

# Tips for Losing Weight and Keeping it Off\*

Four thousand people on the National Weight Control Registry who lost 30 pounds and kept it off for at least one year were found to have four things in common that they do to lose and keep weight off.

1. **Eat breakfast.** Eating breakfast doesn't necessarily help you eat less during the day but it does tend to make you a little more active. Eating a good breakfast helps ease hunger later in the day.
2. **Eat a low-fat, high-protein diet with some healthy carbs.** People who are able to keep their weight off report eating about 24% of their calories from fat. Per gram, fat has twice the calories of protein or carbs — so the key here is a *low-fat* diet. Keep in mind that not all carbs are bad. The typical American diet is loaded with “bad” carbs like alcohol and processed white sugars and white flours. Avoid “bad” carbs and instead focus on healthy ones like fruits, vegetables. If eating grains, go for whole grains. Refer to the chart on the back of this handout for more on carbs.
3. **Self-Monitor.** Weigh yourself at least once a week. Do things like keeping a food diary.
4. **Exercise regularly** three to four times a week. Over 90% of the people who kept the weight off did regular physical activity typically an hour a day. They burn about 2,800 calories a week through walking briskly, biking, swimming or other exercise. The key: start slowly, and increase gradually. When exercising do 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise (reaching the target heart rate for your age range) and about 20 to 30 minutes of weight training. Alternatively, do a variety of different types of workouts throughout the week. See a trainer to be sure you are doing the exercises properly.

Additionally, some people have found the following tips helpful.

- ◆ **“Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper.” — Adelle Davis.** Eat a large breakfast, a moderate lunch and a light dinner. Some people even favor five to six small meals throughout the day to avoid “crashing” and subsequent binging (but with the largest of them still being breakfast). If you are not a “breakfast person”, at least eat something to start the day. The evening has a way of tempting people to overeat, so don't snack for at least two to three hours before bedtime.
- ◆ **“My doctor told me to stop having intimate dinners for four. Unless there are three other people.” — Orson Welles.** You really are what (and how much) you eat. Remember: Nothing tastes as good as being thin feels. Other dieting tips include using common sense when eating and eating extra fiber. The average American eats twice as much protein as they need, but only half as much fiber as they should. Fiber is best found in whole foods like whole-grain breads, fresh fruits and vegetables. Make good food choices like oatmeal for breakfast and avoid junk food, caffeine, fats, processed or added sugars, and sodas. Over the past few decades, portion sizes in restaurants have steadily increased. “Super-sized” meals are “super-sizing” Americans. So keep a close eye on portion sizes and take some of that big meal home for the next day's lunch. So the real “food” keys are breakfast, little fat, lots of fiber, plenty of water, and portion control.
- ◆ **“Human beings are 70% water, and with some the rest is collagen.” — Martin Mull.** Try to drink only water throughout the day. Drink 8 to 10 cups a day if you are a woman, and 12 if you are a man. Also replace fluid losses during exercise – 1½ cups for each pound of water weight lost during exercise. (1 cup = 8 oz.)
- ◆ **“You should eat to live; not live to eat.” — Socrates.** Address any emotional or stress-related issues in order to stop emotional eating. Think: What would I be feeling if I weren't eating?

**“If we burn ourselves out with drugs or alcohol, we won't have long to go in this business.” — John Belushi.** Cut down on alcohol. Alcohol is just “empty” calories without providing any nutritional value. In addition, it has other negative effects on your health and weight like raising cortisol levels.

\*These recommendations are for generally healthy people. Not all of these apply if you have chronic medical problems like diabetes, heart problems, high blood pressure, eating disorders or other problems. For example, diabetics often need an evening snack to avoid blood sugars that drop too low at night. Talk to your doctor to see which of the above tips are appropriate for you, and always talk to your doctor before beginning any diet or exercise program.