

The Alternative to “Diets”

We tend to not be patient with weight loss because change is hard. We get excited by new promises and new eating and exercise routines. Once this excitement wears off, we are faced with a rigid plan that is hard to follow in our “real” world. These plans tend to ignore our internal signals to eat. They mess with our metabolism and make it hard to enjoy our lives.

Rigid eating and exercise plans will become harder to stick to over time. This is because these plans are not realistic. Our busy lives need a flexible plan. Many people start a plan with so much intensity that they burn-out. Then they will sooner or later rebound to their old lifestyle patterns.

Find a plan you can stick with and create real change. Think about these three different mind-sets: (hint: the non-diet approach works best!)

American Lifestyle

- Steady weight gain
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Large portions
- High taste (high sugar, fat and salt), highly processed, less nutritious foods
- Erratic eating style (less frequent meals, more frequent snacks)

Fad/Extreme “Diet and Exercise” Plans

- Rapid weight loss
- Inflexible lifestyle
- Rigid eating plan—often with low taste or low interest foods
- Ignore internal hunger and appetite regulators
- Requires high motivation and excitement

- May result in feelings of guilt when unable to follow the plan closely

Non-Diet Approach

- All foods can be eaten in healthy portions. For instance, if you eat 2 cups of ice cream, try 1 cup rather than none.
- Moderate increase in activity level.
- Changes started that you enjoy and can sustain. For example, if you love chocolate, work it into your meal plan.
- Slow change in body composition, like a change in clothing size.
- Less focus on the number on the scale. This can be slow to change and isn’t the only sign of your progress.

The non-diet approach encourages:

- Varied meal plan with portion sizes based on hunger signals.
- Meal plan that includes lots of types of foods. No foods are forbidden.
- Regular mealtimes based on your schedule. No more than 3 to 4 hours between meals. Eat within 30 minutes of feeling hunger.
- Snack foods, sweets and processed foods should be eaten in healthy portions with meals. Not as snacks.
- Balanced meals that include protein, carbohydrate, fruit and vegetables. For information on the plate method, refer to HFFY#509.

Other Tips

- Move your body in activities you enjoy. Walk, bike, swim, etc.
- Find non-food ways to manage your stress and emotions. Examples include getting fresh air, reading, puzzles, etc.,
- Make lifelong changes instead of temporary fixes.

Let's get started! Write three goals in each of these areas with the help of your nutritionist.

Competent Eating Goals

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Moving Your Body Goals

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Stress Management Goals

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright 2/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#406.