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10 Tips for Weight Loss

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There are many tactics that you can employ to lose weight. What follows are 10 tips for losing weight in a manner that's safe, effective and practical.

1. Eat foods that are low in fat.

A food that's high in fat is loaded with calories. Packed with nine calories per gram, fats are more than twice as dense as carbohydrates and protein which have four calories per gram. Or look at it this way: A food that's high in fat has more calories *for the same weight* than a food that's low in fat.

People tend to eat about the same weight of food each day; not the same calories of food, the same *weight of food*. So choosing foods with a low caloric density—those that have the smallest number of calories in the largest portions—means that you'll consume fewer calories without sacrificing satiety (fullness).

2. Get more fruits and vegetables.

Foods (and beverages) that offer very few calories along with a feeling of satiety are great choices for those who are trying to lose weight. Fruits and vegetables meet these criteria because they contain exceptionally high amounts of water.

You can incorporate different tactics to increase your intake. For example, you can eat fruits as snacks. You can add vegetables to soup. Or, you can put sliced tomatoes and/or lettuce on sandwiches.

3. Eat spicy foods.

Spicy foods can increase your metabolic rate by raising your body temperature. The greatest increase in body temperature is triggered by capsaicin, an ingredient that's found in chili peppers; it's what makes hot peppers hot.

The effect of capsaicin on metabolic rate is temporary and small. But the real benefit is that eating spicy foods seems to curb appetite. Research indicates that spicy foods produce an increase in satiety and a decrease in caloric intake.

4. Chew your food slowly.

If you chew your food slowly, you're less likely to mindlessly inhale it as if you're the defending champion in an eating contest. The fact of the matter is that by chewing your food slowly, your brain is given adequate time to receive a signal from your stomach that it's full.

In one study, subjects were given a plate of food and told to eat as much as they wanted. When they ate quickly, they consumed 646 calories in 8.6 minutes (about 75.1 calories per minute); when they ate slowly, they consumed 579 calories in 29.2 minutes (about 19.8 calories per minute).

5. Drink more water.

It's a wise move for you to drink plenty of water before, during and after meals. Remember, water has weight but no calories. Therefore, drinking water creates a feeling of satiety without adding anything to your caloric budget.

In one study, subjects ate the same food for lunch but drank a different type of beverage. Regardless of the beverage, the subjects ate the same number of calories. So, the calories from the beverages were added to the calories from the meal. This means that when water was the beverage that accompanies the meal, fewer calories were consumed.

6. Avoid doing activities while eating.

Certain activities are associated with eating. This includes watching television, playing a board game and reading a book. When engaged in such activities, people focus on what they're doing rather than what they're eating. Therefore, it's a good idea to refrain from eating while doing these and other activities. A great way to keep you from doing this is to only eat in a designated place (and not in front of something with a screen).

7. Minimize unhealthy foods in your home.

Unhealthy foods include those that are high in calories, fat and sugar and low in

nutrients. When there are little or no healthy options in your home, it's virtually impossible for you to make healthy choices. Remember: Out of house, out of sight, out of mind, out of mouth.

8. Restrict the number of meals that you eat in fast-food restaurants.

It's estimated that each day, one out of every four Americans eat fast food. No wonder: Currently, there are more than 200,000 fast-food restaurants in the United States.

The good news is that fast food is inexpensive, convenient and, of course, fast. But the bad news is that, for the most part, it's not very healthy. Fast food tends to be high in calories and fat (and sodium). In fact, research has found that on the days that people eat fast food, they tend to consume more calories and fat than on other days.

9. Make activities less sedentary and more physical.

An increase of sedentary activities and a decrease of physical activities are contributing factors to gaining weight. Obviously, you should do less sedentary activities and more physical activities. But whenever possible, sedentary activities should be made more physical. For example, use the steps, not the elevator; at a mall or work, park farther from the building, not closer.

10. Do strength training and aerobic training.

Like all types of physical training, strength training and aerobic training use calories. Strength training is unique, though, in that it can decrease fat and increase muscle, thereby improving body composition and enhancing appearance. Aerobic training is also important since it can produce a sustained and significant use of calories.

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