



Secrets of Successful Dieters

Have you tried to lose weight many times? Or, maybe you've lost several pounds but gained it all back again. If so, you're not alone. It's extremely challenging to maintain weight loss. However, some people *do* manage to achieve their weight loss and weight maintenance goals.

The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) (www.nwcr.ws) is a database that tracks more than 5,000 people who have lost at least 30 pounds and maintained the loss for at least 1 year. How did these people keep off the weight? Natalie Digate Muth, MD, MPH, RD, CSCS, a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, a registered dietitian and an ACE master trainer, shares some of their secrets.

Control Portions

Portion sizes were much smaller in the past than they are today. With today's portion sizes, it's easy to lose track of how much you're eating. To lose weight, you must control your food portions. In fact, research suggests portion control is the *greatest* predictor of successful weight loss (Logue et al. 2004). Control portions by

learning to read nutrition labels; carefully measuring out servings; eating only a single helping; using smaller serving dishes; and resisting the urge to "clean your plate."

Be Aware

Practice paying attention to everything you eat. Many people turn to food when they are bored or stressed out. Ask yourself why you are heading to the fridge or pantry. Are you really motivated by hunger, or are you just bored, stressed, sad or tired? Emotional eating can wreak havoc on a well-planned weight management program. Keeping a daily food log and jotting down what you are feeling can help you identify your emotions, monitor your food intake and hold yourself accountable.

It's also important to know your weight. While it is not advisable to become obsessive about weight to the nearest 0.01 pound, people who maintain their weight loss do so by keeping periodic tabs on the scale, weighing themselves at least once per week. This way they are able to identify small weight increases in time to take appropriate corrective action (NWCR 2007).

Turn Off the Tube

Time spent watching TV is usually time spent being completely sedentary (and thus expending minimal amounts of calories) and often eating as well. Most people mindlessly consume snacks while mesmerized in front of the television, not noticing the rapidly multiplying calorie intake. Case in point: the successful NWCR "losers" watched less than 10 hours of television per week (Raynor et al. 2006). ■

Exercise Regularly

Fitness is key in losing weight and keeping pounds off. More than 94% of participants who succeeded in their goals in the National Weight Control Registry did so by increasing their rate of physical activity in order to lose weight (NWCR 2007). In fact, many who lost weight reported walking for at least 1 hour per day.

And for those who kept the weight off, exercise was also crucial. This was evident because the registry participants who dropped out of fitness programs ended up putting the pounds back on (NWCR 2007). As you lose weight, a proportion of each pound comes from muscle; that, in turn, slows down the metabolism and makes it difficult to keep the weight off. Although cardiovascular exercise is important for burning calories, be sure to do a resistance training program as well, to help preserve your lean tissue and keep up your metabolic rate.

Reference

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