

## - Why can't I lose weight?

This is a question that I am continually asked in my capacity as a personal trainer. We are constantly being bombarded with advertisements for crash diets and meal substitutes. However, the key to healthy weight loss is eating the right foods, taking regular exercise, and getting plenty of rest, ideally a good eight hours per night.

Therefore, healthy weight loss is about lifestyle changes. This means making a permanent change to the way you eat and exercise. Many people find rigid diet plans difficult to stick to leading to a yo-yo effect on their weight – constantly losing it and then putting it back on, with interest. Healthy weight loss needn't be like this.

The best way to lose weight, and keep it off is as follows:

- 1) **Eat a balanced diet:** make sure your diet includes all the major food groups and avoid eating foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt. Instead, increase your intake of fruit, vegetables, healthy grains, and a good source of lean protein, such as chicken, oily fish, but not too much red meat. Also, by filling your plate up with lots of vegetables, you'll find you still feel full but lose weight!
- 2) **Take regular exercise:** Now this does not mean running a half marathon every other day. Simply by increasing your normal daily exercise, you will be running on 'negative' calories in, to calories out ratio. Your exercise could take the form of getting off the bus a stop or two early on the way to work, and walking a little further, thereby increasing the number of steps you take on an average day. The government guideline for this is approximately **25,000** steps per day. If you are not motivated to exercise on your own, try getting into a regular team sport, like 5 a-side football, or start playing badminton. It is also important to check with your doctor before you embark on a new fitness regime, just to make sure you are safe to do so. Basically, find something you enjoy and you'll be more likely to stick to it. Swimming, cycling, horse-riding, walking and keep-fit classes are some other examples of great weight loss exercises.
- 3) **Drink more water:** Many people mistake thirst for hunger, and increasing your intake of water can help prevent this. Also, drinking plenty of water helps flush out the toxins in your body and keeps your skin hydrated, and looking younger. Drinking at least 2 liters of water a day can help towards achieving healthy weight loss.

- 4) **Get plenty of rest:** This is the part of being healthy which is often neglected. Put quite simply, your body cannot maintain a good level of fitness if it does not get adequate rest. During the time you are sleeping, your body is going through its natural repair process, which allows all important muscle and bone tissue to repair itself from the previous days damage, through exertion. Also, if you keep trying to train, or work an already fatigued body, it will eventually say enough is enough, and literally shut down! If you have trouble getting to sleep at night, avoid:
1. Caffeine (e.g., coffee, tea, coke, chocolate)
  2. Nicotine
  3. Alcohol
  4. High protein meals
- 5) **Speak to a professional!** If you feel you need to lose a large amount of weight or are unsure about the right plan for you, speak to your doctor or a nutritionist or both. Your weight is affected by more than just food; many health conditions can lead to a change in weight. Therefore, it is worth getting checked out by your doctor initially to make sure there are no medical reasons for your weight gain, and maybe seeking the advice of a nutritionist for their advice on the best eating plan for you.
- 6) **Don't be in too much of a hurry.** Healthy weight loss is not achieved overnight and should be a gradual process. You should not be looking to lose more than a kilo (2.2 pounds) per week. This will also avoid you getting too many, if any, stretch marks, caused by a rapid change in weight. So, be patient! Stick with your new changes and you should notice a gradual but permanent change in the way you look and feel.

Good luck!

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