

## **Exercise to Successful Weight Loss**

I hope you are now motivated and ready to move to the next step in your weight loss program. In our three part series we will address the importance of including exercise to achieve and maintain a successful weight loss program. Many weight loss programs do not include exercise as a requirement; they do this because they know that they will sell more programs. We all want a quick easy fix and hope if we spend the money on something too good to be true it might work. Statistics show that only 5% of all dieters (without exercise) keep the weight off. Further studies show that the majority of people who have dieted and have kept the weight off for 3-5 years have exercised regularly. This is due in large part because they have raised their metabolism and changed their lifestyle. If you rely on diet alone or calorie reduction you generally will lose muscle, resulting in a lowering of your metabolic rate. Exercise creates a "bigger engine" in your body; we are able to eat more then if we strictly diet only. The answer is not starving yourself, but to burn fat with cardiovascular exercise.

The easiest form of cardiovascular exercise is brisk continuous walking. Start with about 20-30 minutes three to four times a week. You will burn from 150-200 calories a session. After a couple of weeks gradually begin to increase to 60 minutes four times a week and add a fifth workout a week if time allows. To increase add about 10-15% a week to allow the body a chance to adapt and gain conditioning. Add other activities if you like, the more variety the better. Cardiovascular activity is a quick solution to weight loss. If you want long lasting changes nothing can replace weight (strength) training. Strength training increases the body's metabolic rate, causing the body to burn more calories throughout the day. Every extra pound of muscle will burn an additional 30-50 calories, even at rest. Add some sort of strength training after about 4-6 weeks of cardiovascular exercise. Strength training will also tone and shape your body. There are many options including stretch bands, dumb bells or free weights, and strength machines at your local fitness center. Be sure to seek advice and guidance on how to perform and set up a program to meet your goals. Studies show that you are never too old to start strength training. Older adults as well as the elderly can improve their mobility and independence with such programs. Let's dispel one myth, fat does not turn into muscle and muscle does not turn into fat. Through exercise you will gain muscle and lose fat, muscle weighs more than fat so it is important to remember to use a scale as a gauge for weight loss, but ultimately it is equally important to use the mirror as guide as well. You could end up heavier than your goal weight but look great. Start with lighter weights and higher repetitions, 15 for example. You don't want to be too sore to start off. This can be discouraging as well as uncomfortable. Then progress over the weeks to 10-12 reps with heavier weights. If you can do more then 12 reps, the weight is too light. If you can't do 10 reps the weight is too heavy. If you are merely looking for tone and want to burn fat, stick with higher reps in the 12-15 range. Try a routine two times a week. Don't forget to warm-up a minimum of 10 minutes before you strength train. To continue to make gains you will need to change up your program every 6-8 weeks with different modes and types of equipment.

A successful weight loss program must include exercise; it takes hard work, dedication, and patience. No five minute exercise device or diet only is going to get you the long lasting results you need. The simple fact is you must under go lifestyle changes which includes nutrition and exercise to accomplish and maintain that ultimate goal. Think positive, believe in yourself. You can do it! Next month I will address nutrition in your successful weight loss program.