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## Policing the Game



# Don't be a big loser: Drop pounds the right "Weigh"



Matt Brzycki

Now in its 10th season on television, *The Biggest Loser* remains very popular. For those who are unfamiliar with this reality show, severely obese contestants are pitted against each other to determine who can lose the greatest percentage of their body weight within a specified time frame. And there's a huge financial reward at stake: The winner pockets \$250,000.

But with its emphasis on rapid weight loss, the show sends the wrong message to the estimated 10 million viewers who tune in each week and are tempted by the "success stories" of the contestants. Police officers, of course, don't need to lose such extreme amounts of weight. There's a pretty good chance, however, that numerous cops might want to drop at least some weight and may resort to the same methods that are used by the contestants.

The frenetic pace at which weight is lost is in sharp contrast to the advice you might get from the vast majority of scientific and medical authorities who typically recommend a weight loss of about one to two

pounds per week. It's little surprise, then, that the methods used on the show have come under intense scrutiny and heavy criticism from many in the fitness industry.

## THE DOWNSIDE

Several problems are associated with losing weight too quickly. As the contestants on the show have demonstrated, a significant amount of the weight loss can be in the form of muscle. This isn't desirable as muscle is functional tissue: It allows you to move your limbs, enabling you to perform physical work.

In addition, muscle is a metabolically active tissue. Having less muscle decreases your metabolic rate (the rate at which you use calories). In other words, you'll be less efficient at "burning" calories which will make it more difficult for you to lose weight. So when losing weight is a goal, you want it to be fat weight not muscle weight.

Also, when you lose weight too quickly, it's often temporary as your body cannot sustain such dramatic changes. It's not unusual for people to regain much of the weight that they lost.

In general, it's rarely a good idea to pursue a "quick fix." In order to realize long-

term success, you must install changes in your lifestyle. By losing weight too rapidly, you won't change any bad habits. At best, you'll only experience short-term results.

## THE RIGHT "WEIGH"

If you want to lose weight, you must expend more calories than you consume. You can accomplish this by eating less and exercising more.

Suppose that your goal is to lose 10 pounds of fat in 10 weeks. This represents a rate of one pound of fat per week. Since one pound of fat has 3,500 calories, you'd need to come up with a shortfall of 500 calories per day. Eating 500 less calories per day can be quite a challenge; the same can be said about using 500 more calories per day.

The best way, then, is to do a combination of the two: Eat a little less and exercise a little more. And it doesn't have to be a 50-50 split. For example, you could achieve a deficit of 500 calories by eating 200 less calories and using 300 more calories.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The best tactic for losing weight and keeping it off is to exercise patience and do it slowly. ♥

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