

Nutrition Bites

Nutrition Bite Week 7 – Losing Weight

If you want to lose weight and improve your overall fitness, taking part in this 10 mile run/walk is a great idea!

Losing weight can improve your blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and cholesterol, can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke, improves your mobility, relieves stress, improves self-esteem and boosts your energy levels. The distribution of fat around the body can also have an effect on your health. Being 'apple' shaped, with fat stored around the middle of the body (tummy, back and chest) increases your risk of diabetes and heart disease. Being 'pear' shaped, with fat stored around the hips and thighs is less harmful.

Studies have shown that regular exercise along with following a healthy balanced diet is more effective for weight loss, compared with exercising alone, or just watching what you eat. The secret is to find a way of fitting healthy eating and exercise into your lifestyle so that you can sustain it in the long-term. Fad diets are just that – a craze, a trend. They never last and they can cause your weight to yo-yo up and down. First you follow a stringent exclusion diet and then follow it with lashings of the very foods you deprived yourself of in the first place! Not a recipe for long-term success!

Here is a better and healthier plan - get training, improve your fitness and slowly you can sculpt your body shape. You can then relax around food and enjoy it!

Top Tips for Weight Loss.....

Throw away the diet books!

They may help you to lose weight in the short term but they are not sustainable or realistic. Most people don't like giving up their favourite foods, so any diet that deprives you of these won't work – you will obsess about these foods and give in eventually, and will probably end up eating more than you would have normally!

Make Peace with food

If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't eat a particular food, it can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that build into uncontrollable cravings and often binges! Accept that no one food has the power to make you fat or help you to become thin. Allow all foods to be part of your healthy eating plan – moderation is the key here!

Set goals

Achievable goals will help keep you motivated and on the right track. But there are some rules to bear in mind when setting goals – make sure they are realistic, specific and measurable. For example, rather than setting a vague goal to eat more fruit and vegetables, aim to include one piece of fruit at breakfast, one portion salad/fruit at lunch etc. Make the goals specific!

Aim for a healthy weight loss

Aim for a loss of no more than 1-2 lbs a week – this is a healthy and realistic rate of weight loss. If you have a lot of weight to lose, break it up into smaller amounts – you can aim to lose half a stone to 10 pounds in the next five weeks. If you are overweight, losing just 10% of your body weight can help

lower your cholesterol, improve your blood sugar control, make exercise easier, ease your joint pains, and boost your self confidence.

Be prepared

Carry healthy snacks with you and always carry a bottle of water. Fruit, unsalted nuts, high-fibre cereal bars, wholegrain crackers are useful snacks to have in the car or your handbag to prevent you from being tempted by chocolate or crisps when you are on the go. When doing your grocery shopping, making a shopping list and sticking to it will make your shopping trip more efficient and stop you buying on impulse.

Don't shop on an empty stomach

If you go shopping when you are hungry you are more likely to buy treat foods. If you do find yourself shopping on an empty stomach, drink some water or buy a piece of fruit to eat as you go.

Eat more fibre

A high fibre diet, rich in wholegrains, plenty of fruit and veg and pulses, has many benefits to your health. Fibre rich foods are low in fat and provide many essential vitamins and minerals. Fibre helps keep your digestive system working. It can also help prevent against heart disease and some forms of cancer. As well as this, high fibre foods keep you feeling fuller for longer and are useful if you are trying to achieve a healthy weight. So aim to fill up on fibre by eating more wholemeal and brown varieties of bread, pasta, rice, eat the skins of fruit and vegetables and try adding more pulses such as chickpeas and lentils to dishes such as salads, soups, stews. If you are increasing the amount of fibre in your diet, you also need to increase the amount of fluid you are drinking to help the fibre work properly in the body. Aim for the recommended 8 glass, or 2 litres a day.

Drink more fluid

Keep a one litre bottle of water with you, so that you can measure your water intake over the day. Aim to drink 2 litres of water a day.

Breakfast like a King

It's true that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating a good breakfast helps to boost your metabolism after an overnight fast, and fuels you up for the day ahead. Studies have shown that people who skip breakfast are more likely to be overweight, snack more between meals and overeat at main meals. Try something like porridge or a wholegrain breakfast cereal, low fat milk, fresh fruit or a handful of dried food sprinkled over your cereal for a healthy start to the day.

Keep a food diary

Writing down exactly what you eat and drink for at least a week will give you a good idea of where you need to improve. Be as honest as possible – include all snacks, alcohol, and any nibbles you have during the day. You may be surprised at how quickly the amount you eat adds up! A food diary can help you spot problem areas and plan ways to improve, such as swapping that mid-morning biscuit for a piece of fruit or swapping white bread for wholegrain.

Eat little, often and slowly

Eat regular meals, and don't skip meals. This will help keep your blood sugar levels stable and prevent dips in energy and sugar cravings. When you are eating, chew your food slowly and be aware of the taste and texture. Studies have shown that people who eat meals in front of the TV tend to eat larger portions. Try not to have any distractions during mealtimes so that you can enjoy your food.

Focus on the positives

Try not to become obsessed with the numbers on the weighing scales - use other ways to measure your success e.g. how your clothes feel, how you look, your energy levels and your mood. Weigh yourself no more than once a week.

Reward Yourself!

If you don't reward yourself for all your hard work you will quickly lose interest and motivation. Try not to have food based treats as your rewards, instead treat yourself to as a trip to the cinema/theatre, visit to the hairdressers, a facial/manicure, new makeup, a magazine, lessons to learn a new sport, a weekend away etc.

Cutting your calories is the bottom line.....

- ✓ Serve water at mealtimes. Limit soft drinks and juices as they are high in sugar.
- ✓ Watch your cooking methods – steam vegetables rather than boil them, use a non-stick pan when stir-frying, bake or microwave instead of frying.
- ✓ Reduce your intake of spreads and oils. If you have to use oil for cooking, measure it out using a spoon and try to use healthier fats such as olive oil or rapeseed oil.
- ✓ Marinade your meat/chicken/fish instead of adding a high fat sauce or dressing at the table.
- ✓ Eat one portion of white and one portion of oily fish a week. White fish is very low in calories and an excellent source of protein. Oily fish contains heart protective omega 3 fatty acids.
- ✓ Buy lean cuts of meat and premium minced beef. Ask your butcher to remove any excess fat. Choose reduced fat sausages or pates only very occasionally as treats.
- ✓ Focus on “low-energy density foods” to add bulk, texture and volume to your meals. Eating more fruit, vegetables, peas, beans, lentils and wholegrains gives you the sensation that you are eating more food while still losing weight.
- ✓ Use low fat dairy products e.g. low fat cheese, low fat milk, low fat yoghurts.
- ✓ If you want something sweet after a meal, finish off with a piece of fruit, low fat yoghurt or fruit based dessert.
- ✓ Reduce your portion sizes. Aim for ½ of your plate to be filled with fruit/vegetables/salad, ¼ for meat/fish and ¼ carbohydrates. Consider using a smaller plate.
- ✓ When eating out ask for sauce, dressings and gravy to be served on the side as you can add as little as you want. When ordering a side order ask for vegetables or a side salad instead of chips.
- ✓ Substitute sugar with an artificial sweetener when adding to hot drinks, cooking or baking.
- ✓ Limit your alcohol intake.
- ✓ Avoid temptation and don't buy junk food for the house.

- ✓ Get into the habit of reading food labels, and calculate the number of calories in the portion you are about to eat.

For further information on healthy eating and portion sizes check out www.paulamee.com or www.indi.ie. Next week we will focus on alcohol. Keep up the good work!