

Weight Management article:

Diet, Nutrition and Weight management is an ever increasing concern within each stage of the human lifecycle, so instead of starting with the hard facts, I thought it a good idea to lighten the mood with a bit of laughter.

A lady her mother and her 7 year old niece are in the lady's bedroom. The lady having lost weight over the past few years was discarding things from her wardrobe that no longer fit. Her seven year old niece was watching as she held up her trousers. "Wow," the lady said, "I must have worn these when I was 183." Her niece looked puzzled, then asked, "How old are you now?" The cynical mother of the lady replied with an off the cuff remark, "Darling, the older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight because by then, your body and your fat are really good friends." The niece's puzzled look turned to bemusement as she fell silent and then replied, "The new Garlic diet on TV says it's really good for older people as you don't lose weight; you just look thinner from far away."

The successes and failures of weight loss have been experienced by everyone at some point in their lives, but those who lose weight and achieve long lasting weight loss maintenance have followed the simple energy balance equation. The energy balance equation states that energy in, must equal energy out. That means that food (energy in form of calories) consumed must be expended (used up through activity). Energy can be expended in several ways all of which have greater or lesser degrees of energy expenditure. Energy consumed in the form of calories can be utilised by the body's internal systems or through movement (daily living activities to structured physical activity). The basic lack of understanding and consistent poor practise of this equation results in the increase in body fat and overall body weight. However it also has to be considered, although not as worrying for the majority of the general population is the opposite side of the spectrum, in which a consistent reduction in energy consumed coupled with too much energy expenditure leads to excessive weight loss.

Energy Balance is Energy in=Energy out

Although a simple equation, it doesn't take into consideration the best suited methods designed to achieve and maintain ideal weight. Over the past thirty years, there have been many different schools of thought on the best suited methods individuals can use to achieve weight loss, but very little research has been carried out on weight loss maintenance. It's all well and good achieving your ideal weight but the real battle is maintaining it without imposing unrealistic dietary restrictions and physical activity regimes upon your lifestyle, as life is to be enjoyed. Forever harking on about calories is also not a healthy approach to take especially in the presence of young children.

A new mental approach has to be created with regards to weight management; we have to break down the old school of calorie counting and start to introduce the teachings of body composition. Once we start to understand how the body works, only then can we really achieve true success through everlasting weight loss maintenance.

So you ask, "What is body composition?"

Body composition is looking at the body as being separated in to two compartments. Imagine a square with a vertical line drawn down the middle, one side contains fat free mass (bones, muscles, tissue) and the adjacent compartment contains fat mass (fat cells). Fat free mass by its nature is known to be metabolically active – it requires energy to continue its function, compared to fat free mass which has a much lesser metabolic activity.

Metabolism is the body's way in turning energy derived from food into energy that the body's internal systems can use e.g. brain function, muscle function. Maintaining the body's ability to breakdown food energy efficiently at a high standard reflects positive lifestyle behaviours achieving weight maintenance. A suitable analogy would be- if you can imagine your body's metabolism to be an engine belonging to an Aston Martin. At birth you are blessed with this highly efficient engine which works to breakdown food into energy for bodily function, and it continues in this fashion from birth -childhood- adolescence through to young adult (30yrs).

Everything you eat for pleasure and energy is broken down efficiently to fuel the body and its development. (Bear in mind, that physical activity levels during these stages of the lifecycle is very high, therefore leading to a high energy output. However this is proving not to be the case due to the increasing rise in childhood through to adulthood obesity). As the body hits thirty years the rate at which this beautiful engine operates reduces ten percent per decade. That means that the body's ability to derive energy from foods consumed slows down ten percent as the body ages, leading to change in fat distribution, concentrating predominantly in and around the abdominal area.

Abdominal fat is one of the many risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

In order to maintain high metabolic efficiency, focus has to be brought to maintaining the metabolic fat free mass compartment. Muscle is one of the most metabolically active tissues in the body and is also prone to sarcopenia (loss of muscle fibre) through aging. So therefore, incorporating strength training exercises into physical activity routines for all ages will ensure high metabolic efficiency.

Sustaining high metabolic activity can also be achieved through dietary measures. Ensuring all dietary reference values are met for protein, fat and carbohydrate, will assist in reducing excess body fat accumulation.

Many studies have highlighted the importance of achieving the recommended daily protein intakes which are 45g per day for females and 55g per day for males. Maintaining adequate daily protein requirements has been shown to improve blood fats and blood glucose sensitivity, reduce the signs of hunger as well as reducing increased calorie intake from fat and refined carbohydrates which are responsible for causing an increase in body fat and weight.

Due to the rapid rise in obesity in all age groups, it is clear to see, that many people fail to meet their daily protein requirements. From a dietary perspective in order to attain adequate protein intake a female would have to consume approx 200g chicken breast per day and a male approx 300g of chicken breast a day (100g of chicken breast 21.2g protein, 1 can of tuna 27.2g protein). As this is not being achieved, it is sometimes wise to look at other alternatives. The inclusion of a personalised whey/soy protein powders will have positive effects on reducing blood cholesterol, improve oestrogen levels, reduce abdominal fat and improve blood circulation.

Therefore if daily requirements were met, this would reduce the compulsion to make poor snacking choices in response to signs of hunger based on low blood sugar levels. Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar levels) created through the continual intake of processed foods and high sugar drinks containing simple carbohydrate (sugars) can also create hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar levels) after consumption. This frequent rise and fall in blood sugar levels is a precursor for the development of Type 2 diabetes.

So after all that the key take home messages are:

1. Increase daily protein intake to meet the recommended values, by having a protein food at each meal.
2. Include 3 x 20min strength training sessions into weekly exercise programs.
3. Make engaging in structured physical activity 3 x 60min sessions a way of life.
4. Incorporate green leafy vegetable, red, yellow and orange fruit and vegetables into meals daily as they are low in calories and high antioxidants.
5. Reduce the consumption of high sugar high fat foods.
6. Maintain good hydration levels as it helps the metabolic process.
7. Graze as it is the way forward

If you're interested in finding out more about your own body composition along with help and advice on weight loss, weight loss maintenance, or the best suited fitness or sports specific physical activity programs . Then please don't hesitate to contact Karen Idun on 07794 581070.

