

The Weight Loss Challenge

How Can I Lose Weight and Keep it Off?

Health problems resulting from overweight and obesity are on the rise. It is important that you consider how your weight affects your health. The suggestions listed below are to help you change your current behaviors and become healthier.

1) Keep focused on the benefits. Even a small, positive change in your body composition will help you reduce your risk for Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and arthritis. If you eat sensibly and exercise you will feel better.

2) Avoid fad diets – think healthy lifestyle. Believe that YOU CAN DO IT without relying on a fad diet or pills. Fad diets and pills can be harmful to your health and should be avoided. Often these types of weight loss programs require drastic changes to your eating habits. The likelihood of sticking with a program is slim to none. Yes, you will lose weight quickly but, again how long will you keep it off and at what cost to your health?



3) Cut back on food and beverages that are “empty calories” (don’t have a lot of nutritional value).

Some examples are as follows:

- 1 oz. bag of potato chips-150 calories
- 1.5 oz milk chocolate candy bar-235 calories
- 1 glazed doughnut-240 calories
- 2 tablespoons ranch dressing~150 calories
- 12 oz. can of soda-150 calories [3cans=450 calories]
- 12 oz. can of beer-150 calories

4) Keep a detailed food record for at least a week. Then scan it for hidden sources of unnecessary calories in the foods you’ve eaten. You might discover those unwanted calories in the form of snacks, or large portions of food, or beverages. By eliminating 250 calories each day you can lose approximately 1/2 a pound a week with relative ease. (By cutting back 500 calories each day, you could lose approximately 1 pound per week.) This is how you can slowly cut back and not feel deprived.

5) Plan to eat 3 moderate size meals each day that includes a variety of foods from all food groups. If you don’t eat regular meals the tendency is to snack on foods with excess calories throughout the day or in the evening. It is OK to have snacks as long as you choose wisely. (some example might be: string cheese, fruit, yogurt)

6) Learn to eat only when your body is truly hungry. Identify high risk times when you are more likely to eat for emotional reasons and come up with a non-food activity, like taking a walk or calling a friend. If you don’t develop other ways of dealing with issues such as stress, boredom, and low self-esteem, you will continue to over-eat to cope.

7) Begin an exercise program or tweak your workout. If you aren’t physically active it would be good to pick a type of activity you enjoy, like walking, and start gradually. If you are currently exercising you probably need to kick your program up a notch by adding another day or begin a strength training program. You could also mix it up a bit and try a new



class or a different type of exercise. Variety prevents boredom! If you increase your activity or exercise to burn up at least 250 calories each day, you can lose another 1/2 pound per week. By reducing 250 calories from your food intake each day and increasing your exercise you could lose 1 pound per week. That doesn't sound like much but in a year that would be about 50 pounds. **Remember, if you have a medical problem, consult your doctor before beginning an exercise program.**

8) Drink more water. Some extra weight could just be fluid that your body is retaining in response to hormone fluctuations or eating too many high sodium/salty foods. Drinking water helps flush out the excess fluid and waste products. Start by adding just 1 cup a day and slowly work up to 8-8oz. cups a day.

9) Eat more high fiber foods (fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains such as brown rice, oatmeal, barley and whole grain breads and cereals) they'll fill you up with fewer calories and will provide your body with many very important nutrients.



10) Write out one or two specific, realistic goals that you can work on for the next week.

Examples:

- 1) I will keep a detailed food record every day this week to look at my eating behaviors.
- 2) Walk four times per week for 30 minutes and write it on my exercise log.

Focusing on changing behavior is how you improve your body composition, not focusing on the fact that you want to lose weight. That can be a never-ending, self-defeating battle. Instead, take responsibility for creating a healthy lifestyle and stick with it for a lifetime – that's what counts!

What specific, realistic goal(s) will you work on this next week?

If you want to lose weight but don't know where to start, or have been unsuccessful with weight loss in the past, consider talking with an OSF Saint Francis Registered Dietitian at 655-3705 (hospital), 282-1600 (RiverPlex), 655-7936 (Penn. Avenue Office).

Need more suggestions for a healthier lifestyle? OSF Saint Francis Wellness Services is here to help! Call us at (309) 282-1624 or visit our website at: osfsaintfrancis.org/services/wellness

References- Sept., 2003

Weight Management web sites: www.intelihealth.com

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/weightlossdieting.html