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Introduction

Have you ever thought upon seeing yourself in the mirror that perhaps you could physically look a little bit better if not a lot better than you do? You're not alone in your thinking if this is the case!

Our craving for fatty foods and lack of exercise is a growing concern all over the world, especially amongst North Americans, and the statistics say our health is going down the tubes...fast! There was a time when we could indulge because we worked hard in our physically demanding jobs, particularly heavy labour, which meant calories would be burned throughout the course of the day as we exhausted ourselves from morning to night.

This is not the case now. With the rising popularity of computers and video games and also with kids spending more and more time surfing endlessly on social networking groups as opposed to spending time outdoors, things are looking rough not only for the current generation but the generations to follow which will all be exposed to the same lifestyle which we all enjoy...(and suffer through without truly knowing it.)

Unfortunately at our expense, the weight-loss industry is booming with it's mass-marketing of bogus ineffective, instant-results, fat-loss products. People pour tens of millions of dollars into this industry thinking they will get the results advertised. But truth be told, there is no such thing as instant results nor do these diet fads truly work.

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Only one thing works in life and that is hard-work! But it's not anywhere near as hard as you think. It's a case of seeing through hype and forcing yourself to accept reality as it is and to then go forward with a positive attitude and make an effort.

A simple diet and a bit of exercise can net you unbelievable results! Most people tend to quit when they don't see results right away but it takes time for results to happen as nothing is immediate. This is where willpower is required, to help you stay on track. If you can stay focused on your goal to lose weight and get in shape, you will succeed.

The following steps are laid out to help you achieve those goals. Simply keep your eyes on the prize, stay focused, maintain a positive attitude and watch the weight come off! 😊

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How Much Do You Need?

How much food are you consuming daily? How much high-calorie or fatty foods are you eating without truly knowing it? The best way to identify where things are going wrong in your eating habits is to begin looking at the nutrition facts on the packages of the food you're eating and to record them in a daily log for about a week. By doing this, you will be able to analyze where you are going wrong and where you will need to improve to get the results you want.

The unfortunate reality is that we cater to our taste buds instead of worrying about proper nutrition. This is what leads to weight gain and ultimately, obesity. What's worse is that fast-food is far more convenient for most people than spending time in the kitchen cooking up a good dish. Society's need for convenience is a big reason for the growing statistics of obesity which is still rising.

This is why it's so important as a first step to take note of the foods you are putting into your body so that you can analyze the areas which require the most attention. You will discover by observing the nutritional value of the foods you are consuming exactly what is causing you to pack on the pounds. From there, it means you can then begin diminishing your fat intake and replacing the fatty foods with slightly healthier foods.

A pound of fat consists of 3500 calories so in order to lose a pound of fat weekly, you would need to cut off 500 calories from your diet. If you are eating approximately 3000 calories per day, you could lose weight by wiping out 500

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calories from the 3000 which you are consuming by either replacing your unhealthy meals with healthier meals and/or incorporating some exercise into your daily regime. By taking out those 500 unhealthy calories, you are then down to 2500 and on top of that, you decide to put in a half hour or 45 minutes of running, biking or an elliptical. Another 500 calories off puts you down to 2000 calories for the day just with less than an hour of cardio-training and a healthier choice of meal. At the end of the week, that will be 2 lbs of unnecessary weight off your body...and chances are you'll be feeling much better both mentally and physically.

Not only do you build up a great sweat during your training, your heart and entire body gets a great workout in the process which means heading toward a healthier lifestyle.☺ As always, eating less or picking out a healthier choice of foods crossed with a bit of exercise can get you some seriously good results which not only gives you more self-confidence but also a vote of confidence from your family and friends.

The worst thing you can do is crash diet which is the drastic measure of going on a food strike in hopes that you'll drop excessive weight quickly! This only leads to disaster as you experience hunger pains, causing your body to feast off your muscle tissue and then eventually, you go into a serious eating binge.

The tried and tested method of eating healthier foods and incorporating exercise into your day will always guarantee results for the better.

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A Healthier Choice!

Once you've discovered the amount of unnecessary calories you are consuming on average, you will then need to decide where to make adjustments in your diet so that healthier foods will prevail over fatty foods.

If you were to take the example of McDonalds' Big Mac which packs not only a ton of calories but a lot of bad ingredients with it, you may consider downsizing to a hamburger which, although still not a healthy food by any means, is much lower in calories and easier on the health.

Let's also take the example of a flame-broiled Whopper at Burger King which is actually bigger than the Big Mac. A single Whopper with cheese contains over 750 calories and almost 50 grams of fat. One could save 480 calories and about 36 grams of fat simply by downsizing to a mayo-free junior-sized Whopper. Discard the larger-sized fries for a smaller portion and you will have saved yourself from consuming a lot of excess calories. If you're still feeling a little bit hungry, why not go for a bowl of grapes or an apple instead of a second burger?

Some fast-food restaurants have been making an attempt to offer healthier food including KFC which offers not only fried chicken but also grilled chicken. A KFC grilled chicken breast and drumstick mixed with mashed potatoes and gravy can go for well under 400 calories and just over 12 grams of fat. On the flip side, the extra crispy chicken breast which taste-wise is not particularly better than the regular fried chicken according to some, goes for nearly 500 calories and over 30 grams of fat after having sat in the deep fryer for a longer amount of time.

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If you need a quick fix but also something tasty and you find pizza as a very pleasing convenience, try a thin-crust at Domino's with ham and pineapple instead of pepperoni. That will be around 200 calories you'll have just saved from entering your body.

One must also not disregard the joy of quenching thirst with a massively-calorie-ridden milkshake! It tastes amazingly good but thankfully they are offered at different sizes which means despite the fact that you can still enjoy your favourite milkshake, you can also go for a smaller sized cup. For example, a triple-thick strawberry shake at the king size goes for over 1000 calories! A small-size goes for 420 calories. If you need your shake, go for the small size. If you want to trim your waistline then discard the shake and order an orange juice! ☺

Let's also not forget breakfast! People during the early-morning rush hour need a decent breakfast to energize themselves and gather their bearings for another long day in the office mixed with a tedious commute back and forth. The very popular Egg McMuffin is a popular breakfast amongst Americans but it also contains 300 calories. On the other hand, the English Muffin is half that. This is when you make the choice of going for the relatively less-fattening order. Despite the fact that none of it is healthy, even making a choice of down-sizing your portion or going for the healthier dish can make all the difference on the road to losing weight.

Americans have a deep fascination with fast-food. Fast-food means not just food on the go but also convenience because it's much easier to go into a drive thru as opposed to rummaging through the fridge and trying to put together a decent

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meal. So why go to the trouble of cooking your own food when fast-food is so easy to get access to considering it's all around you, wherever you go.

As before, even if fast-food is convenient, one can still pick out healthier foods on the menu. Much like downsizing portions from large-sized to small-sized, you can slowly pick out healthier foods or mix your usual choices up from time to time.

Every food contains the nutritional value on the package so it's always best to analyze what you are putting into your body. When you keep a close eye on what you eat, there is really no excuse for blaming the fast-food industry or anybody else for your unhealthy shape or inability to lose weight. Fast-food is a convenience but you alone are responsible for what you eat and you have a choice which is why it's best when starting off on the path to a healthier lifestyle to keep a close watch on the foods you eat.

Furthermore, losing weight is only the beginning. Weight can creep back up if you neglect your improved eating habits after a while. Snacking on junk food is ok if it's limited while you still maintain a quality healthy diet. Satisfying a craving is not at all a bad thing but making sure you stick to a reasonably healthy diet while doing some exercise daily is essential to improving your shape on the road to ultimately a healthier body and a healthier lifestyle.

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Reducing Your Portions!

Spreading out meals into smaller portions as opposed to eating enormous meals at any one time is a major factor in losing weight. It's been proven that rationing your meals not only reduces your caloric intake throughout the day but it also helps to steady your metabolism. If you're in the habit of eating 2-3 massive meals daily, consider eating 6-7 smaller meals which are spread out throughout your day.

One thing people enjoy doing is eating right from the packet as opposed to taking out what they need and putting the packet away. Such an example is eating out of a mega-sized packet of potato chips. Not only do you have no idea how much you are consuming, but typically you're satisfying a craving by eating more than you really need until you are completely satisfied when instead you could pour a small portion into a bowl and add a piece of fruit to get the amount of food you actually need.

Super-sized packets are more commonplace now than before. More items are sold in bulk and more foods are served at restaurants with the option to super-size for a few extra cents. Increased portions are a factor in the rising statistics for obesity. There is always a cause but people put enjoyment ahead of anything else which naturally leads to a health risk. This is why rationing meals are a handy way to take control of your bad habits. It takes discipline to make adjustments and there's really no reason why people must feel they should eat until they're full. As always, tiny servings are fine and if still peckish, add a tiny bit more as opposed to loading your plate and trying to finish it all. Rather than sit

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around feeling stuffed and undoing your belt buckle, leaving some room so that you can have another small meal a few hours later while still feeling good enough to mix in a little bit of exercise is a good balance which leads to improved results. Doing this helps control the weight and slowly it begins to come down which is a marvellous feeling when you experience it, motivating you to work a little harder as you become confident in your ability to take control of your own body as opposed to allowing your cravings to take control for you.

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Fiber...Are You Getting Enough?

What is fiber and why is it important in our diets? Well quite simply, fiber helps lower the risks of some very bad common illnesses and diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, diverticulitis and even stroke. It also controls your urges and desires for needing more food by helping you get the fulfillment you need so that you won't need any more food or as much food as you crave.

The typical amount of fiber intake daily is 30 grams for men and 20 grams for women. Great sources of fiber include fruits and vegetables naturally, beans and whole grain breads. For breakfast cereals, there is a good amount of fiber in Raisin Bran Extra which contains about 7 grams.

Rapidly increasing your fiber is never healthy so if your body is used to consuming roughly between 10-15 grams daily, don't begin eating 30 grams at the offset. The body needs to adapt slowly which means over a month period. There are enough sources of fiber and you can try to shift more towards eating these types of foods and replacing the others which are much lower in fiber.

Juice products as mentioned earlier are much healthier than shakes. But even so, natural fruits like oranges and apples have more fiber and less calories than juice products. You can add fruit to your breakfast including bananas, grapes, etc. You can even add crackers which is a source of fiber. Whole wheat breads, crackers, and some cereals offer a good amount of fiber to start you on your day. You can even include beans into your breakfast or lunch as beans are not only a top source of fiber but also contains protein to help grow muscle.

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Hit The Treadmill

Very few people enjoy exercise. Exercising and seeing results is like walking up a hill. It takes an effort which people don't like to give because effort means work. But on the downside, much like coming down the hill, it's easy to pack on the pounds by simply doing nothing. Physical activity can indeed be tough for some because of aching knees or problematic backs, etc. But there are solutions to get some amount of exercise into your day. Whether it's to use a machine like the elliptical instead of running, or whether it's to use the exercise bike instead of biking down trails and rocky terrains, or whether it's to just pick up a tennis racquet and fit a little session into your evenings by hitting with your friends or family, any little bit always helps.

Thanks to technology and video games, there is also the Wii Fit which allows you to participate in fun exercise routines right in your own living room while keeping a measure on your fitness level and calories burned. Adding to that, there are also games like tennis, boxing and bowling which require real-motion movement so you can literally get involved physically while enjoying yourself at the same time.

If you're a novice in the world of exercise, it's unlikely you will be burning 500 or so calories in a single session if your plan is to lose a couple of pounds per week. In the case of a person weighing 165lbs or so, it's unlikely they will lose 500 calories in just a 30 minute session playing football or tennis or going jogging. It would take more of an effort and a longer amount of time to cut that amount of

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calories. But similarly to spreading out meals, you can also divide up your exercise routines throughout the day and attain your goals.

One of the great things about exercise, specifically cardio-type training is that it can be done during different parts of the day and still get you the same result as you'd get doing one solid continuous workout. If you normally wake up at 6:30am in the mornings to get ready to go to work, consider waking up earlier at perhaps 6:00am and doing a 30 minute run on the treadmill before getting into the shower. Not only will you have done a tremendous workout, you'll be extremely fresh and alert and feeling inspired before heading off to work.

Depending on your level of fitness, a 30 minute run can burn 400-500 calories at a fairly good pace but you can also do a brisk walk which still can burn around 200 or more calories. After work, you may consider going for a walk in the evening time, going cycling or even playing a little sports such as soccer, basketball, tennis...basically anything to help you build up a sweat and get your body working hard.

You may even consider during rainy days or the winter season to get a gym membership and try out the variety of cardio-machines available from the treadmill and the exercise bike to the elliptical, stair climber and rowing machine. Everything there is specifically designed to get your heart pumping and helping you build up a great sweat.☺ You can always start off slow and build up to a faster pace over the weeks. Never force more out of yourself at the beginning than what your body can handle. You will naturally improve over time and your health will also improve greatly.

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Water Is Your Best Friend

It's been suggested by research that you require at least 8 glasses of water daily, but it can depend on your weight regarding how much you actually require. You would need to divide your weight by 2 so as an example, a man weighing 180lbs would need 60 ounces of water in a day.

So why do experts suggest that we drink lots of water and why is it considered so essential to a healthy life? Well first off it helps to avoid dehydration and it keeps the kidneys functioning well by assisting in the elimination of waste products plus it helps to increase your metabolism which helps you to lose weight.

But aside from listening to what experts tell you, you should make it a priority to listen to your body first and foremost. When you are thirsty, then naturally you will drink water to replenish yourself. Depending on the kind of work that you do, you should try to get into the habit of drinking water regularly or even better, keeping a water bottle handy, especially on really hot days since the heat causes you to sweat and your body loses water and thus you will need to replenish yourself.

This is why water is so important in our lives. Not only is it zero calories, it is basically the best source for quenching your thirst AND the healthiest. You may consider adding water to all of your meals over time and doing away with fruit drinks and sodas ultimately as it will help reduce your caloric intake and you'll also feel much better without the added sugar that comes with the other drinks.

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Ready...Set...Go!

Everybody thinks they know what to do. They read the material, they realize they need to take action and put in the effort but they seldom do. Unless you discipline yourself to resist the temptation of eating unhealthy foods and motivate yourself to eat healthy foods, you will find it difficult to get on the road to a healthy life.

No amount of reading or saying "*Yes, I can do it!*" will help you unless you take that first step. It takes a strong commitment to get on track and it takes an equally strong commitment to keep at it. Most people give up after a short time because they're not satisfied with their results. If you can commit and keep yourself motivated and continue to aspire to eat well and train well, you will achieve your goal. No matter what the goal is, be it to lose weight or increase your endurance or become a better athlete in a specific sport, you just need to go out there and make the effort and do the work required.

Over the course of time, not only will you mentally adjust to your training regiment but you will develop a great amount of discipline and self-confidence and you will naturally maintain a positive attitude which means easily being able to resist any kind of temptation. Everybody needs to start from somewhere. Setting your goals little by little as opposed to attempting to go all-out and trying to sweat out 10 pounds on the treadmill in the course of a week will do more harm than good. Starting the process slowly is key which means going for a brisk walk to help acclimate your body to the more rigorous runs you plan to do in the later weeks.

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One mistake people make when starting out is going all out which leads to injury and soon they decide that training is just too painful and taxing. As before, set a schedule and if necessary, consult with a personal trainer about what might be good for you if you feel uncomfortable coming up with a schedule. Although you do not need to make the process so difficult. If your desire is to lose weight, all you really require is a small daily window allotted to your exercise and keeping an eye on what you put in your body.

Simply be confident and work towards your goals. Be positive and you will get the results you want. As we approach Spring, maybe now is a good time to begin developing that plan and taking a course of action so you can get on the road to the super healthy lifestyle you deserve? ☺

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To Your Weight Loss Success,

Mr. Dennis

Aka Losing With Dennis