

TRIMMING OFF THE FAT

Are you satisfied with your general physique, or would you like to get rid of a few extra pounds? If your answer is the latter, quit looking for that magic pill and just follow several general guidelines that will help you work toward a healthier body.

Calorie Deficit

Atkins™, South Beach™, The Zone Diet™ and countless other types of diets have each been hyped as the perfect diet strategy to shed those unwanted pounds. While they may have shown initial results, most have failed to demonstrate long-term success in keeping the weight off. Here's an important tip to remember: Your body must burn more calories than it is taking in to lose weight. One pound of fat equals 3,500 calories, so if you want to lose 1 pound per week you need to average a caloric deficit of 500 calories per day.

Don't worry—that doesn't mean you have to get on the treadmill and run until you have burned 3,500 calories to lose a pound. Your goal is to combine increased activity with some cutbacks in your diet.

Basal Metabolic Rate and Calories Burned in a Day

To manage weight, you need to determine the number of calories you eat and the number of calories you burn. Your body has something called the basal metabolic rate (BMR), which is the amount of calories you burn at rest in order to survive. It accounts for roughly 60 to 75% of all the calories you burn in a given day. That's right—you are actually burning a small amount of calories while you are sleeping.

Use the following website to determine your

BMR and daily calorie needs: www.bmi-calculator.net/bmr-calculator/.

Now that you've determined your daily caloric needs, you need to set a realistic goal of 1 to 2 pounds per week and determine how many calories you'll need to forgo to lose those pesky pounds.

What to Eat

As surprising as it might sound, managing your weight is easier than you might imagine. There is no need to spend hours planning your diet. Just follow several simple guidelines and keep the calorie deficit in mind.

- Reduce your portion sizes by 10 to 15% each time you prepare or order a meal.
- Eat smaller meals more frequently throughout the day and avoid skipping breakfast.
- Consume a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and non-fat or low-fat dairy products to get the nutrients your body needs.
- Aim for two or three servings of dairy products daily (e.g., milk, cheeses, yogurt).
- Select low-fat foods and avoid trans fats. Limit your total fat intake to 20 to 35% of daily calories, with no more than 7% of your total calories coming from saturated fats.
- Avoid eating too many salty foods.
- Limit alcohol beverage intake.

Cardio: Burn the Right Fuel

Research shows that lower-intensity exercise uses a larger percentage of fat as fuel compared to higher-intensity exercise. However, it does not burn as many calories as higher-intensity exercise and, consequently will not result in as much body weight or fat loss. Gradually increase the intensity to increase your caloric deficit while continuing to burn fats. Higher-intensity exercise also has a greater impact on keeping your metabolism elevated after your workout, which adds a few more calories to your deficit. Remember, always check with your doctor before starting an exercise program and choose the intensity that is appropriate for you.

Burn Fat With Muscle

Strength training offers many health benefits, including an increase in the number of calories burned. Muscle tissue burns more calories than fat tissue, and building muscles costs a lot of energy. As you increase the amount of muscle you have, you will also increase your resting metabolic rate. To prevent injury and develop consistency, start off with one to two sets of 12 to 15 repetitions for all major muscle groups.

Additional Resources

MyPyramid: www.MyPyramid.gov

About.com: www.exercise.about.com/cs/weightloss/a/howtoloseweight.htm

About.com: www.weightloss.about.com/od/eatsmart/a/blcalintake.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 and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



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Harris Benedict Formula

To determine your total daily calorie needs, multiply your BMR by the appropriate activity factor, as follows:

- If you are sedentary (little or no exercise): Calorie Calculation = BMR x 1.2
- If you are lightly active (light exercise/sports 1–3 days/week): Calorie Calculation = BMR x 1.375
- If you are moderately active (moderate exercise/sports 3–5 days/week): Calorie Calculation = BMR x 1.55
- If you are very active (hard exercise/sports 6–7 days a week): Calorie Calculation = BMR x 1.725
- If you are extra active (very hard exercise/sports & physical job or 2x training): Calorie Calculation = BMR x 1.9

Note: 2x = Two training sessions per day (e.g., cardio in the morning and resistance training in the evening)