

## Journal Star – Weight Loss Help Article

Spring is right around the corner and that means most people start thinking about losing a little weight to look good in those shorts, tank tops, and eventually swimsuits (summer won't be far behind). Unfortunately most of us procrastinate, we slowly gain weight through the winter and wait till this time of the year to get serious about losing weight. There are a number of things we can do to enhance the process. First we need to start by changing our lifestyle habits year round. I have listed some key factors to help you in developing a healthy weight lose program. As always see your physician before starting any major weight lose program. Remember there is no short that is safe and long lasting. No pill or gadget that will magically take that weight off and keep it off (You see them on TV, I know). It's what you do with your life that counts; including regular exercise, healthy eating habits and maintaining a positive attitude and self-image that will determine your ability to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight. Remember you need to set goals and write them down, also no two individuals are alike; never compare yourself or your progress to someone else's. We all have different body types and shapes and should be realistic in our weight lose goals. Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to have a positive attitude, including a high self-esteem, self-empowerment, and a healthy body image.

One important factor in losing weight is to increase your metabolism. This can help you burn more calories, replace fat with muscle and give you more energy. This in turn will make your body a fat-burning machine. Metabolism is a combination of physical and chemical processes in which the body cells synthesize protoplasm for growth and repair along with complex substances that are broken down into simpler compounds, these produce energy that are essential for the proper functioning of body cells. Together, these two processes distribute nutrients which are absorbed into the blood after digestion.

Three factors determine our metabolic rate.

1. The basal metabolic rate (BMR) is the rate your body uses energy for vital body processes.
2. The total amount of calories your body uses every day.
3. The rate you burn energy during exercise along with the rate you use energy during the digestion of food.

It is through exercise that we can increase our metabolism. Exercising reduces our body fat percentage and increases our lean muscle mass. Muscle burns much more calories than fat tissue and is much denser per area. This is why when you workout consistently your clothes begin to fit better even if the scale does say you haven't lost much weight. Another added bonus is after you exercise your metabolism will remain at a higher rate for 4-6 hours after your workout. That's why working out in the morning is so beneficial. Aerobic exercise is important as we discussed last month, it raises your metabolic rate along with burning calories and developing a strong heart. Strength Training is also a very important factor. It produces more lean muscle tissue which in turn makes your body a more efficient calorie/fat burning machine. Try to include strength training in your exercise program 2-3 times a week.

Some dietary and eating habit tips on helping you lose weight besides limiting the total amount of calories in your diet to your prescribed safe limits, taking into account your BMR + exercise calories burned are to eat a good breakfast. Your body has been deprived of food throughout the night for 8-10 hours; therefore your metabolism has slowed. If the cells do not receive sufficient nutrients they will begin to function less efficiently on smaller amounts which will result in shutting your metabolism down. They will in turn actually store more fat during these times of nutritional deprivation. Eat six to seven smaller meals during the day instead of two large meals which too

many of us do because we blame our job or lifestyle; bring healthy snacks and/or a lunch to work. Along with this avoid eating too late at night. Limit your serving or portion sizes, especially when you eat out. Eat slowly, I know from experience this is a tough one in our fast paced world, but try to improve, this will help you feel full before you eat too much. Eat a well balanced diet and choose more healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, higher fiber foods, complex carbohydrates (limit simple, sugary carbs), leaner meats, and low fat choices ( notice I didn't say no-fat, the body needs some fat to survive and suppress our appetites). Make these changes gradually; you can't change your diet and eating habits over night. For 2-3 days this week, keep a tally or food log of the kinds of foods you eat each day and see how well your food choices fit a healthy diet. If the fatty foods and sweets make up too much of your daily food plan, plan ways to shift to more fruits, vegetables, whole grain, and dairy foods.

Another important factor in weight lose is to drink enough water during the day to stay hydrated. Most of us are in a state of dehydration everyday. A good rule of thumb is to take your weight in pounds, divide by 2, this will equal the number of ounces you need each day. Water helps our digestive system and makes us feel fully when we eat, so we in turn will eat less. Limit the amount of alcohol, coffee, and soda you drink throughout the day and replace it with water. Keep a water bottle with you or handy during the day. Recent studies have also shown that getting the adequate amount of sleep (7-8 hr a night) is a key component to losing weight.

Let's try to change our life style habits this year for the long term to aid in keeping that weight off next winter. Remember you are not perfect, try to slowly make as many changes as possible and be patient. Your healthy life depends on it.

Resource Websites:

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/ns421/BMR.html>

<http://walking.about.com/cs/calories/l/blcalcalc.htm>

<http://health.discovery.com/tools/calculators/basal/basal.html>