

NEW-LIFESTYLES STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOUSM ENERGY BALANCE & WEIGHT CONTROL FACTS

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What is the Energy Balance & Weight Control Equation?

Think of controlling your weight like keeping a teeter-totter level. One end of the teeter-totter is caloric intake and the other end is caloric expenditure. If you eat too much or too little, your teeter-totter will get off balance, and one end will crash to the ground.

As the teeter-totter example depicts, the energy balance equation is important in maintaining a healthy weight. In other words, the energy you take in (in the form of calories consumed) needs to equal the energy you expend (through exercise and an active lifestyle).

How can I safely and effectively lose weight?

To safely lose weight, you should expend slightly more calories than you consume over a period of time. Cumulatively, you'll lose a pound or two per week. This slow weight loss will not knock your teeter-totter out of balance, as it will adjust itself accordingly.

If you consume more calories than you expend, your body will store these extra calories for future expenditure as fat. Your body is an efficient machine and uses many biological processes to work effectively and essentially survive.

Concerned that food may one day not be plentiful (as it used to be thousands of

years ago for hunter-gatherer communities during winter), the body is taking necessary precautions to store energy for when it may be needed to fend off starvation.

What should my goal be for daily caloric intake?

Moderate eating is the key for managing caloric intake. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as a general guide to help you choose a healthy diet and better maintain your weight. To get the vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates and protein you need, make sure you eat enough from each food group.

You'll be much more successful in eating properly if you learn about serving sizes. Many people are surprised at how little food it takes to constitute a serving size. When determining your caloric intake, it is essential that you figure your serving size appropriately. Often what someone considers "a serving," is actually two or three servings. Thus, when determining caloric intake, many people make the mistake of recording half to a third of the calories they should be recording.

You control your own destiny. We've heard that a hundred times, but it's true. When it comes to managing your calories and weight, it is important to plan ahead and stick to your plan. If you know you are going to eat a large dinner, increase your activity during the day and eat moderately at lunch and breakfast (but avoid starving yourself—if you do, you'll only eat more later!). If you find yourself eating a large meal you didn't plan for, that's OK. Increase your activity afterwards and eat moderately the next day.



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We advocate activity over dieting because EXERCISE EMPOWERS, dieting deprives. It's much better for your body to go for a long walk than to skip a healthy meal!

What happens if I just drastically reduce my caloric intake and don't eat much? Won't this help me to lose weight?

The flip side of this equation can be even worse: If you burn too many calories or don't eat enough on a regular basis, over time you will cause damage to your internal organs and metabolism. Starving yourself is not a managed way to lose weight. It does more harm than good. When you return to normal eating patterns, you will regain your weight and possibly gain back even more weight than when you started!

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What is the best way to increase my caloric expenditure?

The best way to increase caloric expenditure is to increase your activity. People who lose weight from dieting alone generally regain it. To keep off weight over a long period of time, you must integrate activity into your life and lose the weight slowly over time.

Consumer Reports, in its June 2002 edition, studied American weight-loss techniques to determine what's effective. Out of 32,213 dieters in its study, nearly a quarter of those lost at least 10 percent of their body weight and kept it off for at least a year. Of those "losers," 4,000 were considered "superlosers," people who lost an average of 37 pounds and kept it off for five years or more.

How did they do it?

They found their own unique combination of moderate eating and exercise they knew they could contin-

ue over a long period of time. Eighty-three percent did it without an expensive program, special food or the regimen of a particular diet guru. The most successful strategy was regular and fairly vigorous exercise.

Eight out of 10 successful losers exercised three or more days a week. Most chose walking as their preferred form of exercise, while 29 percent also added strength training to their routine.

Once you've reached your goal, it is essential you don't return to your old lifestyle if you want to maintain your weight loss. You can eat a normal, moderate diet if you continue to exercise.

A recent study monitored by the National Weight Control Registry found people who maintained a weight loss of at least 26 pounds for at least 13 years walked an average of 5,894 more steps a day than did the control group. The average number of steps a day these people took was just under 11,000!

Keep in mind that most people need to move their body the equivalent of 12,000 to 18,000 steps a day to burn enough calories to lose weight without changing their diet. (The people in the National Weight Control Registry study were able to maintain their weight on fewer steps because they had years to master the balance of caloric intake versus expenditure.)

For most people, 12,000 to 18,000 steps a day is quite a bit. Don't try to start your program with an activity goal this ambitious. Wear a pedometer a few days to find your baseline; then slowly work yourself up.

While the body does burn calories 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, just by being alive, keep in mind that activity burns more calories than sleeping or sitting around—and exercise burns the most calories!

