

EXERCISE

A New Beginning

(www.atozfitness.com)

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By Paul Bunting

So you are thinking about starting a fitness program huh? This could well be something that you have thought over time and time again with nothing to show for your thoughts. If this is so, you are certainly not alone, as there are literally tens and hundreds of thousands of people who seem to have these re-occurring thoughts of doing something to feel better, even a fitness program. To many of you the word fitness is enough to send dismal thoughts down your spine. The truth of the matter is that a fitness program does not have to be that bad, in fact it can be quite enjoyable if done the right way. Before we even get into any sort of explanation as to what a fitness program requires let us first take a look at what fitness means.

The state or condition of being fit; suitability or appropriateness. Good health or physical condition, especially as the result of exercise and proper nutrition.

Biology. The extent to which an organism is adapted to or able to produce offspring in a particular environment.

Amazing, there is nothing about grueling, smelly, taxing and demanding painful exercise sessions. Although some of you may actually enjoy this kind of training fitness does not have to be difficult. The level of perceived difficulty that many people hold as a pre-conceived notion as to what fitness means simply does not exist. Your imagination can act as a wonderful mechanism used to rationalize it's way out of something that your mind may perceive as difficult, or not enjoyable.

For those of you who believe fitness to be a task to which you derive no enjoyment maybe you should take a look at the series of events that led you to that point. Unfortunately there are many people who happen to have bad experiences with an exercise program. For some of you it could be that you purchased a product that did not work like you thought it should have. For others maybe it was a bad gym experience, like not knowing what you are doing and pushing to the point where you hurt yourself. It is sad but true that most people would love to get in better shape, feel better, perform better but do not know how they are going to get there.

For some of you these articles may be a great starting point. I am going to be laying down the foundation for you to be able to achieve great things with the principals that are going to be discussed in this column, ranging from thought processes, to complicated exercise and nutritional programs. It would make more sense to talk about the beginning stages of an exercise program rather than advanced nutrition right now, so I am going to keep it relatively simple.

The pressing issue here is that you would like to look better, feel better, have more energy, perform better, and all that good stuff, but you do not want to exercise. As I mentioned before a lot of you may have a pre-conceived idea of what exercise is. What I am going to tell you here is that exercise does not have to be what your pre-conceived notion tells you it is. Your exercise program could well start right here right now! For those of you who do want to get started I am going to take you through a series of simple exercises, and we will be on the road to success.

For this exercise all that you need is a sheet of paper and something to write with, and no I am not going to have you visualize what you want you body to look like. Simply write down what comes to mind with the word fitness. Your receptiveness towards any sort of fitness program is going to be evident with what you wrote. If you used adjectives like, painful, boring, nazi like, no fun, rabbit food, or any other negative

connotation to describe your feelings to fitness chances are that you have a picture of something that you tried before that did not work, and was not fun. On the other hand if your description went something to the tune of, challenging, high energy, a great stress buster, time to feel good, chances are you already exercise, or are looking forward to starting up again.

If you had some not too nice thoughts associated with fitness, but you do not like the way you feel or look right now it could well be time to re-think your outlook about fitness. For starters there are thousands of possibilities to look at when it comes time to select something that you are going to do on a regular basis as a fitness program. Exercise does not have to mean going to a public gym and weightlifting. Yoga, roller blading, biking, walking, hiking, martial arts, spinning, plyometric exercises, and intensive stretching are all alternatives to weight lifting. If you like weight lifting that is great too! The point being is that you do not have to just do one form of exercise for your exercise regimen.

Before you actually do get started with any kind of exercise there are some important preparation that you should take so that you can avoid an injury, or any bad feelings that you may associate with exercise. First step is to make an appointment with your doctor and get a physical. It is dangerous to go from sedentary to active without knowing the present condition of your body. It is bad enough to not do any form of exercise but it is far worse to going from nothing to a whole lot in a matter of a couple of days. By doing this you risk getting seriously injured, or even experiencing a heart attack.

After getting clearance from your doctor you know what you are going to be capable of, and what to steer clear of. Now that you know what you are capable of actually doing it is time to actually select what kind of exercise you find interesting, or you are willing to try. You may want to try several different kinds of exercises before you decide what you like and are going to be doing.

This opens a whole new issue of where to get information about exercise. The best places to look for information about the different forms of exercise and how to do them are rather abundant. Magazines on almost any topic of exercise can be found at your local bookstore, and if the internet is your thing there are more fitness sites online than you could possibly view in a ten year period! Consulting a professional is another great way to get ideas of directions to take your fitness program. It really is not difficult.

Write It Down!

by Greg Landry, M.S.
Special For eDiets.com

Research shows that people who actually set goals and write them down are much more likely to reach those goals than someone who simply has a vague idea in mind. This holds true for exercise.

When it comes to fitness you should set three different goals:

1. The total number of aerobic exercise sessions (walking, jogging, cycling, aerobic dance, rowing, etc.) per month. For example, if your goal is to exercise six days per week, you would multiply 6 by 4.3 (average weeks in a month) which gives you a goal of 26 exercise sessions for the month.
2. The total number of aerobic exercise minutes for the month. For example, if your goal is to do an average of 30 aerobic minutes in each session and 26 sessions for the month, then your goal would be 780 aerobic exercise minutes for the month ($30 \times 26 = 780$).
3. The total number of weight training sessions for the month. If your goal is to do three weight training sessions per week, you would multiply 3 by 4.3 (average weeks in a month). Your goal would be 13 weight training sessions per month.

At the beginning of each month, fill in a calendar with the days that you plan to do each of your aerobic and weight training sessions. Also list your total aerobic minutes goal for each session (30 minutes in our example). Some days you may end up doing more or less than 30 minutes, but your goal is to average 30 minutes per session and thus 780 minutes for the month in our example.

Once you've exercised, check off that day on your calendar and also list the number of aerobic minutes you exercised. Keep a running total of your minutes for the month.

Reward yourself for reaching your monthly goals. Make it something that you can really look forward to. Here are ideas from a few of my subscribers:

"My husband is very supportive of me losing weight and getting fit and he suggested that I buy a new outfit each month when I reach my exercise goals. That REALLY motivates me!"

"I'm a single mom struggling to raise two young children, work, and lose weight. But I've decided to make my health a priority by rewarding myself for exercising consistently. Once a month when I reach my goals, I hire a sitter for my children and I do a 'pamper day' at a local shop. I get a manicure and a facial. It's something that I look forward to all month and when I don't feel like exercising it motivates me."

"My reward for attaining my fitness goals is a simple one. I have a friend who I love spending time with, but she lives two hours from me. And with four children I often don't feel like I can take the time to visit her. But I've started giving myself that time as an incentive to exercise consistently. I've done this for three months so far and it's been great."

"I'm a very goal-oriented person in most areas of my life so I thought I should do the same with my exercise. I love to golf but don't get to very often because of time and expense. I decided to set monthly goals for exercise and reward myself for reaching those goals by playing golf once a month. My wife isn't crazy about me playing golf, but she sees how it's motivated me to exercise and has encouraged me to continue doing it. I'm very strict about it. If I don't reach my goals, I don't reward myself."

Set your goals, do the work and reward yourself. I think you'll be surprised at how well it can work for YOU!

Don't Give Up! 3 Surefire Ways To Ensure Weight Loss

by Greg Landry, M.S.

Special For eDiets.com

"Greg, I've thrown in the towel. I'm 48 and I've been struggling to lose weight for as long as I can remember. I'm tired of fighting it so I'm not going to fight it anymore."

I receive several heart-tugging email messages like this every day -- they come from people who have given up on weight loss. They are at their wits' end and don't know what to do. They've "tried it all" and believe it's impossible for them to lose weight.

Many of them have lost weight, gained it all back and packed on a few more pounds! Some have struggled with losing weight all their lives and have never found success. One fed-up female from Alabama wrote, "I have been trying to lose about 60 pounds for over 23 years. I quit! I'm resolved to the fact that I will be fat for the rest of my life."

How sad. But, I'm happy to tell you this lady, with a little guidance, is now 65 pounds lighter than she was a year ago. And, she sports muscle tone. Needless to say, she no longer believes that she'll be fat for the rest of her life.

I tell you this simply to illustrate the fact that you don't have to give up on weight loss. You CAN lose weight, but you have to be willing to do what it takes.

If we look at people who have been successful at losing weight, and maintaining that loss, a couple of things become very apparent. There are two factors present in the lives of most of them.

1. They do some form of aerobic exercise five to seven days per week. These people aren't exercise wimps! They know how critically important this is to their weight loss and maintenance so they get out and do it! They average 45 minutes per day with the range being 30 to 90 minutes. This not only burns lots of calories, but, perhaps more importantly, it elevates their basal metabolic rate.

2. They do some type of weight training two to three days per week. This has a tremendous affect on basal metabolic rate and muscle tone. Success at maintaining weight loss is much higher in people who have weight trained while they were dieting versus those who haven't.

Obviously, healthy eating habits are also very important. However, most of these people say that their exercise habits seem to dictate their eating habits. They've found if they can be consistent with exercise, their eating habits seem to fall into place.

I've had many clients tell me that their daily exercise puts them in a healthy frame of mind and helps them make better food choices.

I firmly believe that a major factor in most people's frustration with weight loss is that they haven't been told the truth about exercise. You see, 20 minutes, three days per week isn't going to cut it for weight loss. If you're serious then you have to get serious about exercise and realize that it takes time. But always remember: it will happen!

It's all about changing your basal metabolism through exercise. It's about looking at exercise as a part of your daily routine, (just like brushing your teeth). It's about viewing exercise as something you're doing to get healthy and feel great!

If you vigorously pursue fitness and health, weight loss will happen. I've seen this work for many people who gave up on weight loss. It can work for YOU! Get movin'!

7 Keys To Supercharging Your Metabolism

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You hear it all the time - "metabolism," but what is it? It's the process of converting food to energy (movement and heat). Metabolism happens in your muscles and organs and the result of it is what we commonly refer to as "burning calories." Metabolic rate is the speed at which this process is occurring.

"Basal metabolic rate" (BMR) is the metabolic rate or caloric expenditure needed to maintain basal body functions such as your heart beating, breathing, muscle tone, etc. Basal metabolism accounts for about 75% of the calories you expend on a daily basis!

The good news is that there are 7 ways you can "boost" your BMR! The more of these you're able to incorporate into your life, the more you'll boost your metabolism. That means you'll be expending ("burning") more calories 24 hours a day!

1. Tone your muscles with weight training three days per week. Toned muscles send your metabolism through the roof. Do it!
2. Do some type of aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, swimming, stationary cycling, aerobic dancing, etc.) on a DAILY basis (preferably in the morning) for 30 to 60 minutes! Forget this twice-a-week stuff. Your body was designed to be active on a daily basis! When you are, your metabolism will soar!
3. Always eat breakfast! Skipping breakfast sends the message to your body that you're starving because you haven't had food for a while. As a protective mechanism, your metabolism slows down. Food, especially complex carbohydrates, fuels your metabolism.
4. Never eat less than 1200 calories per day! Less than 1200 is usually not enough to support your basal metabolism and thus will slow your metabolism.
5. In addition to your regular aerobic exercise, take a 10 to 30 minute walk at lunch or in the evening. This serves to boost your metabolism even more!
6. Look for situations to be active. Park as far from the store as you can (when safe) rather than looking for the closest parking spot. Use the stairs rather than the elevator, a rake rather than a blower, etc. Look for the "hard" way to do things! Make your life an active one.
7. Incorporate "intervals" into most of your aerobic sessions. Intervals are a powerful tool to help boost your metabolism.

Intervals are brief periods (about one minute) of more intense exercise mixed into your regular aerobic exercise sessions. For example, if you're walking, you would do a one minute interval of faster walking about every five minutes throughout your exercise session.

Here's how it will look; you'll start with your normal three to five minute warm-up and then five minutes into your workout you do your first interval, one minute of faster walking (or perhaps jogging). At the end of that minute you should be "winded" and ready to slow down.

You'll slow down to your normal exercising speed for the next four minutes and then your fifth minute is another one minute interval. This pattern continues throughout your exercise session. Get started today! You'll feel better and your metabolism will be in great shape.

Always check with your doctor before making any changes in your exercise program.

Author and exercise physiologist, Greg Landry, offers a variety of unique weight loss and fitness programs at his site, such as the "Weight Loss and Fitness Insiders Club!" Visit his site at.. <http://www.Landry.com> copyright 2001 by Greg Landry, M.S.

SEVEN HEALTH AND FITNESS MYTHS YOU NEED TO KNOW!! !

Bob Myhal

Myth #1: Starving yourself is the best way to lose weight.

Reality: Starving yourself is the quickest way to get your body to downshift your metabolism thereby bringing your weight loss efforts to a screeching halt.

Myth #2: To build a lean muscular body you need to train for hours virtually every day in the gym.

Reality: The ideal fat-burning, muscle-building workout session should last no more than 1 hour.

Myth #3: Moderate aerobic exercise is the best way to burn fat.

Reality: High intensity aerobic exercise combined with resistance training is the proven way to maximize fat loss.

Myth #4: To maximize fat loss, aerobic exercise should be performed at a consistent, moderate pace for an extended period of time.

Reality: To maximize your fat burning efforts, aerobic exercise should be varied, intense, and brief.

Myth #5: Stretching is a great way to warm up before resistance training . . . it reduces the risk of injury.

Reality: The latest studies suggest that stretching is not a good way to warm-up ... it may actually decrease muscle contraction strength and increase the risk of injury. Light cardiovascular exercise may be the best way to warm-up.

Myth #6: Lifting weights will make women bigger and bulkier.

Reality: Intelligent resistance training will make women smaller and leaner.

Myth #7: More is better.

Reality: Better is better.

Are You worried about Gaining too much Size from Weight Training?

By Mandi Gibbons

A Common Concern

I have written about this specific topic several times in my Newsletter as it seems a very common concern among women especially. The most frequently asked questions regarding this issue are: "I would like to increase my muscle tone but I am afraid that if I use weights I will look like the body builders in the muscle magazines etc" or "I have recently begun a weight program and I am finding that I am putting on more weight plus bulking up. How do I achieve muscle tone without getting bigger?"

You Need to Train for Big Muscles to Get Big Muscles

Body Building for very large muscles or muscle mass is only achieved by training long hard hours, for many years in a specific manner to reach those goals. I myself love the physique of a body builder but it doesn't necessarily mean that I want my muscles as big as that. However I can appreciate the sheer hard work that goes into that type of training. I have often used the techniques of body building myself to gain muscle size when wanting to create a more muscular look without gaining too much size or looking masculine.

What You Eat will Encourage You to Bulk Up

One thing you need to watch out for when beginning your weight training program is what you eat. Why!? Because what you eat effects the way your body reacts to your training program. Certain foods and the amount of those foods eaten can cause you to bulk up, rather than reduce your body size or to cut up rather than bulk up.

How Eating Affects Your Size and Shape when Partaking in a Training Program

Ok. Reviewing your eating program is one of the most important things for you to do when starting your exercise program. When most people start training they find that they become very hungry, because they are expending more energy, which then leads them to eat more. The most common food people reach out for when they are super hungry is either really fatty foods, high sugar foods or foods that are extremely high in starchy carbohydrates. Eg Rice, pasta, bread, cereals, grains, etc.

Overeating to Compensate for Exercise and How it Increases Your Body Size

If you begin to "carb up", as mentioned above, you need to be training to burn off that type of food intake, which would often be more in the line of an athlete's or a body builder's etc training program. This means that any excess food you eat and are not burning off will most likely store as body fat, which obviously will increase your body size. So what you eat is very important especially if you are training for a leaner appearance.

Putting On Weight when Starting Your New Exercise Program

Most people when they start exercising will put on a kilo or so. This is normally due to muscle growth. Even just a small amount of resistance training can cause this, especially if you haven't trained in a while. But don't worry because this is only weight not your measurements. Muscle weighs more than fat so you may have already started losing some body fat, but because you have been performing weight training exercises you have stimulated muscle growth, thus the gain in weight. This is GREAT NEWS and means your body is reacting to your new training program. If you are doing the right thing by your program you will soon be seeing some fantastic changes in your body shape. So be persistent!

It is Easy to Get Confused when Trying to Choose What Food Types will Help Your Training Goals

Choosing what we should eat can be baffling. Often we tend to place it in the too hard basket and decide to start "tomorrow" on our new eating program. Honestly, once you get started you will be so impressed with yourself for making the effort to learn and educate your self further on this matter. Learning what is right for you and your body type will offer you the freedom to start experimenting with new recipes and to start seeing new results from your eating program. My advise is "give it a shot", you won't regret it.

Steps to Prevent You from Bulking Up

- Eat Low Fat Foods
- Reduce your fat and oil intake
- Reduce your Starchy Carbohydrates - breads, cereals, potato, pasta and rice etc towards the end of the day.
- Make sure you are performing a Fat Burning Program 3-4 times per week.
- Don't forget about your weight program. To start with, keep your weights light and perform more repetitions per set of each exercise. eg. Bicep Curls: 3 sets x 15-20 reps
- Use Variety in your Fat-Burning.
- Reduce your alcohol consumption.
- Make sure you take one day off from your low fat eating program per week.
- Increase Lean Meat intake and / or low fat protein in your diet.
- Eat more veggies and salads, rather than filling up on starchy carbohydrates.
- Get your workout weight resistance program renewed every 12 weeks or 3 months, no longer.
- Measure certain parts of your body to keep track of size and fat reduction. Don't rely on what the scales say. Muscle weighs more than fat, so concentrate on taking your measurement only.
- Skin fold measurements are also great for helping observe fat loss.

Just a few last words.....

Weight training and exercise in general not only gives us the opportunity to change our body shapes but can also increase our fitness level, assist in rehabilitation, improve our self esteem and boost our health in general. Choosing the right program for you is important so you can benefit and enjoy your workouts plus feel confident that you are on the right track to your health and fitness goals. Always remember to check with your doctor too, before starting any new eating or exercise program.

WEIGHT TRAINING ISN'T JUST FOR BODYBUILDERS

- Bob Myhal (MuscleMaster.com)

There's no doubt that resistance training can lead to increased fat loss. In fact, in addition to cardiovascular or aerobic exercise, resistance training is an important element in any effective fat loss program.

Muscle tissue is metabolically active in the body-in general terms, the higher your percentage of muscle mass, the higher your resting metabolism. Strength training will increase your lean muscle mass resulting in an accelerated metabolism ; in other words, if you add more muscle, you'll burn more calories.

And this, of course, can translate into an increase in fat burning as well. So, in addition to the other health benefits associated with resistance training-increased strength and energy, healthy bone density, protection against injury, etc.- engaging in two or three brief and intense weight training sessions per week carries the major plus of allowing your body to burn more calories even while at rest!

RESEARCH UPDATE: Walking for fat loss: Does it work?

Yes - but you need to do a LOT of it to see any real results.

Dr. Robert Ross and a research team from Ontario, Canada, tracked 52 obese men for three months.

They split the men into four groups:

1. Diet-only
2. Exercise-only
3. Exercise without weight loss
4. No exercise or diet

Both the diet-only and exercise-only groups created a caloric deficit of 700 calories daily. In other words, each day, the diet-only group ate 700 calories LESS than normal. The exercise-only group burned an extra 700 calories daily by walking on the treadmill.

Here's what happened three months later:

Diet-only
Fat loss = 11lb
Muscle loss = 4lb

Exercise-only
Fat loss = 13lb
Muscle loss = 3lb

Only problem is, the exercise program involved 60 minutes of brisk walking EVERY single day for three months. Now, I don't know about you, but finding the time to train for 60 minutes each day isn't easy.

The majority of studies examining the effect of aerobic exercise on weight loss have used programs lasting 30-45 minutes, 4-5 days per week. Weight loss with routines of this type usually averages about 0.2lb per week (yes, the decimal point IS in the right place!).

Not much, is it?

So why are walking programs so ineffective at promoting fat loss (unless, that is, you're prepared to invest around 7 hours of your time each week on the treadmill).

It's a fact that walking burns only a modest number of calories. Each pound of fat contains roughly 3,500 calories. If we assume that 30 minutes of brisk walking burns around 350 calories, it'll take AT LEAST 10 workouts to get rid of just 1 pound of fat.

If you do plan to use walking as a way to lose weight, make sure you're aware that you'll need to do a lot of it to see real results.

REFERENCE:

Ross, R., Dagnone, D., Jones, P.J.H., Smith, H., Paddags, A., Hudson, R., & Janssen, I. (2000). Reduction in obesity and related comorbid conditions after diet-induced weight loss or exercise-induced weight loss in men. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 133, 92-103

Don't Fall for the 5 Biggest Fitness Myths

by Kim Droze
eDiets Senior Writer

You shouldn't lift weights until you've reached your goal weight!

If you buy that line, then we've got a nice piece of swampland for sale in Florida. Yes, you've just fallen for one of the biggest fitness myths around. But don't worry -- you're in good company. When it comes to fact and fiction regarding exercise, plenty of people aren't in the know -- they only act that way.

We've recruited author and in-demand personal trainer Brad Schoenfeld to set the record straight. He can get you on the right track to great fitness by exposing a few of the workout fallacies accepted as gospel by many.

You can count on Brad. He's the man behind the revealing exercise guide *Look Great Naked* (Prentice Hall Press). If you haven't read his book or seen his brand new exercise videos, you could be doing your body more harm than good.

He says erroneous information too often comes from the so-called "experts."

"One of the problems is that many of the fitness professionals aren't schooled in exercise physiology," Brad tells eDiets. "They tend to perpetrate a lot of the myths. It becomes difficult for consumers to separate fact from fiction.

What's even worse is a lot of fitness experts are paid endorsement money by companies to say something and what they're saying is just blatantly not true."

Among the offenders: men and women touting products through infomercials. Not all are bad, but Brad says some prey on desperate dieters who honestly believe that relief from obesity is just a phone call and credit card number away. Then once the "miracle" product arrives, the honeymoon can be quickly over when the purchaser realizes he or she has been duped.

So how can you avoid falling into the trap? Brad says the key to slimming success lies in education. Beware of the bologna. Believe half of what you see and none of what you hear. Do your homework. Verify your information through credible websites like eDiets.com, he says.

When all is said and done, you'll be on the right track IF you avoid falling for these top five exercise myths.

1. You shouldn't lift weights until you reach your ideal weight!

A lot of times women don't do weight training because they think it will make them look bulkier. The fact is muscle is metabolically active tissue. For each pound of muscle you add to your body, you burn 50 calories a day while doing NOTHING. Add five pounds of muscle and you'll burn a pound of fat every two weeks without changing anything else in your daily life. That means over the course of one year, maintaining five pounds of muscle will enable you to lose 25 pounds of fat. Not only should weight training be a part of a weight loss program, it's an essential component.

2. You can spot reduce fat!

People think by performing inner thigh exercises they can reduce fat in the inner thighs. It simply can't happen. There's no way for your body to localize where it's going to take the fat from during exercise. The body breaks down fat globally. Fat has to be transported through the bloodstream. There's no way to determine where the fat is going to come off. For maximum fat loss through exercise you need to perform

cardiovascular exercise and train all of your muscles. That will increase the resting metabolic rate and maximize fat loss.

3. If you stop training with weights, your muscles will turn to fat!

Fat and muscle are two totally different properties. Fat is a triglyceride. Muscle is a protein. One cannot morph into the other. From a physiological standpoint, what happens when someone stops working out is that his or her muscles get smaller. That decreases the metabolic rate, which in turn makes fat accumulate more. It may appear that muscle is turning to fat, but it's just an illusion.

4. Train your abs every day for optimum results!

You constantly hear people saying that the abs are unlike any other muscle group and that the abs should be trained daily. The fact is the abs are made of the same properties as other muscles in the body. During exercise, the muscle tissue breaks down. If you don't allow adequate recuperation time, the muscle doesn't have time to regenerate. Thus, you'll decrease your results. The rule of thumb is to allow 48 hours rest in between sessions, so train your abs no more than three times a week.

5. Using a stair-climber device will give you a big butt!

There are two types of muscle fibers in your body. There are the slow twitch muscle fibers and the fast twitch muscle fibers. The fast twitch fibers are strength fibers -- they can grow larger. Slow twitch fibers are endurance-based fibers -- they don't have the potential to get large. The Stairmaster or any other similar device is an aerobic activity. By nature, any aerobic activity will use slow twitch endurance-based fibers. There's no way an aerobic activity can make you get larger no matter what you do. You're not activating the fast twitch fibers. Fast twitch fibers are activated by anaerobic activities such as weight training and sprinting. Feel free to use the Stairmaster no matter what your body type is.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are released every five years by the USDA. With an ever-increasing public awareness of nutrition, the new guidelines that came out for the year 2000 address one of the most important current world-wide health issues: epidemic occurrences of obesity .

According to a fact sheet released from the White House: One-third of non-elderly adults in America are now overweight : Fifty-eight million American adults ages 20 through 74 are overweight, and the number of overweight Americans increased from 25 to 33 percent between 1980 and 1991. One in five children are at risk of being overweight : Ten percent of children are overweight or obese. The number of overweight children has doubled over the past 15 years, and 70 percent of overweight children aged 10 to 13 will be overweight and obese adults. Most of this increase has taken place in recent years; 10 percent of children, 4 to 5 years of age, were overweight in 1988 through 1994, compared with 5.8 percent in 1971 through 1974. Recent studies indicate that this trend is associated with low levels of physical activity rather than increased food consumption.

Obesity is linked to an increased incidence of chronic disease : Obesity is a risk factor for diseases such as coronary heart disease, certain types of cancer, stroke, and diabetes. Over \$68 billion is spent each year on the direct health care costs related to obesity, representing 6 percent of the nation's health care expenditures in 1999. Almost 90 percent of Americans have diets that need improvement :

The Healthy Eating Index shows that 88 percent of Americans have diets that are poor or need improvement. Only 26 percent of people meet the daily dietary recommendation for dairy products, and less than 20 percent meet the daily recommendation for fruits. In particular, teenagers and people with low incomes tend to have lower quality diets.

Many illnesses can be prevented or mediated through regular physical activity : Regular physical activity reduces the risk of developing some of the leading causes of illness and death in the United States, including heart disease, high blood pressure , colon cancer , and diabetes. Physical activity has been demonstrated to reduce blood pressure and symptoms of anxiety and depression while maintaining healthy bones , muscles , and joints. More than 60 percent of adults do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity, and approximately 25 percent of adults are not physically active at all.

Obesity Ups Kidney Cancer Risk in Men and Women

NEW YORK, Nov 12 (Reuters Health) - Maintaining a healthy body weight can help lower the risk of kidney cancer in men and women, according to researchers.

Their study found that excess body weight increases the risk of developing kidney (renal) cancer for both men and women, a finding that contradicts previous research that showed obesity to be a more significant risk factor for women.

According to the review in a recent issue of the British Journal of Cancer, all individuals who are overweight and obese have a higher risk of developing kidney cancer, a disease that is more prevalent in North America and Europe than in Asia. In the US, more than half of all adults are considered to be overweight, and almost one-quarter are obese.

"Excess body weight was positively associated with risk of renal cell cancer, equally strongly among both men and women," Dr. A. Bergstrom from Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden and co-authors conclude.

Their study found that morbidly obese individuals were more than twice as likely to develop renal cancer compared with normal-weight individuals, and those who were obese were up to two times more likely to develop the disease.

Morbid obesity occurs when a person's excess weight begins to interfere with normal physiological functions, such as breathing.

Men and women who were overweight but not obese were about 35% more likely to develop kidney cancer, the investigators found.

Bergstrom and colleagues reviewed data from 28 studies examining the association between body weight and kidney cancer over 22 years. Most people who took part in the studies were at least 50 years old.

Overweight was defined as a body mass index (BMI) of at least 25, while those with a BMI of at least 30 were classified as obese. BMI is a measure of weight in relation to height.

The researchers estimate that 29% of all kidney cancers among women and about 27% of these cancers among men can be blamed on excess body weight.

"Maintaining a healthy body weight can therefore be an effective strategy to prevent renal cell cancer," they conclude.

Exactly how excess body weight increases the risk of developing kidney cancer is not clear. The study authors suggest that elevated levels of certain hormones in obese individuals, including insulin, may be to blame because they could encourage the growth of kidney cell cancer.

Alternatively, obesity can affect the flow of fluids through the kidney in a way that makes the kidneys more vulnerable to cancerous compounds, Bergstrom and colleagues suggest.

SOURCE: British Journal of Cancer 2001;85:984-990.

Weighing The Many Risks Of Obesity

by Susan L. Burke, MS, RD/LD, CDE
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This news headline caught my eye: "Obese Are At Major Risk For Heart Disease." But, I thought, is this news actually new? I thought that everyone knows that obesity puts you at increased health risk.

The American Heart Association has "upgraded" obesity to make it a major risk factor in heart disease. Obesity is now considered a contributing factor for heart disease, just as Type 2 diabetes, cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and lack of physical activity are known and "modifiable" risk factors for heart disease.

Another recent headline read: "American Heart Association Says Diabetes Is A Major Risk Factor For Heart Disease And Stroke". This is a no-brainer! Obesity + Type 2 diabetes = heart disease, the primary cause of mortality in the United States! Heart disease kills more than 2,600 Americans DAILY.

I did some research and found the statistics very worrisome. According to the National Institute of Health, over 100 million Americans -- or about 60 percent of the adult population -- are overweight. About 33 percent are obese, which means these folks are 20 percent or more over their ideal body weight.

Most nutrition professionals use a range of body weight instead of one particular number which could range above or below that weight by up to 20 pounds depending upon your body type (small, medium or large-framed) and your amount of muscle mass.

Muscle is a dense tissue. If you're muscular you can weigh more and not be unhealthy or at risk! If you're not muscular and your weight is 20 percent over that upper range then you're considered obese.

The Centers for Disease Control report that diabetes is epidemic. About 16 millions Americans have diabetes (60% of them women). Older women (those over 65) make up 75 percent of the cases.

Type 2 diabetes may be controlled or even delayed with diet and exercise. But most often it's not diagnosed until five years after someone develops the disease. By then, irreversible damage has been done.

Research shows that if you have a genetic link to Type 2 diabetes (having an immediate blood relative with the disease is a "genetic link") and are just 10 to 20 pounds overweight, there's a good chance you will suffer Type 2 diabetes. This translates to a 33 percent increase in this type of diabetes over the last 10 years.

Type 2 diabetes used to be known as "adult diabetes" because it was rarely found in people under 20. Now more young people are contracting Type 2 diabetes so it's no longer appropriate to term it "adult." So, what's changed? More and more young people are becoming overweight and obese!

Research shows that men with Type 2 diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart disease as non-diabetic men and diabetic women are three times more likely to develop heart disease compared to non-diabetic women.

Insulin resistance, which researchers think is the common factor for this increased risk for Type 2 diabetes and heart disease, results in an increase in "bad" cholesterol, or LDL, and a lowering of the "good" cholesterol, or HDL. Most significantly, triglycerides are raised, which is a predictor of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries.

Although doctors know that high cholesterol is a predictor of heart disease, a recent study by the UCLA Center for Cholesterol and Hypertension Management showed that while the cholesterol guidelines have changed this year, women and men are diagnosed differently.

Center director Dr. Karol Watson reports that women have a higher mortality rate from heart disease than men and nearly half of the doctors surveyed thought that women are treated less aggressively for heart disease.

So, we all agree that getting to a healthy weight is the most important thing that you can do to improve your chances of not getting diabetes or heart disease. Unfortunately, 90 percent of all people who lose weight regain the weight and more! The answer: lose weight and keep it off.

But in the U.S. where there is scant deficiency of anything, portion control is out of control! It appears that quantity outweighs quality in people's choices in restaurants and supermarkets. Products are "supersized" and "all you can eat" is a big attraction! A 3-ounce portion of meat is a "tidbit." We want 16-ounce sirloin steaks or double-crust pizzas. We're convinced that bigger is better and this is increasing our belt sizes and risk for these diseases.

And it's not just the food, but also our lifestyle as well. At the turn of the century, most women worked inside the home. Their time was spent preparing food from scratch. Convenience foods were not available.

World War II changed the food supply and availability of different ethnic foods and foods that were produced for the soldiers (dehydrated soups, dried potatoes, margarine and prepared mixes) appeared on grocery shelves. There was an improvement in technology that gave birth to frozen foods and TV dinners. Less time was devoted to whole food preparation.

The '60s saw more women in the workforce and more convenience foods invading the market. Drive-through eateries became daily stopovers for busy commuters with no time to eat. You didn't even have to get out of your car to fetch the daily milk and bread for your home, much less cook a hot meal for dinner!

The CDC reports that obesity causes more than 300,000 premature deaths each year. High-calorie food and inactivity contribute to this deadly phenomenon. Many schools have eliminated gym class -- the population of overweight kids is devastating. I've often seen kids eating chips and cola on their way to school!

Just recently we've seen the latest invention designed to "enhance your pedestrian experience," the Segway Human Transporter. This futuristic-looking device allows you to travel on the sidewalk... without walking! Now, what will that do to the rate of obesity? Will walking -- one of the activities that most people can easily do -- become obsolete?

The American Heart Association's directives about obesity, heart disease and diabetes make one thing very clear: the risk factors are "modifiable." This means, you can make changes to your risk factors. You can quit smoking, change your diet and get off the couch!

I like to say that all diets work and no diet works! What works is when you make changes in your lifestyle that include what you eat, how much you eat, when you eat... and then you add the magic ingredient of exercise!

To succeed, you have to learn to modify two words in your vocabulary. Think of your diet as a "meal plan" and exercise as an "activity."

Now, think about your healthy meal plan and activity. You'll see that eDiets.com promotes healthy meal plans designed to help you get the nutrition you need to achieve a healthy weight and guide you toward healthy activity.

The National Institute of Health recommends that you ask these questions when you decide to follow a weight loss plan:

Does the diet limit portions to an extremely small size or exclude certain foods or food groups entirely? If yes, then the diet is a fad and cannot sustain weight loss. Excluding certain foods creates a feeling of deprivation and eventually will backfire.

Also, an unbalanced diet can be unhealthy! What is most important: learning about healthy foods and the portion size that is right for YOU. There is no single recipe for success. Everyone will lose weight differently depending upon their body type, metabolism and activity.

Secondly, does the diet allow you to include preferences like "no meat" or "no fish" and include a wide variety of foods and recipes? If yes, then the meal plan is realistic and one you can follow once you've reached your goals.

Third, once you're at your goal weight, can you adjust your meal plan so the calories will be appropriate to maintain your goal weight? If yes, then you're going to be able to stay with your plan and sustain your goals. So many diets promote weight loss, and then abandon you.

Statistics show that 90 percent of diets result in regaining the weight lost, which means people are not making permanent changes. When you make permanent, healthy lifestyle changes, you will be able to reduce your risk for heart disease and diabetes. Plus, you'll feel and look better.

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The Surgeon General's Warnings on The Health Consequences of Being Overweight or Obese

PREMATURE DEATH

An estimated 300,000 deaths per year may be attributable to obesity. The risk of death rises with increasing weight. Even moderate weight excess (10 to 20 pounds for a person of average height) increases the risk of death, particularly among adults aged 30 to 64 years. Individuals who are obese (BMI > 30) have a 50 to 100% increased risk of premature death from all causes, compared to individuals with a healthy weight.

HEART DISEASE

The incidence of heart disease (heart attack, congestive heart failure, sudden cardiac death, angina or chest pain, and abnormal heart rhythm) is increased in persons who are overweight or obese (BMI > 25). High blood pressure is twice as common in adults who are obese than in those who are at a healthy weight. Obesity is associated with elevated triglycerides (blood fat) and decreased HDL cholesterol ("good cholesterol").

DIABETES

A weight gain of 11 to 18 pounds increases a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes to twice that of individuals who have not gained weight. Over 80% of people with diabetes are overweight or obese .

CANCER

Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk for some types of cancer including endometrial (cancer of the lining of the uterus), colon, gall bladder, prostate, kidney, and postmenopausal breast cancer. Women gaining more than 20 pounds from age 18 to midlife double their risk of postmenopausal breast cancer, compared to women whose weight remains stable.

BREATHING PROBLEMS

Sleep apnea (interrupted breathing while sleeping) is more common in obese persons. Obesity is associated with a higher prevalence of asthma.

ARTHRITIS

For every 2-pound increase in weight, the risk of developing arthritis is increased by 9 to 13%. Symptoms of arthritis can improve with weight loss.

REPRODUCTIVE COMPLICATIONS

Complications of pregnancy - Obesity during pregnancy is associated with increased risk of death in both the baby and the mother and increases the risk of maternal high blood pressure by 10 times. In addition to many other complications, women who are obese during pregnancy are more likely to have gestational diabetes and problems with labor and delivery. Infants born to women who are obese during pregnancy are more likely to be high birthweight and, therefore, may face a higher rate of Cesarean section delivery and low blood sugar (which can be associated with brain damage and seizures). Obesity during pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of birth defects, particularly neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. Obesity in premenopausal women is associated with irregular menstrual cycles and infertility.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Overweight and obesity are associated with increased risks of gall bladder disease, incontinence, increased surgical risk, and depression. Obesity can affect the quality of life through limited mobility and decreased physical endurance as well as through social, academic, and job discrimination.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, occur with increased frequency in overweight children and adolescents compared to those with a healthy weight. Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased dramatically in children and adolescents. Overweight and obesity are closely linked to type 2 diabetes. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. This increases to 80% if one or more parent is overweight or obese. The most immediate consequence of overweight, as perceived by children themselves, is social discrimination.

BENEFITS OF WEIGHT LOSS

Weight loss, as modest as 5 to 15% of total body weight in a person who is overweight or obese, reduces the risk factors for some diseases, particularly heart disease. Weight loss can result in lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, and improved cholesterol levels. A person with a Body Mass Index (BMI) above the healthy weight range may benefit from weight loss, especially if he or she has other health risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, a sedentary lifestyle, and a personal and/or family history of heart disease.

(This information has been cited from the Surgeon Generals website: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov>)