A Common Sense Approach to Weight Loss

Weight is a balance with calories on both sides. Eat as many calories as you burn and your weight remains the same. Eat fewer calories than you burn and you lose weight. Eat more calories than you burn...well, you get the picture.

Understand What You Eat

Be a label reader. Everything from serial boxes to menu items at restaurants now list calories. When calculating the calories in your food choices, pay attention to serving sizes. The recommended serving sizes are usually half or less of what you expect. Remember, one pound of body is equal to 3500 calories. (That’s two slices of chocolate coconut cheesecake!)

The Role of Physical Activity

Our basal metabolic rate is the number of calories we burn at rest, or with minimal activity. Heavier people burn more calories at rest and with activity. That makes sense. It takes more energy to move larger objects! When we diet and lose weight, our metabolic rate declines. This is why, as you probably know already, we lose weight more rapidly when we start to diet and more slowly as we lose weight. Consider the following.

A 150 pound woman of stable weight burns about 2200 calories during sedentary daily activity. Let’s say that she reduces her daily calorie intake by 500 calories. Over a week her “balance sheet” has used 3500 more calories (500 calories X seven days) than she consumed. She loses a pound each week. After two months she is 8 pounds lighter. Her metabolic rate, however, declines by 10% because she is dieting. She now burns about 1980 calories per day. Her caloric balance sheet now shows that she uses 1540 more calories than she consumes. She loses only ½ pound a week, gets discouraged, and abandons her diet. Sound familiar?

Physical activity does two things. First, you burn calories during exercise that you would not burn at rest. The following chart shows how many calories are burned per hour during various activities at various body weights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY / CALORIES</th>
<th>100 Pounds</th>
<th>150 Pounds</th>
<th>200 Pounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling, 6 mph</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling, 12 mph</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging, 7 mph</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumping rope</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running 5.5 mph</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running, 10 mph</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>1,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming 25y/min</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming 50y/min</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis, singles</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking, 2 mph</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking, 3 mph</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking, 4.5 mph</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You see that it is a lot harder to burn calories than to consume them. (Our 150 pound woman must jog for an hour to burn off about half a piece of that cheesecake!)

The other big advantage of regular exercise is that is prevents the diet from reducing our metabolic rate. As a result, with regular exercise, you burn more calories ALL DAY LONG. How much exercise is enough? We recommend a minimum of 45 minutes of moderate physical activity (the equivalent of brisk walking) on most days of the week. The exercise need not be in one session. Alternatively, we recommend the equivalent of walking 10,000 steps daily. (That’s about five miles but every step counts!)

The Diet

After reading the section above, you realize that to lose weight by exercising alone you must take up something like marathon running. Diet, then, is an essential part of your weight loss efforts. There are many diets and they all work if they result in your eating fewer calories than you burn. We will talk about some common sense approaches to a balanced diet.

1. Start with the Obvious
   a. Avoid calorie dense foods except on occasion and then in small amounts, for example:
      i. Soda
      ii. Shakes
      iii. 400 calorie Latte’s
      iv. Cakes, Candies, Confections
      v. That Cheesecake!

2. Limit Portion Sizes
   a. Read the label to see how to measure one portion of that cereal or that prepared rice or ...whatever!
   b. Reduce your portion sizes by 20%. (Be Honest)
   c. Take time to eat and leave the table a little hungry.
      i. It takes time for your food to be absorbed and to signal your brain that you have eaten (about 15 minutes).
      ii. If you eat until you are full, you are responding to a distended stomach and you have overeaten.
      iii. As you get used to smaller portions, your stomach will feel full even after smaller meals.
3. Choose Healthy Foods
   a. We say, “Eat a Rainbow”. That means at least five servings daily of fruits and vegetables of different colors.
   b. Limit refined carbohydrates like white breads and pasta. Substitute whole grains and reduced calorie (more thinly sliced) breads.
   c. Avoid fatty cuts of meat. Choose lean meats, chicken or fish. In fact, you should eat fish twice weekly for the healthy oils (omega 3’s).
   d. Limit fatty foods. Fat contains more than two time as many calories as protein or carbohydrate.
      i. Cook with polyunsaturated vegetable oils (like canola).
      ii. Use olive oil on salads.
      iii. Use fat free dairy products.

4. Plan your Meals
   a. Surround yourself with healthy foods by shopping regularly and by buying only what you should eat. Why tempt yourself!
   b. Plan your meals in advance (including lunch).
   c. Start your lunch or dinner with a salad and diet dressing.
   d. Have a strategy for eating out.
      i. Read the menu and choose low calorie items.
      ii. Avoid foods that are fried or “crispy”.
      iii. Skip the appetizer and the bread.
      iv. Restaurant portion sizes are often huge. Ask for the take-out container first, portion your meal and take the rest home for another day.

5. Eat Regularly
   a. Fasting all day and eating all night is the commonest eating disorder. Don’t do it.
   b. Eat a reasonable breakfast (Cereal, banana, coffee or juice, fat free mild, English muffin)
   c. Eat a reasonable lunch (cup of soup, half a sandwich, café salad, piece of fruit)
   d. Eat a reasonable dinner (small salad, small sweet potato or half cup of rice, 6 oz of lean meat, chicken or fish, coffee, piece of fruit).
   e. Eat a snack mid morning, mid afternoon and mid evening (piece of fruit, power bar or yogurt).
6. Have a Plan to Deal With Urges
   a. You will want to munch. Plan to deal with it.
      i. Our urges are driven more by habits than by hunger. We eat when we
         are angry or stressed or bored, at certain times or in certain places.
         Find alternatives! Find a hobby instead of sitting around at night. Go
         for a walk. Meditate. Anything except....eat!
   b. Have something healthy handy on which you can munch.
      i. Left over salad
      ii. Fruits or vegetables
      iii. Popcorn (Plain or diet)

7. Stay Hydrated
   a. Drink at least 1-1/2 to 2 liters daily of non-caffeinated, non alcoholic, non-
      sugary fluids. (Sounds like water, doesn’t it? Flavor it with lemon or lime.)

8. It’s Not a Diet, It’s a Lifestyle
   a. In the Stone Age you would have had a survival advantage. Your skinny
      comrades would have perished in times of famine. Instead, your family
      survived and you are here in a time of plenty. You will ALWAYS have to
      monitor your food intake and your weight and to remain active.
   b. It took time to gain weight. It takes time to lose it. “Yo-yo” weight gain and
      loss is not good. Target 3-5 pounds weight loss per month. You may do more
      or less, as long as you are headed in the right direction.
   c. That said, 200 additional calories daily (that’s half of a Dunkin Donut) if
      unopposed by additional exercise results in weight gain of 20 pounds in a
      year.

9. There Is No Magic Bullet
   a. There is no short cut to sustained weight loss. There are no weight loss drugs
      currently on the market that are both safe and effective.
   b. Any approach to weight loss starts with the principles noted above.
   c. If you must lose weight rapidly for medical reasons or if, despite honest
      effort, you are unsuccessful, speak with your doctor.

Let’s Get Started

The beauty of changing your life style is that you can start anytime, anywhere. If you fall
away from your plan from time to time (we all do), just pick it up again. Reward yourself for
small victories: new clothes..a CD..a trip to Europe (save that one for a big victory!). You are
in control. Now take the reins and go! You’ll be happier and healthier.
Some Useful References

American Heart Association Nutrition Center
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Nutrition-Center_UCM_001188_SubHomePage.jsp

American Diabetes Association Food and Fitness

Weight Watchers Food and Recipes

National Institutes of Health Nutrition Information Network
http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/index.htm#public