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Making Sense of the Multitude of SureFire Weight Loss Strategies

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Making Sense of the Multitude of SureFire Weight Loss Strategies

How to Lose Weight

Finding an effective way to lose weight seems like a daring adventure straight out of an Indiana Jones movie. In actuality, it's nowhere near that difficult.

Exercise More!

The healthiest way to lose weight is neither crash diets and fad diets nor sudden bursts of exercise. The body likes slow changes in terms of food and exercise. For example, someone who has not exercised for years should not rush into running three miles every day. Exercise needs to be increased gradually. Even relatively light exercise such as a short walk may be beneficial if done frequently.

Eat Less!

People who eat a lot will experience problems if they suddenly start starving themselves. Introduce diet changes gradually as well. The calories you eat minus what you use in exercise and maintaining your body will be stored as fat. Someone that increases the amount they exercise, but maintains the same diet and calorie intake, will almost certainly lose weight.

Exercise in a fun way.

Thankfully we are all different in our likes and dislikes and, therefore, exercise in a variety of ways. It is essential that you find an activity that is enjoyable, appropriate, accessible and affordable for you. That way you are far more likely to build it into your routine and continue regular exercise, despite the inevitable setbacks due to illness, family commitments, etc.

Reduce calories.

For many people, it may be beneficial to reduce their calorie intake by eating less and eating more healthily. It is not necessary to crash diet. This usually ends up with you either getting weaker or giving up completely in desperation, which in turn can lead to a yo-yoing effect of the weight loss - weight gain cycle.

Cut down on fatty foods and eat more bread, fruit and vegetables.

Eating 300 to 500 calories less per day, may lead to losing between one and two pounds per week. This is a realistic weight loss. It may seem slow, but would add up to a sizable weight loss in a year.

Having a glass of water instead of juice, eating less lunch than usual and having smaller portions of the food you enjoy are all ways to reduce caloric intake without having to necessarily alter your diet significantly. Avoid a second helping at dinner and snacks between meals. Cut down on beer and alcohol.

All these things will influence your health – and your weight - in a positive way.

Write down your weight every week.

From the day you decide to lose weight, weigh yourself once or twice a week before breakfast. Keep a record of this weight and see the pattern that develops.

Every single time a person exercises more than usual, they burn calories and fat. Avoid being impatient and remind yourself that the results will slowly manifest themselves. Remember that there are no shortcuts to losing weight in a healthy and reasonable way.

Confused by Diet Plans?

If you are confused by weight loss programs, you are not alone. There are so many different types of diets and programs, that it is no wonder there is confusion. Some convince you that the answer is low fat, low carb, while others preach the opposite. The important thing to remember is to choose a diet correct for your lifestyle.

Each diet or program has its advantages and disadvantages. In a program, such as Jenny Craig or NutriSystem, you are being closely monitored and are eating specific meals designed for your weight loss.

While if you are on the Zone or Atkins Diets, you must monitor and prepare your own meals. Your choice may also be a financial consideration as well. Most programs such as Jenny Craig or NutriSystem cost significantly more than the Zone or Atkins, as they are preparing your foods for you.

To eliminate the confusion of choosing a tailored program or a specific diet, you may first want to consult your physician to discuss what the best options for you are.

Your physician may ask you to add a fitness program to your diet as well, or may require you to choose a specific diet if you have health issues. Meeting with your physician is especially important before starting a program or diet especially if your goal is significant weight loss.

Once you have decided on either a program or a specific diet, you will then be able to tailor your program or diet to meet your lifestyle and achieve your desired results. We will discuss the various options in this report, but first we will talk briefly about fitness.

Fitness Weight Loss Programs

Fitness weight loss programs follow the principle that exercise is the primary key to effective weight loss. The infamous “fat camps” are one example, but the variety available today goes far beyond that. The one common denominator they all possess is motion.

Exercise raises metabolism over time, and when coupled with a sensible diet, allows the body to consume excess calories stored as fat. Choose your fitness weight loss program with one thing in mind. You need to like it and you need to see yourself involved in such activities for years to come.

Those poor overweight souls who take up running (and hate it) or throw themselves into high stepping aerobics classes (and hate it) won't do it very long and therefore will not realize any benefits from it whatsoever. They'll just recall how awful it is. Had those same individuals started with walking short distances or dancing a bit, their perception would have changed. They would have considered their efforts as fun, and fun makes all the difference.

Becoming overweight took time. So will becoming fit. Walking can lead to running or hiking. Performing five pound dumbbell curls can lead to performing full free weight routines one day. Cross-country skiing may be an Olympic event, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy a simple shuffle in the snow.

Your fitness weight loss program, then, only requires three key things: fun, do-ability over time and effectiveness. Doesn't that sound a lot more enjoyable already?

Use Effective Workout Routines

You might choose to walk or run for your exercise, or you might opt to go to the gym to work out. If you opt for the latter, make sure that you choose a workout routine that meets the third requirement above - one that is effective.

Workout routines that don't deliver what you expect may be a waste of time and energy.

Most workout routines designed to improve your aerobic fitness involve exercising for 20 minutes or longer at a percentage of your maximum heart rate — known as your training zone.

Quite apart from the fact that the formula traditionally used to calculate your maximum heart rate is extremely inaccurate, some workout routines can elevate your heart rate without having any effect on your cardiovascular fitness. In other words, it's possible to raise your heart rate, keep it there for 20 minutes or more several times each week, and it won't improve your fitness in the slightest.

Workout routines

Most aerobic workout routines are based on the relative stress they impose on your body. For example, the general rule for establishing a suitable training intensity is to measure your VO₂max. To improve your aerobic fitness, you then follow a training program that corresponds to a percentage of this maximum.

However, most people don't have access to the equipment needed to measure their VO₂max. Instead, they use their heart rate to establish a suitable training intensity.

This is because during some forms of exercise, there's a link between oxygen consumption and heart rate. During aerobic exercise, such as running or walking for example, oxygen consumption and heart rate tend to rise together. Yet the relationship doesn't hold true for all forms of activity.

Nautilus exercise

Some evidence for this comes from a study carried in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. Researchers from Washington University measured the effect of four months of strength training using Nautilus exercise machines.

A group of 13 untrained males aged 40-55 took part in the study. During each workout, which was carried out 3-4 times per week, test subjects performed one set of each of 14 exercises.

- There was no change in body fat levels.
- Upper-body strength increased by an average of 50%.
- Lower-body strength increased by 33%.

During Nautilus exercise, the heart was working at 155 beats per minute, which was approximately 80% of its maximum. However, despite training in this way for up to four times each week, there was no significant change in aerobic fitness.

This is because the large rise in heart rate was partly caused by an increase in the production of hormones known as catecholamines (pronounced cat-a-coal-a-meens). Adrenaline, for example, was roughly 4.5 times higher during Nautilus exercise than treadmill walking at a similar oxygen consumption.

This doesn't mean that training with weights isn't a suitable way to improve your aerobic fitness. After all, compound exercises such as the squat and the dead-lift place a large stress on your cardiovascular system. What it does mean is that measuring your heart rate isn't always the best way to gauge the effectiveness of your workout routines.

OK, enough about exercise. What about your diet options. There are so many of them nowadays, it's hard to know where to begin... But we'll try to cover all the important ones, beginning with...

Low Carbohydrate Diets

Here are some facts about low carbohydrate diets that may assist you in your dieting choices.

Low-carbohydrate diets or low carb diets, are food diet programs for weight loss and dietary health that advocate restricted carbohydrate consumption, based on research that ties carbohydrate consumption with increased blood insulin levels, and increased insulin with obesity.

Under these various dietary programs, foods containing carbohydrates (like sugar, grains, and starches) are limited or replaced in favor of foods containing more protein and fat. Vegetables, though classified as carbohydrates, are thought to be far healthier than grain-based carbohydrates. Programs such as the South Beach, Atkins and Zone diets, are claimed to "work" because they reduce insulin levels, which in turn causes the body to burn its fat for energy.

As a process, these kinds of diets have been in and out of fashion since the Banting diet appeared in the 19th century. But long before modern scientific invention, anecdotal and holistic prescriptions, containing passages about limiting certain foods, including foods of mostly carbohydrates, have appeared throughout history. Although strong evidence suggests, and general agreement claims, that low carb diets can help achieve weight loss, some have been controversial among nutritionists, and their relative safety has been challenged.

Differences between low-carbohydrate diets

Low-carb diets are largely distinguished by the proportions of carb intake they recommend, and the method or methods used to determine which source or sources of carbohydrates should be consumed and which should be avoided. While all agree that processed sugar should be eliminated, or at the very least greatly reduced, they often differ on the recommended levels of grains, fruits and vegetables, though there is broad agreement that, in general, vegetables are better than fruits, and fruits are better than grains.

The recent rise in western obesity rates has coincided with a widespread belief in low-fat, high-carbohydrate as a healthy way of eating. By contrast traditional, high-fat French cooking has led to a much lower incidence of obesity, morbid obesity and chronic heart disease than the high-sugar American diet, despite overall energy intake and exercise levels being the same.

Side effects

Critics contend that low carbohydrate diets are not without harmful side effects. Very low carbohydrate consumption can lead to the metabolic state called ketosis, which may cause headaches, tiredness, nausea, dehydration, dizziness, and an unusual sweet-smelling breath odor. The lowered intake of dietary fiber that often accompanies dramatically reduced carbohydrate intake can result in constipation if not supplemented.

For example, this has been a criticism of the Induction stage of the Atkins diet (note that today the Atkins diet is more clear about recommending a fiber supplement during Induction).

These are just a few small samples in both positions regarding low carb diets. Be sure to continue your research to make an informed decision.

The Facts about the High Protein Diet

High protein diets have been a topic of conversation for quite a while. How much, though, do you really know about them?

Protein is a vital nutrient, essential to your health. In its purest form, protein consists of chains of amino acids. There are 22 amino acids that combine to form different proteins, and 8 of these must come from the foods we eat. Our body uses these amino acids to create muscles, blood, skin, hair, nails and internal organs. Proteins help replace and form new tissue, transports oxygen and nutrients in our blood and cells, regulates the balance of water and acids, and is needed to make antibodies.

However, too much of a good thing may not be so good for you. Many people are putting their health at risk by eating too much protein. Excessive protein consumption, particularly animal protein, can result in heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, and kidney stones.

The average American eats about twice as much protein than what is actually required. Some people, in the pursuit of thinness, are going on high-protein diets and are eating up to four times the amount of protein that their body needs. Protein deficiency is certainly not a problem in America.

According to the American Heart Association and the National Institutes of Health, as little as 50-60 grams of protein is enough for most adults. This breaks down to about 10-12% of total calories. Your body only needs 0.36 grams of protein per pound of body weight. To calculate the exact amount you need, multiply your ideal weight by 0.36. This will give you your optimum daily protein requirement in grams. Since the amount of protein needed depends on the amount of lean body mass and not fat, ideal weight is used instead of actual weight.

People on high-protein diets are consuming up to 34% of their total calories in the form of protein and up to 53% of total calories from fat. Most of these people are unaware of the amount of protein and fat that is contained in the foods they eat. For instance, a typical 3-ounce beef hamburger, which is small by American standards, contains about 22 grams of protein and 20 grams of fat. Animal proteins are loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat.

Many people on these diets also experience an elevation in their LDL (the bad) cholesterol when they remain on this diet for long periods. High levels of LDL cholesterol in the blood clog arteries and is the chief culprit in heart disease, particularly heart attack and stroke. So while you may lose weight in the short-run, you are putting your cardiovascular health in jeopardy in the long-run.

By replacing animal protein with vegetable protein and replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat, like that found in olive and canola oils, you can avoid the pitfalls of the typical high-protein diet. You will be able to improve your health and regulate your weight while enjoying a vast array of delicious, nutritionally dense, high fiber foods.

The Atkins Diet

The Atkins diet is the focus of these comments from the American Heart Association:

"The Atkins diet holds the controversial belief that low fat is not the only way to go for a healthier lifestyle and weight control. Dr. Atkins blamed carbohydrates (grains, pastas, fruits, potatoes) for weight gain. He believed that if you reduced your carbohydrate intake then you would lose weight. Too many carbohydrates in your diet encourage your body to retain fat."

When the body absorbs simple carbohydrates quickly, it causes an insulin response that speeds the conversion of calories to fat. The plan focuses on the consumption of nutrient-dense, unprocessed foods and vita-nutrient supplementation. It also restricts processed and refined carbohydrates (which make up to approximately more than 50 per cent of people's diets). It encourages you to eliminate sugar from your diet as this contributes to a slower metabolism.

The Atkins diet is designed to be a program on which you can maintain a healthy weight for a lifetime and it is highly suitable (but not restricted) to those who prefer eating animal protein. The diet offers people who have failed on a low-fat diet a healthy, effective and safe alternative. Instead of carbs and sugar, eaters are allowed plenty of fat and protein.

There are four phases to the Atkins diet, they are; 1) Induction, 2) Ongoing Weight Loss, 3) Pre-Maintenance and 4) Lifetime Maintenance.

During Phase 1 (Induction), you restrict carbohydrate consumption to 20 grams each day, obtaining carbohydrate primarily from salad and other non-starchy vegetables.

In Phase 2 (Ongoing Weight Loss), you increase carbohydrate in the form of nutrient-dense and fibre-rich foods by 20 grams daily in the first week and then 30 grams daily in the next week until you gradually lose weight. Then you subtract 5 grams of carbohydrate from your daily intake so that you continue sustained weight loss.

In Phase 3, known as 'Pre-Maintenance', you make the transition from weight loss to weight maintenance by increasing the daily carbohydrate intake in 10 gram increments each week.

In the last phase of the Atkins plan (Lifetime Maintenance), you select from a wide variety of foods while controlling carbohydrate intake to ensure weight maintenance.

There are mixed views on the Atkins diet amongst health experts and dieticians. Many experts are critical of low-carb diets but have not totally discounted the Atkins diet as an effective method of losing weight. Although they do assert that it is too early to adopt the low-carb diet, health experts do concede that it is worth exploring. One main criticism of the Atkins diet is that it does entail frequent meat consumption.

However, followers argue that the program can be tailored for different preferences and metabolisms. After the first phase (known as the 'Induction phase') the Atkins diet plan can be modified. Despite the immense popularity of the diet, the Atkins diet plan continues to have many skeptics. Another criticism of the diet purports that a person is unlikely to keep the weight off over the long term. However, this claim could just as easily be applied to many low-fat or low-calorie weight loss plans, on which dieters are likely to feel hungry.

Getting into the Zone Diet

Celebrities like Madonna, Demi Moore and Jennifer Aniston swear by the results of the Zone Diet created by Barry Sears, PhD. The Zone Diet contains 40% carbohydrate, 30% protein and 30% fat and is also known as the 40-30-30 plan. The Zone Diet works on the premise that 100,000 years ago, we were meat eaters and our bodies was designed to handle the demands of a meat-based diet.

As we have evolved, more carbohydrates have been introduced into our daily diet, causing an imbalance. The reason for our extra weight could be attributed to the many grains and starches in our diet (pasta, rice, breads, and potatoes). The Zone Diet's strategy calls for a return to the diets of our ancestors where meat, fruits and vegetables are the main dietary items.

How Does The Zone Diet Work?

The Zone Diet works by working the right ratio of carbohydrates to proteins and fats in order to control the insulin in the bloodstream. Too much of the hormone (insulin) can increase fat storage and inflammation in the body (conditions that are associated with obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease). Sears asserts that by using the Zone Diet, you are actually optimising the body's metabolic function. Through the regulation of blood sugar, you allow your body to burn excess body fat.

The Zone Diet does not actually prohibit you from any particular food group; however food with high fat and carbohydrates such as grains, starches, and pastas should be avoided. Fruits and vegetables are the preferred source of carbs and monounsaturated

fats (such as olive oil, almonds, avocados) are the ideal choice of fats. The Zone Diet claims to use food as a drug for overall good health, weight loss and prevention or management of heart disease and diabetes.

Sears says that you can test to see whether you are 'hormonally' correct by eating following the Zone diet and see how you feel four hours later. To simplify the Zone Diet, fill one-third of a plate with low-fat protein, and then two-thirds with fruits and vegetables.

Advocates of the Zone Diet

Advocates for the Zone Diet include celebrities and also some health experts who say that the Zone's recommendations don't stray far from the USDA's (United States Dietary Association) dietary guidelines. Critics have argued that the Zone Diet has flawed ratios but Sears argues that the Zone diet is really a low glycemic-load diet that has adequate protein. Sears also defends the criticism that Zone Diet is too complicated. He believes this is a misconception because his first book on the Zone Diet was targeted to cardiologists who were more scientifically-oriented.

Critics of the Zone Diet

The AHA (American Heart Association) classifies the Zone Diet as high protein and does not recommend the Zone Diet for weight loss. They assert that the Zone Diet has not been proven effective in the long term for weight loss. They issued an official recommendation warning against diets like the Zone Diet. They believe that the Zone Diet is hazardous as it restricts the intake of essential vitamins and minerals present in certain foods.

They are concerned that the protein ratio in the Zone diet is too high even if the minimal fat ratio is good. Robert H. Ecker M.D of the A.H.A., finds the Zone Diet's theory on insulin flawed and argues that there is no scientific proof that the hormone insulin plays a big role in weight regulation.

How Effective is Jenny Craig Weight Loss?

How effective is Jenny Craig weight loss? Here are the basics:

Jenny Craig Weight Management Program

This is available in one of two ways:

1. By attending a Jenny Craig Center

This option involves personal, one-on-one consultations at Jenny Craig Centers. You are assigned a trained weight loss consultant to help you plan nutritionally balanced diet

menus. The diet foods are purchased from Jenny Craig. There are Jenny Craig locations throughout the country.

2. By joining the Jenny Craig Direct At-Home Program

This allows you to participate in the Jenny Craig Program from the convenience of your own home. You enjoy weekly "phone-meetings" with your trained Consultant, and order your food in at least two-week increments. Weekly support consultations are done over the phone, toll-free and Jenny Craig menus and support materials are delivered to your door.

- **Calories and Weight Loss**

The calorie-level of your menu plan will vary according to your need. The lowest calorie level is 1200 calories per day. The Jenny Craig Program has been designed to result in a weekly weight loss of 1-2 pounds or 1% of your body weight.

- **Menu Plans**

All menu plans that are nutritionally balanced according to the recommendations of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid and U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Clients can choose from more than 70 food products. Each is manufactured to the specification of our dietitians, approved by our Medical Advisory Panel, and purchased through Jenny Craig Centers and Jenny Direct.

- **Diet Foods**

All diet foods are shipped via UPS, which typically takes 5-7 business days to arrive at your home. You can also opt to receive your foods quicker via FedEx (1-2 day delivery time) for a small surcharge.

- **Weight Maintenance**

Support for weight maintenance is available under certain conditions.

The Mediterranean Diet

Have you heard about the Mediterranean diet? Here's the facts from American Heart.org, the official website of the American Heart Association.

What is the "Mediterranean" diet?

There's no one "Mediterranean" diet. At least 16 countries border the Mediterranean Sea. Diets vary between these countries and also between regions within a country. Many differences in culture, ethnic background, religion, economy and agricultural production result in different diets.

But the common Mediterranean dietary pattern has these characteristics:

- high consumption of fruits, vegetables, bread and other cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts

and seeds

- olive oil is an important monounsaturated fat source
- dairy products, fish and poultry are consumed in low to moderate amounts, and little red meat is eaten
- eggs are consumed zero to four times a week
- wine is consumed in low to moderate amounts

Does a Mediterranean-style diet follow American Heart Association dietary guidelines?

Mediterranean-style diets are often close to our dietary guidelines, but they don't follow them exactly. In general, the diets of Mediterranean peoples contain a relatively high percentage of calories from fat. This is thought to contribute to the increasing obesity in these countries, which is becoming a concern.

People who follow the average Mediterranean diet eat less saturated fat than those who eat the average American diet. In fact, saturated fat consumption is well within our dietary guidelines.

More than half the fat calories in a Mediterranean diet come from monounsaturated fats (mainly from olive oil). Monounsaturated fat doesn't raise blood cholesterol levels the way saturated fat does.

The incidence of heart disease in Mediterranean countries is lower than in the United States. Death rates are lower, too. But this may not be entirely due to the diet. Lifestyle factors (such as more physical activity and extended social support systems) may also play a part.

Before advising people to follow a Mediterranean diet, more studies are needed to find out whether the diet itself or other lifestyle factors account for the lower deaths from heart disease.

What is a Raw Food Diet?

The raw diet, as its name implies, is based on consuming unprocessed, preferably organic, whole plant-based foods, at least 75 per cent of which should be uncooked. Raw and living foods are believed to contain essential food enzymes. It consists of raw nuts, fruits, and various varieties of beans.

People who follow the raw diet use particular techniques to prepare foods. These include sprouting seeds, grains and beans; soaking nuts and dried fruits; and juicing fruits and vegetables. The only cooking that is allowed is via a dehydrator. This piece of equipment blows hot air through the food but never reaches a temperature higher than 116°F. Other techniques needed to prepare raw food are blending, juicing and chopping.

Tips on what you will need to go raw

1. Meal plans. Following a raw food diet means that you have to carefully plan your meals to make sure you don't fall short of essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

In some instances it might be appropriate to consider taking dietary supplements.

2. Equipment. You'll need to invest in some appliances so that you are able to prepare the food.

- A durable juice extractor for your fruits and vegetables
- A blender or a wooden spoon and sieve to crush and blend ingredients
- A food processor or chopper to save time and effort
- Large containers to soak and sprout grains, seeds and beans
- Glass jars or Tupperware for storing sprouts

Proponents of the raw diet believe that enzymes are the life force of a food and that every food contains its own perfect mix. These enzymes help us digest foods completely, without relying on our body to produce its own cocktail of digestive enzymes.

It is also thought that the cooking process destroys vitamins and minerals and that cooked foods not only take longer to digest, but they also allow partially digested fats, proteins and carbohydrates to clog up our gut and arteries.

Followers of a raw diet cite numerous health benefits, including increased energy levels, improved appearance of skin, improved digestion, and weight loss. Clearly a raw food diet has many benefits.

Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers, founded in the 1960s by Jean Nidetch, is a company offering various dieting products and services to assist weight loss. It started as a discussion group for how to best lose weight. It now operates in about 30 countries around the world, generally under the name "Weight Watchers" translated into the local language. Its most prominent celebrity endorser is Sarah, Duchess of York.

Varying on location, Weight Watchers generally offers two distinct programs:

- The POINTS program
- The Core program

The programs are supplemented by optional support groups which meet regularly and provide ground assistance to those trying to meet weight-loss goals.

In the UK, Weight Watchers advertises under the slogan "where no food is a sin" in reference to its chief competitor Slimming World's system of giving some food "sin" values.

From 1978 until 1999, the Weight Watchers company was owned by the H. J. Heinz Company, which continues to produce packaged foods bearing the Weight Watchers brand name. Weight Watchers was acquired in a leveraged buyout in 1999 and went public in 2001.

POINTS System

The POINTS system is based on allocating servings of food a specific number of points. A program participant is allowed to eat food that amounts to a certain number of points per week. The number of permitted points for an individual is calculated based on the individual's weight goals, and the level of physical activity of the participant.

A Taste of Weight Watchers Recipes

Weight Watchers recipes, using real everyday foods you can find anywhere, are popular both for that reason and the fact that also taste good! These offerings come from About.com:

Chicken Rice Casserole with Mozzarella

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive oil
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 clove minced garlic
1-1/2 medium red bell peppers, diced
1 cup frozen corn, thawed
1 cup low-salt chicken broth
1-1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 cups cooked brown or white rice
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons non-fat sour cream
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
8 ounces skinless, diced cooked chicken or smoked turkey
3 ounces part skim milk mozzarella cheese, shredded
1/4 cup chopped parsley

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Spray a 1-1/2 quart casserole with nonstick cooking

spray.

In a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, warm the oil until hot but not smoking. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring, until the onion begins to brown, 3 to 5 minutes.

Add the bell peppers, corn 1/4 cup of the broth, the thyme and black pepper, and continue cooking until the bell pepper begins to soften, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining 3/4 cup broth, the rice, sour cream, and mustard. Add the chicken, remove from the heat, and stir until well combined. Stir in one-third of the mozzarella and the parsley.

Transfer the mixture to the prepared casserole. Spread the mixture evenly. Sprinkle with the remaining mozzarella and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the casserole is heated through and the cheese has melted.

Microwave Shortcuts:

In a 2-quart microwave safe casserole, combine the oil, onion, garlic and bell peppers. Cover and cook at high for 4 minutes, or until the peppers and onion begin to soften. Stir in the corn, 1/2 cup of the broth, the thyme, black pepper, rice, sour cream, mustard, and chicken. Stir in one-third of the mozzarella and the parsley. Re-cover and cook at high for 7 minutes, stirring once. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and cook at high for 3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and the casserole is heated through.

Yield: 4 servings

Serving Suggestion: Slice tomatoes and sprinkle them liberally with fresh basil. For dessert, serve crisp almond biscotti with freshly brewed coffee.

Each serving provides: 1/2 fat, 3 proteins, 1/2 vegetable (adjusted to new program), 1-1/2 breads, 20 optional calories.

Nutrition Information:

Values are approximate per serving: 378 calories, 28 g protein, 12 g fat, 39 g carbohydrate, 63 mg cholesterol, 557 mg sodium.

The South Beach Diet

The South Beach diet was developed by a cardiologist, Arthur Agatston, practicing in the Miami, Florida area. The diet first appeared in a book of the same name, published by Rodale Press.

The South Beach diet is frequently confusingly compared to the Atkins diet, which is a low-carbohydrate diet. The South Beach Diet emphasizes the consumption of so-called

"good carbohydrates," mainly ones that are high in fiber or nutrition, and typically low in glycemic index. The South Beach diet was developed for cardiac patients to lose weight without risking ketosis. (There are studies of the effects of extended Ketosis on the average body, but they are at this time inconclusive.) Weight loss turned out to be a beneficial side effect; Dr. Agatson believes this is a positive thing, as it encourages many people to move to a heart-healthier diet than may otherwise make this choice.

In the initial phase, lasting a few weeks, dieters attempt to eliminate cravings for "bad carbohydrates" by eating no grains or fruits. After this phase, grain-based foods and fruits are gradually returned to the diet, although in smaller amounts than were likely eaten before beginning the diet, and with a concentration on foods with a low glycemic index, such as whole grains instead of refined flour. By the time the dieter has lost the desired weight, they should be having three servings of whole grains and three servings of fruit a day. The more strict Phase 1 may be reinstated if the person feels they have developed cravings for foods they shouldn't have.

The diet also emphasizes the difference between good and bad carbohydrates, combinations of foods, and good and bad fats. Good carbohydrates have a low glycemic index, that is, they are digested and absorbed slowly. Other preferred carbohydrates are ones that have more nutritional value than the alternatives (ie, brown rice is allowed in moderation, but white rice is discouraged). Eating fiber or fat with carbohydrates will slow their digestion. Good fats are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Saturated and trans fats are bad.

This diet emphasizes making a permanent change in one's way of eating. It suggests whole grains and large amounts of vegetables, along with adequate amounts of mono- and polyunsaturated fats, including Omega-3 oils. It discourages the eating of overly refined foods, particularly refined flours and sugars.

In 2004, a deal was made between Kraft Foods and Dr. Agatson wherein Kraft will begin producing a variety of foods that meet the requirements of the South Beach Diet. There is some concern that this will lead to the same kind of situation as products approved by the corporation associated with the Atkins diet - that some products will most certainly fall outside the scope of the diet.

Great South Beach Diet Recipes

If you'd like to learn more about the South Beach Diet, the following is a sample of a daily diet regiment to follow. Compare this meal plan with other low carb diets that you may be interested in.

A South Beach Daily Diet

Breakfast – Tex Mex Style (South Beach Diet Menu)

½ grapefruit

2 scrambled eggs mixed with Monterey Jack cheese and salsa

1 slice of whole grain toast

Decaffeinated coffee or tea, fat-free milk and sugar substitute if desired

Mid-Morning Snack

1 hard-boiled egg

Lunch – Roast Beef Wrap

1 ¼ cups reduced-fat cream cheese

4 flour tortillas (9" or 10")

½ red onion, sliced

4 spinach leaves

8 ounces roast beef, sliced

Spread a small amount of cream cheese over the tortilla. Layer the spinach, onion, and roast beef, roll up, and fold. Serves 4.

Mid-Afternoon Snack

4 ounces Dannon Light 'n Fit yogurt

Dinner – Lemon Couscous Chicken (South Beach Menu)

1 ¼ cups water

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

2 cups broccoli florets

1 package Near East Roasted Garlic & Olive Oil Couscous mix

1 ½ chopped cooked chicken

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

¼ teaspoon lemon peel

In a large skillet, bring water, oil, broccoli, and spice from couscous mix to a boil. Stir in couscous, cooked chicken, lemon juice, and lemon peel. Simmer until heated through and then remove from heat. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Using a fork, fluff lightly, then chill and serve cold. Serves 4.

Dessert – Lemon Peel Ricotta Crème (South Beach Diet Menu)

½ cup part-skim ricotta cheese

¼ teaspoon grated lemon peel

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 package sugar substitute

Mix the ricotta cheese, lemon peel, vanilla extract, and sugar substitute. Serve chilled. Serves 1.

Obesity Help

To achieve the correct help for obesity, the first step is to control the composition of your diet, thus dropping your insulin levels and signaling your body to stop storing fat cells.

In order to control your insulin and avoid obesity, one must eat a proper diet and exercise regularly. Regular exercise can be as simple as walking up stairs instead of using an elevator. It is most important to remember that obesity can be beaten, as long as you start a fitness and nutrition plan and stick with it.

Your body must be supplied with the nutrients it needs to survive every day and provide you with good quality health. If this does not happen, you will not beat your obesity. One excellent source of helping with obesity is to eat 4-6 small meals per day. These small meals give your body the nutrition and energy needed to make it through the day. These meals should be low in fat, but contain adequate calories.

Another way to help with obesity is to seek help from a professional, such as a physician specializing in obesity. You may also find benefits from joining a group, such as Overeaters Anonymous or Weight Watchers. In these groups, people just like you are experiencing some of the same trials of beating obesity.

The key to help with obesity is eating proper nutrients in moderation, exercise, and the desire to beat obesity. By beating obesity, you will lower your risks for heart disease, cancer, and Type II diabetes.

Two up and coming options for the truly obese include hypnosis and gastric bypass surgery, which we will discuss briefly in the following segments.

Weight Control Hypnosis

Weight control hypnosis has gone from being perceived as pure quackery to an approach gradually winning over new converts. Its overall effectiveness is not really known, although no weight loss approach is for everyone. As with consulting with any service provider of any kind, you should know who you're dealing with.

Does this practitioner have proper accreditation? Ask for it, look at it and then check it out. It's better you know about bogus credentials before you start.

When considering weight control hypnosis, the single most important thing to remember when looking for a qualified hypnotherapist is that no practitioner should only have a CHT (Certified Hypnotherapist) after his/her name. In addition to a CHT, a practitioner of weight control hypnosis should also have some indication s/he is a licensed health care practitioner.

Licensed health care professionals usually have seven to nine years of university

coursework, supervised training in internship and/or residency programs, and their hypnosis training is in addition to their health care training.

Also: Be sure that hypnotherapists have PhDs from accredited institutions. An accredited university has certain standards their graduates must meet to be licensed mental health professionals

If the accreditation is good, are there former clients that you can contact to discuss their experiences? Don't settle for one or two names: request a list of six or more. Prepare questions in advance to be sure you learn what you want to know.

Hypnosis sessions for any reason can be expensive over time. Investigate all other treatment options possible as well. You deserve the best chance to reach those goals and change your life.

The Truth about Gastric Bypass Surgery

Gastric bypass surgery is in the news constantly, it seems, but the facts aren't always there. WebMD.com offers these comments on this radical procedure.

Surgery Overview

Gastric bypass surgery makes the stomach smaller and allows food to bypass part of the small intestine. You will feel full more quickly than when your stomach was its original size, which reduces the amount of food you eat and thus the calories consumed. Bypassing part of the intestine also results in fewer calories being absorbed. This leads to weight loss.

The most common gastric bypass surgery is a Roux-en-Y gastric bypass.

In normal digestion, food passes through the stomach and enters the small intestine, where most of the nutrients and calories are absorbed. It then passes into the large intestine (colon), and the remaining waste is eventually excreted.

In a Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, the stomach is made smaller by creating a small pouch at the top of the stomach using surgical staples or a plastic band. The smaller stomach is connected directly to the middle portion of the small intestine (jejunum), bypassing the rest of the stomach and the upper portion of the small intestine (duodenum).

This procedure can be done by making a large incision in the abdomen (an open procedure) or by making a small incision and using small instruments and a camera to guide the surgery (laparoscopic approach).

What To Expect After Surgery

This surgery usually involves a 4- to 6-day hospital stay (2 to 3 days for a laparoscopic approach). Most people can return to their normal activities within 3 to 5 weeks.

Gastric bypass surgeries may cause dumping syndrome. This occurs when food moves too quickly through the stomach and intestines. It causes nausea, weakness, sweating, faintness, and possibly diarrhea soon after eating. These symptoms are made worse by eating highly refined, high-calorie foods (like sweets). In some cases you may become so weak that you have to lie down until the symptoms pass.

All surgeries have risk, and it is important for you and your health professional to discuss your treatment options to decide what is best for your situation.

How Well It Works

Most people who have gastric bypass surgery quickly begin to lose weight and continue to lose weight for up to 12 months. One study noted that people lost about one-third of their excess weight (the weight above what is considered healthy) in 1 to 4 years. Some of the lost weight may be regained.

The laparoscopic approach showed similar results, with 69% to 82% of excess weight lost over 12 to 54 months.

Risks

Risks common to all surgeries for weight loss include an infection in the incision, a leak from the stomach into the abdominal cavity or where the intestine is connected (resulting in an infection called peritonitis), and a blood clot in the lung (pulmonary embolism). About one-third of all people having surgery for obesity develop gallstones or a nutritional deficiency condition such as anemia or osteoporosis.

Fewer than 3 in 200 (1.5%) people die after surgery for weight loss.

All surgeries have risk, and it is important for you and your health professional to discuss your treatment options to decide what is best for your situation.

The Benefits of Weight Loss Forums

Online weight loss forums are always there for you and with plenty of help and support. You and I know that getting plenty of support from friends and family is a key to losing weight successfully. It's just plain fact that if nobody takes notice of your efforts, it is much harder to reach your goals and feel good about yourself.

Here's where support groups come in handy.

Reason #1: The Best Online Weight Loss Support Is Free!

Local support groups in your city can be helpful, but they've got a few flaws. First of all, they usually charge a signup fee, or even a monthly membership fee. These expenses are unnecessary, considering that you could get even better support and lose more weight for free! The internet lives and breathes communication. You can find free weight loss support groups online.

Reason #2: Online Support Groups Always Fit Your Schedule.

Most of us who are overweight have busy lives. We have high stress jobs, and that includes taking care of our kids, which can be tough! With so much to do, who has time to make the most out of a local weight loss support group, let alone make it to all the meetings? I sure don't, and I'm guessing you'd say the same. Here's another benefit of joining an online support group: You can visit the website anytime, catch up on the latest postings, share your progress or even complain about difficulties, and be off to do something else in 15 minutes!

Reason #3: Online Weight Loss Support Is Available 24 Hours, 7 Days A Week!

You could join a local support group and pay the fees, but what good will that do if you need to talk to someone right now? We all feel hopeless sometimes, especially during the beginning of our weight loss journey. Your friends are there for you 24 hours, 7 days a week. You don't have to go it alone. Take advantage of free 24/7 support and advice from other people who know exactly how you feel.

Reason #4: Online Weight Loss Support Group Forums Are Overflowing With Help And Advice That You Can Refer Back To Anytime!

While your local group might be helpful during meetings, it's hard to really make the most of your money spent there. Sure, you can get encouragement and advice during each meeting, but what about the rest of the week, or even the rest of the month? The obvious solution is free, and it's on the internet. We have the right to free information, and that's what you get at an online support group. Anytime you need an answer or just want to read the encouraging words of a friend, all you need to do is sit down at the computer and log onto the website.

Reason #5: It's Super-Quick and Easy To Keep Your Weight Loss Diary Online!

You probably know first hand that losing weight is SO much easier when you can see the progress you've been making. After all, it takes a lot of work to reach our weight loss goals, and we need to know we're doing well along the way. Everyone cheats, and when you have nothing to look back on but vague memories of healthy eating and exercise, it's hard to remember that you're still doing a good job.

If you're serious about losing weight and keeping it off forever, please consider your health and join a free weight loss support group online. It's so much easier to log onto a website than to spend money on a local support group, find someone to take care of the kids, and make it home in time for a healthy dinner, talking with your family, or even getting a good night's sleep.

You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like, provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

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