



(Fad) Diets Don't Work Long Term; Here's What Will

If you're tired of gaining and losing the same ten to twenty pounds or more, maybe you are ready for a "new" approach. Unfortunately, it's not glamorous, sexy or exotic but it will work, and will make you feel a lot better if you stay with it and learn to tune into your inner signals. The new approach? Eat fewer calories at every meal and exercise most if not all days of the week.....and do this for the rest of your life.

If this sounds harsh, it's really not. It's more about finding a style of eating less every day, one that you can do indefinitely (hint: including lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help), and a form of physical activity that you enjoy enough to do almost every day. Regular monitoring and accountability will also help: conspire to exercise daily (if possible) with a friend or group and write things down in a food and activity journal or calendar. Use your favorite jeans as a guide – if they start to get tight, it's probably time to cut back on your portion sizes or increase your exercise (or both).

There are many ways to lose weight; the hard part comes in trying to maintain the weight loss permanently. Fortunately, researchers at the University of Colorado and Brown University have been studying people who have successfully lost weight (successful maintainers) for nearly 20 years. The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) (<http://www.nwcr.ws>) is a database that tracks over 10,000 individuals who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for one year or longer. All registrants complete an annual survey to learn more about the behavioral and psychological characteristics of successful maintainers, as well as the strategies they use to maintain their weight losses. Participants in the NWCR "self-report" their success and their methods—which means that there is room for error.

Here are some statistics from the registry on how successful maintainers lost weight:

- 45% lost weight on their own and the other 55% did so with the help of some type of program (e.g., Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, etc).
- 98% report that they changed their food intake in some way to lose weight.





- 94% increased their physical activity, with the most frequently reported form of activity being walking.

To keep the weight off, most NWCR members report continuing to maintain a low calorie, low fat diet and doing high levels of activity. In addition:

- 78% eat breakfast every day.
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week.
- 62% watch less than 10 hours of TV per week.
- 90% exercise, on average, about 1 hour per day.

Change is hard but very worthwhile. Just ask the 10,000 members of the NWCR.