not soda (which is loaded with sugar; even diet soda is full of salt and chemical sweeteners), not coffee, tea, juice, blah, blah, blah. None of these count. Just WATER.

Why is water such an effective fat loss aide? There's several important factors:

--Water seems to act as a natural appetite suppressant. In fact, people on diets who do not increase their water intake will find themselves feeling "hungry" much more often and more severely than those who do up their water consumption. One possible reason for this is that dieters are getting less water from their food, because they're eating less food, so the body is actually craving fluid. These cravings can be significantly curbed with increased water intake.

--Consuming enough water allows the kidneys to function optimally. This in turn enables the liver to become more efficient at metabolizing fat. The result is an increased fat burning capacity in the liver.

--When the body doesn't get sufficient amounts of water, it'll metabolically shift in a defensive and protective strategy to "preserve" what it has. This can only result in a negative slowdown of bodily functions and processes. Incidentally, something similar happens when you cut fat completely out of your diet: the body compensates by holding on to as much of its fat stores as possible, thus defeating the purpose. This is why I recommend a nutrition program rich in "good" fats which promote metabolism.

In addition to fat loss, drinking adequate amounts of water also has numerous other biological and physical benefits. Maintaining healthy and vibrant appearing skin is an example of one such added benefit.

Bottom Line: drinking sufficient amounts of pure water should be the first step in any serious fat reduction program.

Water and Weight Loss

Jun.02 2001

by:Ellie Winslow, MT, CFT

Do you have any idea how very, very important water is to your life? Well, perhaps you know 'sorta' in general, but I'm going to give you some details-some that I'm pretty sure you didn't know.

First of all you can go weeks without food and still survive, but only hours without water. Ok, you probably knew that one. But did you know that about 75% of Americans are chronically dehydrated? Why does it matter? Well, all those trillions of chemical reactions of which we've spoken before, happen in a watery medium inside the cells. There is even a pumping system that changes the concentration of some important minerals from the inside to the outside (and vice versa) of the cells, so that the osmotic pressure of water inside and outside the cells stays optimal. Too much and the cell bursts, but too little and those chemical reactions are in trouble.

Well, your body is really good at prioritizing the important stuff. And water is pretty high in the priority list. So when the body gets slightly dehydrated, it goes into "conserve water" mode. Just as when you skip meals, you tell your body you're in a famine, and it gets real good at conserving calories. (The mechanism for famine strategy is that the fat cell membrane gets very permeable to fat going into storage and very IM-permeable to fat leaving the fat cell.) When you tell your body you're in a drought, it starts hoarding water and packs it in between the cells (extra-cellular water). Hormones are big players in this game, too.

So, do this self-test. Sit comfortably, press the thumb of one hand into your shinbone on the other leg, that place on your lower leg where there isn't anything much but skin. Hold it there for 30 seconds. Now when you lift your thumb off, can you still feel a dent in your leg where it was pressing? If the answer is yes, what you just did is press the extra-cellular water out of that spot and it will take a little time for it to go back to being smooth. What did it tell us? That you're holding water in places you shouldn't, and the first line of defense is DRINK MORE WATER so you tell your body you're not in a drought and it can go back to not hoarding! An extreme case of water retention is swollen feet and legs that you can see. The above test just indicates a minor retention.

Seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? If your body is bloated, it means you need MORE water, not less. Now, there are other reasons (pathologies) why someone might be holding water that are beyond the scope of this article. But here's a free, non-toxic treatment to try before getting into the not so free, and probably very toxic pharmaceuticals. Diuretics make bodies get rid of water all right, but they also flush out important minerals! And they are only symptom treatment, not cause treatment. Besides, the body will react to the perceived threat by holding on tighter...and the cycle escalates.

Next important function of water we're going to discuss is for those of you who have weight to lose. Guess what! Water might be that magic pill we've been looking for! Ok, now you have to understand just a little bit of physiology. We're going to talk about two organ systems. First are the kidneys. Their job is to get the garbage out of your blood. All the toxins and by-products, have to be filtered out, the balances of many substances (salts, acids, etc) have to be maintained. That's what your kidneys do, and water is the flushing mechanism-and it's eliminated as urine. As long as you drink plenty of water, the kidneys do this job admirably.

Now another system is the liver. It performs a number of functions, but the one we're concerned with here, is turning fat molecules into glucose (fuel) to be burned. The process is called gluco-neo-genesis-making new glucose-and it's made from stored fat. Hey! That's what we want-to make fuel from stored fat! That's how we'll get that midsection slimmed down!

All well and good as long as you're drinking enough water so that the kidneys can do their job optimally. But the body is adaptable! If water intake is low, the kidney function isn't optimal and the liver kicks in to help detoxify the blood---because toxic blood is a killer, there has to be some redundancy to make sure it's

cleaned up. So if the liver is helping the kidneys, it doing less of its job of making new fuel out of old fat! It will, by default, be metabolizing less fat.

Get your liver at full throttle helping you lose that weight! Drink more water!

Ok, now just some quick stuff about water:

1. It suppresses appetite, naturally.
2. Water helps to maintain muscle tone. A hydrated muscle can grow, a dehydrated muscle can only catabolize (tear down.)
3. Water helps rid the body of waste-not only urine but feces. More water, softer stools, less constipation.
4. Mild dehydration will slow metabolism by as much as 3%
5. If your thirst mechanism is weak from prolonged moderate dehydration, you will mistake thirst for hunger, and eat instead of drinking.
6. Lack of water triggers fatigue.
7. Nearly all the dieters in a University of Washington study, reported that a midnight glass of water shut down hunger pangs.
8. A 2% drop in body hydration can trigger fuzzy short-term memory and trouble with math and focus on printed matter or computer screen.
9. Adequate water decreases risk of colon cancer, breast cancer, and bladder cancer.

HOW MUCH WATER?

You need to drink enough water, but there are various suggestions about how much is enough. The standard answer is 8 glasses of water a day. If you're not already getting that much, then 8 is going to be a big improvement. I think you will be healthier if you can get closer to 16 glasses of water a day and your rate of burning old fat is going to go UP! If that seems like a lot, just get as close to it as you can. I, and many of the people I teach and work with, ALWAYS have a quart of water at hand. Don't leave home without it! Yes, you will have to go to the bathroom more often! Hello! That's the point-you will be flushing more toxins out and helping your body to be (or get) slim and healthy again. At any age!