



Healthy Weight Loss

Wait! Before you start that new diet, take a moment and think about what you really want. Fast results can come with a high price tag. Pay attention or you could end up worse off than you started.

Many diet plans are based on eliminating groups of foods, which limits calories. Diets that are very low in carbohydrates typically give an immediate drop in weight, but since most of that is water, it returns when you resume eating them.

The biggest risk of rapid weight loss from very low calorie diets is that some of it is muscle. Muscle increases metabolic rate – so less muscle means you burn fewer calories each day. If you lose muscle and then go back to your old eating habits, you will now gain weight at an even faster rate.

Another problem with restrictive diets is that they are hard to sustain. When you go off of them – then what? You end up swinging between restricting and indulging. Going on and off diets can have so much emotional baggage and guilt that some people tell me they wish they didn't have to eat at all!

The healthy way to lose weight is to make healthy choices a way of life. This is a long term approach. It is slower but it has many benefits. A big benefit is that the same healthy food choices that reduce the risk of disease also reduces chronic inflammation which is thought to make weight loss more difficult.

Snacking on fruits and vegetables is a way to put the focus on healthy choices. Whole grains are more filling because of the increased fiber – you naturally eat less. Reduce calories by making processed foods (high in refined carbs and fats) an occasional choice instead of a regular part of the diet. Eating regular meals and planned snacks helps avoid getting over-hungry and overeating.

So if eating in a healthy way is a good way to lose weight – what stops us? Several things. We live in a culture of fad diets and quick weight loss: this is what we expect and there is tremendous pressure from friends and media to conform. Our image of “beauty” is based on starved models. In a culture that moves from one thing to the next very quickly, it can be hard to stay with something long enough to see results. And, of course, it is harder to make healthy choices when we are surrounded by less healthy foods.

Often we feel like we *are* making healthy choices and yet nothing happens. Sometimes it is the invisible little “extras” that add up. A few years back I wrote down everything I ate for a few days. I was shocked—the foods I thought I only ate occasionally were actually a regular part of my diet. I have learned that my 5 foot 2 inch frame does not allow for many

extras these days. I need to make conscious choices and keep it moderate.

The “extras” are not always subtle: sometimes they batter us in the form of food cravings. All our best efforts swamped by the irresistible pull of these foods. Eating enough at meals helps, as does asking what we are really hungry for. Usually it is about something else other than food.

These are the challenges, and it helps to know they are there. AND you can still choose a healthy diet and enjoy weight loss or weight maintenance as a happy side effect. It helps to focus on the habits themselves and how you feel. My clients, as they fine tune their healthy choices, report having more energy, better stamina, and feeling at peace with their food choices.

Weight loss is often slower than we think it should be. In theory, we lose ½ to 1 pound a week for a reduction of 250 – 500 calories a day. It is not quite that straightforward in practice. Men typically lose weight faster than women. Age often seems to slow it down, as does a history of yo-yo dieting. The more times you have lost and regained weight, the harder weight loss becomes.

A different approach is to make peace with your body as it is right now. So many of us are at war with our bodies and our self image. Imagine starting the new year with the olive branch of peace. Imagine being able to truly love and care for your body, making healthy choices as a way to honor it and to honor your life. Imagine having a way of eating that is healthy, steady and has room for all – in moderation. Imagine focusing on health and wellbeing, and letting your body find its own right weight.

These ideas are radical in a nation of fad dieters. What do you want for yourself? A quick fix that compounds the problem or a way of living that is in harmony with nature? It is your choice!

Wishing You a Healthy and Happy New Year!

What's New!

I've started doing monthly newspaper columns! If you live in the area, check out the Rohnert Park Community Voice and the Healdsburg Tribune. If you get stuck with your own healthy habits, give me a call. I can often help you settle into new habits more quickly.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy.?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

