

Citygirlbites News - Accurate and Practical Nutrition for

City Girls and Guys
on the Go

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New Years Resolution: Lose Weight and Keep it Off!

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How many times have you started a diet only to go off it and regain any weight you lost (or more!) Why is it so difficult to lose weight and keep it off? We know what we need to do in order to lose weight - eat less and exercise more. But it's very difficult for most of us to do this for a sustained period of time, in part due to our hectic schedules, little time (or motivation!) to exercise, eating more of our meals out (jumbo sized) or ordering in take-out.

In my private nutrition practice, I have specialized in weight control for the past 20 years and have helped many people "beat the odds" when it comes to losing weight. I would like to share my top 10 tips that have helped some of my clients lose weight and keep it off.

Top 10 Tips for Weight Loss

Tip #1: Be aware of what you are eating. It doesn't matter whether you are on a low carb diet or a low fat diet - calories are the most important factor in weight control. I can't tell you how many times I've had a client come into my office and say "I don't understand why I'm not losing weight. I really don't eat that much!" Chances are that you are eating more than you think. Studies show we underestimate what we eat by 20-40%. Not only do we tend to forget about the "extras" we consume during the day, sometimes we just aren't aware of the calories in many take-out or restaurant foods. For example, did you know the calorie content of these commonly eaten foods: Panani (800 calories), tuna salad wrap (800 calories), Caesar salad with grilled chicken (800 calories), mini 2 oz container of vinaigrette dressing (275-350 calories), Chinese chicken and broccoli and 1 cup of rice (900 calories), spicy tuna roll (300 calories).

The best thing you can do to keep tabs on what you are eating is to keep a food record for at least a week. Record everything you eat and drink. Studies have correlated keeping a food record with success in losing weight. It also helps you identify problem eating behaviors and makes you accountable for your intake.

Tip #2 Include adequate protein at meals. Studies have shown that eating adequate protein at meals may increase feelings of satisfaction and fullness after eating. Think about it what kind of lunch makes you feel fuller longer - a salad with vegetables and fat free dressing or a piece of grilled salmon and large portion of vegetables.? Likely it is the salmon lunch. You also burn more calories digesting protein as compared to digesting fat and carbohydrates. Some studies show weight regain after weight loss is less with a higher protein intake. However, this doesn't mean you can eat unlimited amounts of protein as it contains calories!

Tip #3 Get enough sleep. Over the past 40 yrs, Americans are sleeping 1-2 hrs less a night. Researchers are discovering that sleep affects hormones that regulate satiety, hunger and how efficiently you burn calories. People who sleep less have higher levels of the hormone ghrelin (made in stomach and signals the body to keep eating) and lower levels of leptin (a hormone released by fat cells which signals the body to stop eating). The result of this can be increased hunger for calorie dense foods (salty, sweets and starchy) and may prime your body to hold on to the calories you eat. It may also boost insulin levels which can increase risk of diabetes and heart disease. In one study, people who slept 5 hours a night or less weighed more than those who slept 8 hours a night and had higher levels of ghrelin.

Top 10 Tips continued from front page

<http://citygirlbites.com/blog/2008/01/18/new-years-resolution-lose-weight-and-keep-it-off/>

Tip #4 Stress management When you are stressed, your body produces more cortisol, a hormone that can slow metabolism, stimulate appetite and increase abdominal fat. Find ways to reduce your stress through stress management, exercise, meditation, reading, yoga, etc.

Tip #5 Weight train. Many of my female clients tend to focus on cardio and neglect weight training. While cardio has many health benefits, including burning calories, we also need to weight train to build muscle mass. After age 40, we lose ½ pound muscle a year and after age 50, we can lose up to 1 pound a year. Your metabolism slows by ~ 1-2 % for every decade after age 30. Not only is having adequate muscle important for health, it can help to speed your metabolism. Each pound of muscle burns 35-50 calories per pound, while each pound of fat burns only 2 calories.

Tip #6 Eat more volume based foods such as vegetables, fruit and soup. These foods are low in energy density - they contain more water (80-95% water) and fewer calories. Most of like to feel full after eating. Eating foods with a low energy density can help us feel satiated without packing on the pounds. Studies have shown that you will eat 20% fewer calories at a meal if you start the meal with soup (a broth based soup - not a cream based!). On the other hand, filling up on high energy dense foods such as crackers, chips, nuts, cookies, will pack on the pounds. Bottom line, try to start your meal with a broth based soup or a salad, in addition to including veggies and fruit.

Tip #7 Eat breakfast. Overall, breakfast skippers have higher average BMIs (body mass index) than breakfast eaters, according to a 2003 study. Another study showed that people who skipped breakfast tended to eat more at lunch - and throughout the day - than breakfast-eaters. Eating breakfast will give you energy to start the day as well as give your metabolism a jump start. You will need to experiment to see which type of breakfast makes you feel the best. Some people find a higher carb breakfast such as a bowl of whole grain cereal with skim milk holds them for several hours, while other people prefer a higher protein breakfast such as an egg or egg white omelet with whole grain toast.

Tip #8 Cut back on alcohol. Not only does alcohol contain empty calories, it can also decrease our willpower to watch what we eat. Many of my clients socialize around "meeting for drinks" and / or drink wine with most dinners when in restaurants. And since many of us tend to eat out frequently, our alcohol consumption can be significant. Work on limiting alcohol. I often suggest no more than 4 drinks a week.

Tip #9 Choose low glycemic load carbs

The jury is still out as to what kind of diet is best - low carb vs low fat. It is likely that different diets work best for different people. However, most studies show that people feel fuller on lower glycemic index diets. These diets are based on higher fiber less processed foods, ideally combined with some protein and or fat. Low glycemic diets also prevent blood sugar spikes and insulin spikes which can contribute towards hunger and fat storage.

Tip #10 Plan ahead. How many times have you craved something sweet around 4 pm and headed to the vending machine for a not-so-healthy treat? Or have been so hungry by the time your entrée arrived in the restaurant that you devoured several pieces of bread? Or have had no time to cook dinner, so you end up ordering in almost every night? These problematic situations could have been avoided with a little planning. Here are some suggestions: Don't let too much time go by between lunch and dinner without eating. Plan a healthy snack to eat in the mid afternoon. This can help to control your 4 pm carb cravings as well as help prevent you from overindulging on bread at dinner. Keep healthy foods available that can be made into easy-to-prepare dinners at home.

For more nutrition information for "girls on the go", check out Martha's blog: www.citygirlbites.com/blog



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