

Most people want to lose weight at some time in their lives, & want it to be fast & easy. The truth about dieting is harder to swallow.

All those diets that sound too good to be true promise that:

- You'll get an immediate sense of control.
- Everyone will tell you how great you look.
- You'll feel better about your body.
- You'll like yourself better.

The diet business takes advantage of people's desire for a "quick fix" to sell \$33 billion worth of diet products a year.

It takes time to lose weight.

People who lose weight for good do it a little at a time, over a long period. They:

- Decide they want to change the ways they eat & exercise. This is different from deciding to "lose weight."
- Set realistic goals. Adding 10 minutes of activity a day is more possible than setting an unreachable weight goal.
- Reward themselves. Appreciating small changes can be a key to make a change last.
- Lost a reasonable amount (5 or 10 pounds), then maintain their new weight for a few months before trying to lose more.

The first diet book was published in 1864 by an English casket maker who claimed that low carbohydrates & daily alcohol were the way to shed unwanted pounds. Since then, fad diets have come & gone with great regularity. Their inventors are experts at packaging. They make it easy to believe that this time, this particular diet will really work.

Most people try to lose weight by limiting their calories, eating only one type of food, or following a rigid food plan. They almost always gain the weight back because:

- Keeping weight off takes different skills than taking it off.
- Diets make you cranky, tired, moody, & more likely to get sick. So people are eager to get off a diet.
- After a diet, most people go back to the eating & activity patterns they had before.

Diets can cause a love/hate relationship with food. Eat this, don't eat that, eat less, eat more, blah blah blah. But food can be a very useful tool. Food is a friend, not a foe.

What you eat affects how you look, function, & feel. You'll do best eating foods that contain a lot of nutrients in relation to their calories.

- Eat richly colored fruits & vegetables. They offer lots of essential nutrients & satisfy your hunger. It's a 2 for 1 deal!
- Eat whole-grain breads, rice, cereals, & pastas. They contain more fiber, vitamins, & minerals than refined products.
- Try nutritious food. Add 1 or 2 new foods at a time, until you have plenty of choices as part of a healthy diet.
- Use hunger to help you gauge when & how much to eat. Stop eating when you're satisfied, before you feel full.

Many fad diets don't even mention physical activity. But using the calories you consume is an important part of managing your weight.

You don't have to join a gym, learn a sport, or spend all your spare time working out to get the activity you need.

- Walk, dance, bike, swim or do some other activity you enjoy for 30 minutes on most days of the week. It works to go for 10 minutes, 3 times a day, too!
- All activity counts. Walk when you talk on the phone. Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator. Choose the farthest parking space.
- Notice the feel of your body moving. Enjoy the great sensations!
- Have fun while you're moving. If you like moving, chances are you will.

Fad diets that don't work undermine people's confidence after a while. People who try to lose weight this way, & fail again & again, start to think it's their fault they can't do it.

Fat is not a no-no.

In the right quantities, fat is helpful, not harmful. In fact, fat:

- Makes you feel full longer.
- Helps you absorb the nutrients in fruits & vegetables. For example, a salad with a little oil helps you absorb more of the nutrients in the veggies.
- Strengthens your immune system.

Knowing why you eat, how you eat, & what you eat can be helpful if you want to change your weight.

- Why? Being bored, sad, stressed, or wanting to celebrate can lead to unconscious eating. Knowing why you're eating gives you more choices.
- How? Do you eat standing up? Quickly? While studying or watching TV? Eating slowly or in smaller meals can make it easier to pay attention to what you eat.