

SUCCESSFUL WEIGHT CONTROL

Eating less, or cutting back on fat in your diet, won't keep the weight off. What you really need to do is strike a good balance between the number of calories you consume and the number you burn. And the only way to do that is to exercise.

Don't groan! By exercising, you can lose weight while you eat more calories than if you simply went on a diet. Regular physical activity is much more effective at keeping the weight off in the long run than any diet.

One Choice Is Aerobic Exercise

With aerobic exercise, you can lose weight without drastically reducing the calories you consume or sacrificing important nutritional needs. One reason for this is that aerobic exercise not only elevates your metabolism while you're exercising, but it can also keep it elevated even after you're done, depending on how long and how strong you exercise.

You've probably heard about exercise programs that actually turn your body into a "fat-burning machine." Aerobics can do that. An aerobic program that you stick with can help you lose weight more easily because it can stimulate your body and make it burn calories.

If weight control is your goal, some types of aerobic activity will work better than others. Low-impact aerobic exercise, like walking, step aerobics and low-impact aerobic dance, is your

best bet. Some good non-impact aerobic activities you can benefit from include swimming, bicycling and rowing.

If you're just getting started, begin with as little as 15 minutes of low-impact aerobics three times a week. Gradually increase to 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity four times a week.

Strength Training = Weight Management

Your muscles burn calories during physical activity. What you may not know is that your muscles also burn calories when your body is at rest. Increase your muscle mass, and you'll be increasing your body's capacity to burn calories both during activity and at rest.

Add to that the fact that diets which substantially restrict calories can cause the loss of lean muscle mass, along with the loss of fat. By incorporating strength training into your activity program while also following a moderate diet, you'll be able to maintain lean muscle mass while you lose fat.

Start any strength-training program with

one set of exercises and a weight that allows you to complete eight to 12 repetitions. Your program should exercise your legs, trunk, shoulders, arms, chest and upper back. When strengthening your abdomen and lower back, increase the number of repetitions with weights that offer less resistance.

Success Means Good Eating and Good Exercise

Follow a moderate low-fat diet and an exercise program that combines aerobic activity and strength training. That's the key to losing weight—and keeping it off.

Begin slowly with exercises you find comfortable and build as your body becomes accustomed to the activity level. Don't start out too hard or too fast, or you may injure yourself or quit before you've done yourself much good.

And remember, you can't lose weight overnight. Set a realistic weight-loss goal for yourself—like 1 to 2 pounds a week—eat healthy and get going on a program of regular physical activity, and you'll be delighted by what you accomplish.

Maintaining a lower, healthier body weight is something you can accomplish. So start now and keep on going!

Additional Resource

About.com: www.exercise.about.com/od/gettingweightlossresults/a/successweight.htm

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org/GetFit and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts.™



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