

Weight Loss, the long term plan.....

It's important to remember that your health matters when you're working on losing weight. The body prefers slow and gradual changes to its routine, so going on a crash diet isn't necessarily the answer, and nor is a sudden burst of exercise.



Exercise:

If you haven't exercised for several years, going for a ten mile run on your first day could be very bad for your health. You'll not only be exhausted by the experience, you'll also be disheartened by how badly your body has coped, which could put you off exercising again. Not only that, you're also more likely to injure yourself, which will set you back even more.

One of the simplest forms of home exercise is walking. This basic activity is often overlooked in favor of more exotic fitness pursuits, but walking is an excellent way to increase your energy and fitness levels, and start burning fat. If you're just starting your fitness programme, then build up gradually starting with daily five or ten minute walks.

If you're already at an advanced level of fitness then other cardiovascular options include power walking, jogging, running, swimming and cycling. Short sharp bursts of aerobic work, intense enough to make you out of breath, is the most effective way to lose weight.

Any action that tires out your muscles before you've performed 15 repetitions counts as resistance training. You can train at home using repetitions of the squat, and the lunge moves, for example.

Core training works on strengthening the deep stomach and pelvic floor muscles that support the lower back. It's easy to work on this area at home by practising contracting the muscles.

Engaging in a stretching routine every morning will help you maintain and develop flexibility, and also help your posture improve, by stretching muscles that have become tight.



Eating:

Suddenly starving yourself one day is not the right way to lose weight either. You may have heard it said that 'dieting makes you fat', and there is a biological element of truth in the claim, because when your body is suddenly deprived of food it goes into starvation mode, which means that whatever you eat afterwards, your body will try and store the maximum amount possible. Going without all food is also extremely harmful to your body, because there are many nutrients, such as vitamins and proteins that your body cannot store, and needs to take in every day.

To lose weight healthily, you need to burn more energy every day than you take in as food, so that your body draws upon its stored energy - or fat.

So the best strategy for healthy weight loss is:

- Reduce the amount of calories you eat
- Increase your level of activity
- Make small, gradual changes to your lifestyle. If you eat one biscuit less a week, you'll lose 5lb a year!



Every January diets, fitness DVDs and weight loss programmes are advertised and promoted, some are linked to particular foods and all are aimed at those of us who have set ourselves a New Year's resolution or two... so here are five general weight loss pointers to help ensure you've chosen a safe and healthy diet to follow:

1. Does the diet include all food groups?

You need to include grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy in your diet to ensure you're not missing out on essential vitamins and minerals. Lack of variety also makes it harder to stick to a diet long term.

2. Does the diet restrict calories too severely?

Nutritionists estimate that women need a minimum of 1,900 calories daily, and men need a minimum of 2,550. A minimum of 2,000 calories a day is the safest option for a healthy body.

3. Does the diet include your favourite foods?

If the diet you've chosen bans foods with a high sugar content you might find it hard to stick to during special occasions. Better to allow yourself small amounts of your favourite food, so you can keep to your diet in the long term.

4. Does the diet advise exercise?

Diets that promise quick weight loss without exercise are misleading, as research has demonstrated that exercise is crucial both to losing weight and to maintaining weight loss.

5. Does the plan fit your lifestyle and budget?

Further information can be found:



<http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Loseweight/Pages/Loseweighthome.aspx>