Loss Control Insight

Giving Up the Diet

If you're thinking of going on a diet to lose those extra pounds think again. Long-term weight control through dieting is near impossible, for the simple reason that diets promote only short term solutions, not long term.

After dieting you'll certainly look lighter on the scales, but in most cases this is because you've dumped a few pounds of body fluid and muscle, and not because you've lost any significant amounts of body fat.

One of the main reasons diets don't work is because they send the body into starvation mode – a survival mechanism for times when humans faced periods of famine. Cutting back on our energy intake causes the body to lower its metabolic rate, which reduces its ability to burn fat.

At the same time, hunger signals increase and we quickly start to crave high energy foods loaded with fats and sugars - the exact foods we are trying to do without! Alarmingly, research has shown that repeated dieting actually makes it harder to lose weight and easier to put it on.

This is because when you dump the diet and return to normal eating habits, the drop in metabolic rate caused by the diet means that your old eating habits actually represent an excess in calories. Not only do you regain the fat stores just lost, but you may even gain a bit extra.

Five more reasons to stop dieting

- Diets sap energy - Too little food means not enough energy for physical activity.
- Diets lower your metabolism - Dieting causes your body to conserve energy, making results harder to achieve.
- Diets are unhealthy - A cycle of rapid weight loss followed by weight gain can lead to a loss of lean tissue from your body and calcium from your bones. It also strips the body of essential vitamins and minerals.
- Diets make food the enemy - Food provides nourishment and comfort. Diets can make you afraid to eat, depriving you of one of life's pleasures.
- Diets cheat your confidence - Going from one failed diet to the next can leave you feeling depressed and create a cycle in which guilt battles against food.

Regular physical activity and a healthy, balanced diet aren't as glamorous as the quick fixes, but they do get better results. Start with one extra exercise session and one less fatty takeaway meal per week, and gradually work towards a lifelong plan for achieving your best weight.

If you change the way you eat or exercise to lose weight, ask yourself this question. Can I see myself sticking to this routine for life? If the answer is "no" then its time to change what you're doing. Any healthy weight loss plan should include the following:

- A wide variety of foods.
- Regular and enjoyable exercise.
- Enough filling foods to avoid constant hunger.
- At least 1200 calories a day.
- Flexibility for treat foods and social occasions.
- A realistic goal of your best weight (not necessarily your lowest weight.)

Fact: A realistic weight loss is around one to two pounds per week. Fast weight losses are not fat loss but glycogen and water. If you lose weight quickly then you will probably return back to the weight at which you started as quickly as it was lost.

Fiction: Weight loss is quick and simple. Exercise is not necessary. Certain exercises can spot reduce.

Carbohydrates (for example, bread, potatoes, rice, and pasta) are fattening.

So, the way to lose body fat and maintain muscle is to have a food program for life and more energy output. Increase the amount of fruits, vegetables, non-fat dairy products, whole grains and beans that you eat.

Eliminate calorie-dense foods such as cookies, sugary desserts, chips, fries, pizza, candies, crackers etc. Research on people who have successfully lost a lot of weight and kept it off long term, shows that the vast majority succeeded by consuming a low fat diet high in fibre, coupled with strength training and cardiovascular activity. These are the basics you'll need to aim for.

A sound weight loss-eating plan should:

- Be nutritionally sound, providing all the nutrients you need.
- Never promise fast weight losses.
- Offer an eating plan based on real food.
- Allow you to eat out.
- Avoid expensive meal plans, products and supplements.
- Not avoid carbohydrate foods, e.g. bread, rice, pasta, cereals and potatoes.
- Make gradual dietary changes.
- Provide knowledge.
- Allow you to eat all foods
- Recommend physical activity.

Fat calories are more fattening than carbohydrate calories. Your body can easily convert the fat you eat in food into body fat, so to lose weight you need to cut down on fats and foods that contain it. Consider the following steps to reduce fat in your diet:

- Use skimmed or skimmed milk in drinks, cooking and on cereals.
- Buy a non - stick frying pan.
- Buy a cheese slicer
- Cut the visible fat from meat.
- Eat very little pastry.
- Learn how to read a food label.
- Substitute low fat yoghurt for cream.
- Remove the skin from chicken and turkey.
- Eat fruit as snacks rather than eating chocolate and biscuits.
- Eat fewer burgers and sausages.