Nutrition Tips for Weight Loss

Losing weight can be a challenge because it means changing our food habits and exercise patterns. But the right choices over months and years can make all the difference. If you’re exercising to lose weight, DON’T neglect the nutrition side of the equation. In general, try to reduce your overall calorie and fat intake by reducing portion sizes or limiting the amount of fatty foods and junk food you eat.

TAKE CHARGE

• Plan ahead! Be strategic. When is the next time you’ll eat and where will you be? Days often get away from us and we’re left hungry, eating “defensively.” For example, we wait until we’re starving, then scarf down a big pretzel from a street vendor or raid the nurse’s station candy jar! A better strategy is to think ahead and take a realistic approach to the day’s food challenges. Keep healthy snacks around (fruit, yogurt, nuts, crackers).

• Working late and won’t have dinner until much later? Have a substantial afternoon snack to help you get through. Save a snack from lunchtime to eat before your commute to take the edge off your hunger. Then eat a light dinner.

• Eat every three to four hours. Not big meals, but enough to bridge the gap between meals.

• Eat breakfast. Really. It doesn’t have to be a huge trucker’s breakfast. But starting off the day with some food will kickstart your metabolism. It will also prevent you from feeling ravenous later and eating food you shouldn’t.

SIZE MATTERS!

• Don’t supersize, you’ll just supersize your waist! Order small, instead of medium or large. Eat the foods you usually enjoy, just leave half on the plate. Or save part of your meal for later. (Half a sandwich at lunch, half for a late afternoon snack.). Just eat less!

• Eat until you are 85% full. Then STOP. Give yourself permission to eat again later if you like, but push away from the table. Learn what “full” vs. “overstuffed” feels like.

• Allow 10% of your calories to come from “empty nutrient” foods. This means that a person consuming 1,800 calories a day can eat 180 calories from junk food if she likes, be it a soda, handful of chips, scoop of ice cream or a small candy bar. If you totally deprive yourself of “pleasure” foods, you may end up binging on other less satisfying choices anyway.
FOOD TRICKS

• New research has found that people who don’t get enough calcium have more trouble maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight. So make sure you’re meeting your body’s calcium requirements. For most adults, that means 3-4 servings of calcium rich foods daily. (For example a calcium serving = one cup of milk/yogurt or one slice of cheese).

• Try to eat foods that resemble the original, and snacks that are “real food”, not junk food. Blueberries instead of the blueberry-flavored breakfast bar. Real cheese and crackers instead of cheezits, cheetos or cheese spread (lots of extra fat). A whole grain bread roll instead of a croissant.

• Match your snack or meal with your hunger rating. If you’re just sort of hungry, a piece of fruit should do. But if you’re famished, then you need more: a yogurt with an apple and some almonds. Are you really hungry, or just bored, tired or stressed out? Get some help finding non-food solutions to emotional needs.

• Cut back on your intake of alcoholic beverages or soda pop. They have lots of empty calories and, depending on how much you drink, can really pack on the pounds. Watch out for latte and espresso drinks; they can pack a big calorie punch! Try water, lowfat milk, spritzer, etc.

• Remember the B’s. Choose foods that are baked, barbecued, broiled or boiled. Fried foods have lots of added fat and calories that can sabotage your weight loss efforts.

• Choose the best and leave the rest! That means, if there’s a high calorie food you REALLY love, allow yourself to enjoy it every once and a while. But don’t waste your calories on inferior versions of the same food. For example, don’t eat French fries at every meal. Wait until you can enjoy the great fries they make at that certain place. If you love a certain type of cookie, enjoy it. But pass on other cookie variations.

BONUS TIPS

• Find a partner who wants to make healthier food choices and lose a little weight too. Don’t compare yourselves, but do support each other in making good food decisions. Support and accountability really help, which is why programs like Weight Watchers have been so successful.

• Don’t depend on a magic supplement or metabolism drink to do the trick for you. They may work short term, but you’ll find yourself back where you started (or even a few pounds heavier) and may experience dangerous side effects.

• The nutritionists at the Women’s Sports Medicine Center can help you put together an individualized weight loss plan that takes into account your food preferences and lifestyle. Call 212.606.1345 to schedule an appointment.