



5 PRACTICAL KEYS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

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The condition of being overweight and/or obese is an epidemic in America. Easy access to convenient food without the hassle of preparation may well be the reason of the rising obesity trend. The ubiquity of fast food restaurants offering instant tasty meals with sweetened carbonated drinks and other high calorie snacks has encouraged abnormal eating patterns for all hours of the day. Processed food rich in chemical additives plus sedentary lifestyles has made the Western lifestyle the unhealthiest in the world. When you add the stressors of everyday life, work duties, family life, and more, it can be very difficult to stay on the “weight loss wagon.”

Weight loss isn't just about vanity. It's also about your health. Health is one of the most important things that we have in life. We physically have the ability to do most of the things that we want to do, have more confidence in our capabilities and appearance when we are healthy.

Living a healthy lifestyle is not a simple task. It can be very difficult to find a weight loss or health plan that works for you. It can be equally as hard to follow the intended plan.

For example, you may decide that you want to start running. But once the weather gets icky, this plan may go down the drain. The next thing you know, you're skipping your daily exercise routine and life is back to normal.

Similarly, you may be currently on a diet plan. You feel as if you've been sticking to it, but for some reason, you're not losing weight. Even if you've invested in “diet” foods, you might still be overeating. For example, If you're sitting at your computer and worrying about a project, you could be mindlessly shoveling handfuls of your healthy snacks into your mouth. Despite the fact that this food is healthier than vending machine snacks, the calories still add up.

Time-tested weight loss methods

The best way to lose weight is not necessarily the fastest one. With all the diet trends, accessories and supplements on the market, we are bombarded by testimonials of people sporting flat abs and six packs endorsing the latest fad diet. They swear by how effective it has been for them and how they are having the time of their lives.

Naturally, who wouldn't want flat abs or a six pack? Unfortunately, short-term gains are difficult to sustain unless the individual actually decides to make the personal decision to want to live a healthy life.

The best approach to losing weight is to choose a system that, once initiated, can be sustained in the long run. If you've been trying and failing for years, it's time to reassess your methods. You need to take a closer look at your specific needs and devise a **weight loss plan** from there.

Below are some practical tips that you can slowly incorporate into your everyday activities. If you have been practicing them already, congratulations! If not, it's not yet too late to give it a try:

Tip 1: Stop and Think

Your brain and body work together. When approaching the topic of weight loss, it's important to first sit down and discover the elements that have been contributing to your weight gain.

Have you slacked off on exercising?

Are you too tired to exercise?

How much sleep do you get each night and is it enough?

Did you recently have a baby?

When you were pregnant, did you put on a lot of extra weight?

Have you had difficulty shedding these pounds?

Are you constantly stressed? What are the things that contribute to your stress?

Do you overeat? Do you notice that you're overeating while doing so, or do you only feel the results after a meal?

Have you noticed that you've been eating more or that you instinctively choose junk foods over healthier foods?

What are you putting in your body on a daily basis?

Are you taking any medications that potentially cause weight gain?

Have you experienced any major life changes that have affected your emotions?

Are you doing everything correctly but still are unable to lose weight?

Have you spoken to your doctor about any possible health issues, such as an over-active thyroid?

To lose weight, you must be conscious of the things that are affecting your brain and body on a daily basis. Do your part to get these elements under control. You have to make adjustments within your everyday life so that you can increase your chances of success. Take steps that will help ensure that you start a ***weight loss plan*** and stick to it.

Tip 2: Get a Sufficient Amount of Sleep

Not getting enough sleep may increase your chances of becoming overweight in the long run. A recent study from *Uppsala University* revealed that the brain's response to food is more active after one night of sleep loss.

Researchers from *Uppsala University* together with researchers from other European universities studied the brain of 12 participants with normal weights while the subjects viewed images of food. They examined regions in the brain involved with appetite sensation using magnetic imaging and compared results after a night with normal sleep and one obtained after

one night without sleep. According to Christian Benedict, the lead researcher in the study, "After a night of total sleep loss, these participants showed a high level of activation in an area of the brain that is involved in a desire to eat."

Insufficient sleep appears to be a problem that plagues modern society. Being able to get at least eight hours a night may be crucial in maintaining health and avoiding cardiovascular and weight-related conditions.

Tip 3: Think Realistically and Positively

Keep your expectations in check. Don't expect results overnight. It takes time to lose weight, build strength, and live an overall healthier lifestyle.

Think of it this way, you wouldn't just attempt a marathon if you've never even ran a mile, would you? No. You would need to build up to it. Even after you're ready to run a marathon, the effort doesn't stop there. Once you reach your goal, it still requires hard work and dedication.

Don't get frustrated. Try to change your perspective on your body and your abilities. Avoid viewing things negatively. Instead of saying, "I can't do this. I'm done for the day." Say, "If I keep working at it, I WILL be able to do this."

Talk to yourself as if you're talking to a good friend whom you love. Remind yourself of the positive benefits of looking out for your health. Say, "I'm making myself stronger everyday."

Think of all of the good things you are doing for yourself and the things that you will be able to do if you keep up your hard work.

As with any goal, it's important to decide specifically what you want to achieve, and then break that goal down into smaller, more manageable steps.

Be honest and specific with yourself. Don't just say, "I need to lose weight," or "I need to drop 100 pounds, stat an effective **weight loss plan**"

Seriously consider how much you realistically need to lose. How much is possible over a specific period of time?

Are you almost 30 years old and have discovered that your metabolism has started to slow down? Maybe you're turning 50 this year and have been inactive for the past ten years. Perhaps you want to ensure that you are around to see your grandchildren. Maybe you want to improve your mobility so that you are able to walk your son or daughter down the aisle.

In a study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, maintaining weight and fitness levels as we grow older may be enough to see significant benefits.

Do you want to lower your cholesterol? Do you want to be able to climb a flight of stairs without getting winded? No reason is too small or insignificant.

According to a study, if you're overweight, losing weight and improving your fitness may be the best combination for health maintenance. The study discovered that people who kept up or improved their fitness levels lowered their risk of high cholesterol, high blood pressure and their risk to metabolic syndrome (a term used to refer to a group of risk factors for heart disease such as unhealthy cholesterol level, abdominal obesity and high blood sugar).

Here's an example of a realistic, clear goal: "I would like to lose 20 pounds by next year so that I am great shape for our next family vacation."

From there, you can say that you'd like to lose four pounds a month until you reach your goal. You can decide the best way for you to tackle those four pounds each month.

Getting specific and choosing an attainable goal helps propel you into action because it provides you with a clearer path to your goal. When you say, "I need to lose weight," it's too open-ended.

Once you chose definite numbers and deadlines, you can plan from there what actions you must take to help you achieve your goals.

Tip 4: Exercise your way to health

To stay healthy, your body needs to move. Exercise is critical, and it can have many positive mental and physical benefits.

Although 60 minutes of exercise each day is optimal, it may not be possible. The important thing is that you get moving. You can do one long workout each day, or you break up your exercise into portions throughout the day.

When you're first starting out, it doesn't matter what you do. You can do little things, such as taking the stairs, taking a stroll around the block for 10-20 minutes during your lunch, or biking to locations instead of driving. Adjust little things, and you'll start to notice a difference.

Make sure that you mix things up when necessary. If you get bored, you're more likely to slack off or start skipping workouts.

Keep things fresh so that you stay motivated and excited about improving your body. You can change your form of exercise or do something as simple as altering your route when running to keep your interest alive!

If you need help thinking of a good workout, go to the internet for suggestions. Ask friends or family about their favorite methods. The options are endless and the ideas are creative. You can run outside or on a treadmill. You can invest in some equipment for your home, such as weights, a stationary bike, or an elliptical.

You can also always purchase a gym membership. This will give you a place to workout year round, so when the weather gets crummy, you don't have an excuse not to exercise. Most gyms also have a variety of machines and classes that can help keep you motivated.

You can use your television to do programs such as P90X, Insanity, Pilates, or a variety of other home workouts. If you live in a temperate location, you can go hiking. If typical workouts seem boring, take a dance class or do aerobics.

Get up and stretch at work. Give yourself some energy by doing 20 push-ups or jumping jacks. Do 50 sit-ups while watching your favorite television show.

There are people who choose to golf nine holes every day. But instead of using a cart, like most of the other golfers, they walk the course. To ensure that they do not hold anyone up who's behind them, they clip along at a fast walking pace.

If you have trouble staying motivated, consider finding a workout buddy or investing in a personal trainer. These serve as forms of accountability and will help to keep you on the right track.

Ask a friend to take a morning or post-dinner walk with you each day. If you enjoy playing sports, ask around to see if you can join a club or a league.

Again, don't get frustrated if you don't see immediate results. Download apps on your phone that chart your progress. Invest in a pedometer to count your steps. Strive to do more than you did the day before.

Technology continues to evolve and there are new products released everyday that can help you track your progress. Even if you can't physically notice the results at first, it's rewarding to see what effect your hard work is having within your body.

At the onset, people who are overweight often fail to notice their weight loss because they get hungrier and start eating more. This shouldn't discourage them. What is essential is to use exercise to get fit, and one way to decipher progress is to see how you feel when going through your exercise routine. If it's getting easier, you are getting fitter.

Tip 5: Watch What You Eat

Food is vital for life. But to be your healthiest, you must watch what you eat. Not all foods are created equal. A lot of foods contribute to weight gain and poor health.

It can be easier to head to the vending machine or run to the convenience store for snacks than to actually take the time to prepare a quality dinner at home. However, even though it's time consuming and expensive to prepare quality dinner at home, it's absolutely worth the trouble.

Avoid Unhealthy Diets

Diets can be daunting. The thought of eating less and saying "no" to negative foods can be overwhelming. Odds are, you've been eating these foods for years, have developed unhealthy eating habits, and crave a lot of things that are bad for you.

If you worry about falling off the wagon with a diet plan, start small. Again, it's important to be realistic. It's also important to be fair to yourself. You can't simply stop eating. If you need a little push toward healthy eating, try cutting out one negative thing and see if you notice any results.

Any positive change helps, and each change adds up over time.

To assist yourself in this process, replace something negative with something neutral or positive, such as a glass of water or green tea instead of soda, or a small side salad instead of bread.

Be aware, though, that just because something is healthy does not mean that you should over-do it. As the saying goes, "everything in moderation".

Don't eat an entire bag of carrots in one sitting. Don't force yourself to guzzle a gallon of water. Don't eat ten rice cakes in lieu of a snack-size bag of potato chips.

Also, not all "diet" foods or drinks are healthy. Drinking too much diet soda can also have negative effects on your body. It may have less sugar, but it's higher in sodium.

Make small changes. Substitute junk food and drinks with healthier options. Don't over-do any one particular thing.

Start Your Day Off With The Right Food

Although it can be good to cut out certain elements, you should never cut out breakfast. Breakfast is critical for your energy and metabolism.

Eating a quality breakfast kick-starts your metabolism. On the other hand, when you skip breakfast in the morning, it slows your metabolism down.

You should also make sure that you eat food that will fill you up and help push you through the day, such as proteins. When you're hungry, you tend to feel fatigued. This can lead to overeating. Prevent this chain reaction by eating a good breakfast.

Introduce a Diet Plan

It's hard to know which diet to trust. There are a lot of "quick fixes" and fad diets out there, but most of them are considered ineffective.

Avoid crash diets, miracle pills, or anything similar. The best way to lose weight is to eat well and exercise often.

The last thing you want to do is attempt a diet and quit. This will make you feel like a failure and as if you're simply unable to lose weight. Find a diet that works for you and remain steadfast. Everyone is capable of losing weight and being healthier.

You must find a ***diet plan*** that works for you and that you won't abandon when times get hard or temptations arise.

One useful plan is a low-carb diet. The nice thing about low-carb diets is that they present a lot of additional benefits besides weight loss.

When you eat a diet high in proteins and fats and low in carbohydrates, you lower your risk for diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

As mentioned before, protein fills you up, takes longer to process, and keeps you satiated for longer. This means less unnecessary snacking and more pounds shed!

Low-carb diets are also helpful in getting rid of belly fat, which is notoriously difficult to lose. When you eat a low-carb diet, you will have to make some sacrifices with your meals. You can replace one food group with another. So, instead of eating two pieces of buttered bread with your dinner, you can ask for a side of vegetables or fruits. It's simpler than counting calories, in the long run.

When you go low-carb, focus on what you're eating, instead of what you're missing. Concentrate on how the protein and fats are helping to slim you down and make you feel great.

Women's Health Mag.com says, "Protein is doubly essential for making sure you lose fat, not muscle. Your body uses the amino acids in protein to build lean muscle, which not only makes

you stronger and more toned but also fries calories even when you're not active, unlike lazy fat.”

Beware of portion sizes. In this day and age, a typical restaurant “serving” is much too large. At most places, an entree for one could actually serve as an entree for two or three people. That’s a ton of calories for one person to ingest in one sitting. In general, each food group should be no bigger than a clenched fist. In fact, certain food groups should be smaller, such as carbs and fats.

When you go out to eat, try cutting your plate in half. Take a knife to each food group, and only eat half of each. Or, if you get full before eating the complete half, simply stop eating. Overeating leads to weight gain, not to mention discomfort.

Everyone’s bodies are different, though. People get full at different times. Men and women require different amounts of food. Trust your body to tell you what it needs and what it doesn’t.

When you start to feel full, and are tempted to keep eating, force yourself to take a “break.” Give yourself a few minutes to decide if you REALLY need to keep eating, or if you simply WANT to keep eating. You can always pack the leftovers and save it for later. It’s always a nice treat to remember that you have leftovers in the fridge that you can eat for lunch or the next night’s dinner.

It can also be helpful to do a little research about the place that you’re going to eat so that there are no surprises or you feel the need to break away from your diet. You can also learn which menu items are better for you.

If you have a difficult time with over-eating, remind yourself that you WILL eat again. Keep things in perspective. A dish may taste good, but you should always stop when – or before – you feel full.

When you feel “stuffed,” this means that you have over-eaten. If you feel this way often, it means that it has become a habit for you. Just like any bad habit, you need to get rid of it if you want to be healthy.

Losing weight and changing your habits takes effort. One thing that can be useful is a journal. You can use this journal to document food choices and exercise routines.

Keep a log of what you’ve eaten throughout the day. Note how these things make you feel. It’s also a great way to continue to chart your progress. When you have to write down your choices, it can really illuminate how much you’re actually eating, areas that need more work, and areas in which you are thriving.

Drink Plenty of Water

Recent studies have now shown that drinking water is an effective weight loss strategy. It's helps to boost your metabolism and keeps you hydrated.

In a study, it was discovered that dieters who drank water before eating three times a day over the course of roughly three months lost five pounds more than those who did not have increased water consumption. Water has no calories and consuming it before meals makes less space for food in the stomach.

Researchers also noted that consuming water was better than soda and other sweetened drinks, which are packed with sugar or artificial sweeteners, additives that have found to contribute heavily to weight gain.

Moreover, it is suggested that six to eight glasses of water be taken daily to maintain the water content of the bile, according to Michael Murray, N.D., and Joseph Pizzorno, N.D., in their book "The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods." Fresh fruit, pure water and vegetable juices are the preferred methods of meeting the body's water requirements.

Conclusion

Weight loss and a healthy life style are choices. They take consideration, effort, and determination.

Setting goals is good, but you must *continue* setting goals for yourself. The path to health never reaches an end point.

Once you've reached your desired weight, your health journey is not complete. Rather, it's an ongoing journey. Now, you must work to maintain the body you've created.

This means that you must continue to make positive food and activity choices.

Surround yourself with people who support you on your journey. If a friend or spouse chooses to work on their health, as well, this can be very helpful.

The bottom line is that no one can make you lose weight. No one can force you to make healthy choices. You have to want to do it for yourself.

You may be of the mindset that you can always start your diet "tomorrow." But each day that goes by is another day in which you are not taking care of yourself. When you're not healthy, you're not living life to the fullest.

Furthermore, by living an unhealthy life, you're increasing your chances of serious health problems down the road. Life is shorter than you think. Make the most of it by doing everything you can to make your body healthy and strong.

When you feel good inside, you'll feel even better on the outside. You'll like your appearance. You'll be more confident and happy. You'll have more energy to live the life you want, take care of family or loved ones, and be more productive in the work place.

You'll be proud of your abilities. It's a great feeling to be able to run up the stairs, pick up a child without feeling terribly stiff, or keep up with your friends and family members when walking.

We've all looked back at photos and witnessed ourselves during unhealthy times. When we see these photos, we want to flinch and burn these images. We say, "Oh my gosh, my face was so fat," or "I don't want anyone to see this because it's embarrassing."

Don't let these images drag you down. Instead, use these images as inspiration to better yourself. Create a healthier, happier you, inside and out.

The important thing is that you find your motivation, regardless of what it is. Find a reason to start taking care of you. Perhaps you're content with your weight, but you would like to increase your level of activity so that you stay spritely and vibrant.

Find your inspiration, and get started with your [health journey](#).

For more information and tips, be sure to check out my newsletters. Thanks for reading!

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