

Say NO to dieting

For many of us, constant dieting is a way of life. For some reason, we are drawn to faddy diets like moths to a flame. But, imagine never having to go on another diet ever again.

No matter how popular trendy diets are, there has never been a wonder diet or a magic pill. Medical science has proven that weight loss occurs due to a negative energy balance and not because of a wonder diet. So whether you cut out carbohydrates, or fat, or go on the cabbage soup diet, or eliminate food altogether and drink only diet shakes, you would lose weight for a month or two or even maybe longer, but this is due to a simple energy deficit!

Most dieters complain that once they stop their diet the pounds gradually come back on. It is often something as simple as a holiday, or a few stressful days, or boredom that lures dieters back to old habits. Once you stop a diet, the weight will pile back on, because you have interfered with the "energy deficit" which is then suddenly switched to energy surplus, which is restored as body fat.

Before embarking on any diet, ask yourself the question:

Can you follow the prescribed way of eating for the rest of your life? If your answer is NO, think hard about whether to embark on the diet. If you promise yourself to only use the diet as a kick start to weight loss, think again. Unless you consume the same amount of calories as the prescribed diet, you can expect the pounds to pile back on.

Research has proven that the key to successful weight loss and management is long term lifestyle changes. It is about retraining yourself to follow correct eating habits to maintain a healthy weight. You need to control the constant longing for forbidden foods. Through lifestyle changes you will soon discover new foods to enjoy.

Where do you stand with dieting? Are you desperate to lose weight or do you just want to avoid putting on more? Check your Body Mass Index (or BMI) and set yourself realistic goals. Those who have weight to lose must face the reality that shedding weight may take a while. Do not believe in the false promises many diets make.

Re-educate yourself. The rules of basic good nutrition and healthy eating do not change much. A balanced diet includes plenty of fruit and vegetables, whole grains and a good variety of all foods in correct portions.

Portion distortion. Portion control is the key to any healthy diet and weight management programme. There is no such thing as good foods and bad foods, only bad portions. Research proves that portion sizes, particularly of fast food, have increased drastically over the years. A muffin should be the size of a regular door knob, but in reality it can be much larger and equivalent in calories to 5 - 7 slices of bread. Unfortunately, super-sized meals are often thought to be a bargain. Recent research demonstrates that it is possible to feel full on smaller portions if they simply include more fibre-rich and water containing foods, such as fruits and vegetables, instead of fat containing foods which are more calorie dense.

Recognise the pitfalls. Guard yourself against the pitfalls when eating out. Research has found that families who eat out a lot tend to consume fewer fruits and vegetables. At home, you can control both serving sizes and the exact meal content. Alcohol unfortunately contains calories. It is vital to keep to moderation – a drink with a meal! Stress often is an

unrecognized obstacle to healthy eating. If you are stressed and tired, eat when you are hungry and do not eat to replenish your energy.

The key to weight loss is not to follow a diet, but to change your behaviour and adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes sufficient rest, regular exercise, and a balanced diet – a state of good health.