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Tactics for weight loss

■ BY MATT BRZYCKI

The mechanics of weight loss are very simple: In order to lose weight, caloric output must be greater than caloric intake. Stated differently, more calories must be used than consumed. But achieving this “caloric deficit” is often easier said than done, right?

In order to attain a caloric deficit, many people resort to fad diets. The number of fad diets seems endless; just go to any bookstore and find the section on diet books. You’ll see that fad diets run the gamut of A (Atkins) to Z (Zone).

As the term suggests, “fad diets” – like “fad fashions” – are those that are trendy for a while and then fade away only to resurface at some point in the future (sometimes with a new name). Fad diets have several things in common. First, they promise quick results: specifically, a rapid loss of weight. Second, they severely restrict one or more food groups or macronutrients. Third, they offer short-term fixes not long-term results.

THE RIGHT “WEIGH”

There are many tactics that can be employed in the quest to lose weight. Here are some ways to produce long-term results in a safe, sensible and effective manner:

1. Read food labels. Pay particular attention to the serving size, number of servings per container, total calories, calories from fat and total fat. Point to ponder: Unless it’s a single-serving package, the amount of each ingredient is only for a portion of the contents. If a food has four servings per container, then eating the entire contents literally quadruples the amount of calories, calories from fat and total fat.

2. Reduce the intake of sweetened beverages. Included among sweetened beverages are non-diet soda, fruit drinks, lemonade and iced tea. Let’s face it, sweetened beverages are liquid sugar.



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The average non-diet soda has about 100 calories per eight ounces. Drinking one 12-ounce can of soda on a daily basis translates into about 54,750 calories in a year – or about 15.6 pounds.

3. Consume foods that are low in fat. A food that’s high in fat is loaded with calories. Think about it: A food that’s high in fat has more calories for the same weight than a food that’s low in fat. Studies have shown that people tend to eat about the same weight of food each day. Not the same calories, the same weight. Selecting foods that have the smallest number of calories in the largest portions, then, means that fewer calories are consumed without sacrificing satiety (fullness).

4. Get more fiber. Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that cannot be fully digested. Foods that are high in fiber tend to have fewer calories – an obvious advantage for weight loss. Also, fiber slows the rate at which food passes through the digestive system thereby increasing satiety. (You can boost your intake of fiber by eating fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products such as breads and cereals.)

5. Choose healthy snacks. There’s nothing inherently wrong with snacking. It becomes problematic, however, when poor choices are made. Something like ice cream isn’t necessarily bad provided that it’s not eaten in large quantities and/or on a habitual basis. Healthy snacks include fruit, raw vegetables, low-fat yogurt, popcorn (sans butter), whole-grain crackers, pretzels, cereal and some of the so-called “energy bars” and “snack bars.”

6. Become more knowledgeable. The majority of restaurant and fast-food chains don’t readily disclose nutritional information for their meals, and for good reason. For the most part, the foods are laden with calories and fat. Needless to say, the gory details aren’t made too obvious at most restaurant and fast-food chains. But more knowledge is only a few



clicks away, though, since most of these establishments have websites that list their nutritional information.

7. Minimize unhealthy foods in the home. When there are little or no healthy options, it’s virtually impossible to make healthy choices. Here’s a good rule of thumb: Out of house, out of sight, out of mind, out of mouth.

8. Eat more frequently. How is it possible to eat more and weigh less? Well, the number of meals should be higher but the size of those meals – in terms of calories – should be smaller. In spreading calories over more meals – rather than cramming calories into fewer meals – people are better able to keep their hunger at bay.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Losing weight is a matter of arithmetic: The number of calories used must be greater than the number of calories consumed. Implementing these tactics will help someone “do the math” and lose weight. ♥

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