

A holistic approach to weight loss

The road to successful, healthy weight loss is not an easy one. There are many challenges and choices that await the individual who wishes to embark on such a journey. From a holistic perspective, there is a sensible plan to enable safe and effective weight loss. There are three components to successful weight loss: nutritional, physical and psychological.

From a nutritional perspective, a whole foods diet should be implemented. Whole foods are the foods that nature provides, namely whole grains, legumes, meats, fowl, fish, eggs, dairy, seeds, nuts, healthy oils, vegetables and fruits. These foods are considered nutrient dense as opposed to being calorie dense. Nutrient dense foods are foods that are rich in essential nutrients and that foster wellness, while calorie dense foods are usually heavily processed and depleted of nutrient content and increase the deposition of body fat.

Now that we know what foods to choose, how do we know which diet is the right one to choose? We are all biochemically unique, which is why one diet does not fit all. Nutritionists may argue why popular high-protein diets are better than low-fat vegetarian diets and vice versa. Yet both sides of the argument are only partially right. Based on the theory of biochemical individuality, some people will succeed on the two diets listed above while an equal amount will fail. The key lies in determining the correct diet for an individual's metabolic type. Metabolic typing is the process of balancing one's metabolism in an effort to establish efficiency of body and mind, resulting in an increase in energy, a better sense of well-being, diminished cravings and hunger, and with a focus on improving health.

The focus is on building health, with weight loss as a secondary component. Too many weight-loss diets focus only on the scale or on clothing size. Such a limited view can only result in temporary results, deprivation and may be deleterious to overall health. Focusing on health helps the individual implement lifelong changes that enhance well-being and ultimately result in weight loss. Once an individual's metabolic type is determined, specific foods and supplements are prescribed to enhance well-being and changes are made in macronutrient percentages (the amount of carbohydrate, protein and fat) to enhance weight loss.

Other overlooked components of weight gain are dietary allergens. Allergens can result in a craving for the offending food, thus resulting in overeating, and can result in water retention. It is a common pattern for many people to gain two to five pounds in a day or weekend and then spend the rest of the week trying to get rid of the weekend bloat and blaming themselves for their overindulgence. In most cases, that bloat is simply excess water that your body is hanging on to in an effort to dilute the inflammation of the tissues caused by dietary allergens.

It is very important to work with a nutritionist to achieve weight loss. A nutritionist can alter your metabolic typing results for your current state of health, dietary allergies, food sensitivities, health history and diet history, and sometimes include technical calculations to help you reach your goal weight.

From a physical perspective, an exercise program comprised of strength training and aerobics is essential in a weight-loss program. The strength training component is necessary to increase muscle mass. There is a simple rule of thumb, the more muscle tissue, the more calories burned at rest. Increasing muscle mass will increase resting metabolic rate over time. Two to three days of strength training per week are recommended. The aerobic component will help burn calories,

tone the cardiovascular system, enhance respiration and support well-being. Three days per week of aerobics are recommended.

From a psychological perspective, address aspects that trigger eating other than hunger. Sometimes people are comforted from their emotions by eating. Others may be hiding their emotions behind excessive consumption of unhealthy foods, actually using food as a type of emotional crutch. The key is to address these underlying issues and free yourself from their burden. Seeking counseling from an individual in the psychological sciences can be therapeutic and a great adjunct to your nutritional weight-loss program. Some find that joining a support group through a local religious center, community center or even starting one of their own results in a sharing environment and may make it easier to stay focused between visits with a nutritionist. Additionally, avoid self-punishment if you slip up. If you want to set negative consequences for inappropriate eating, you can request that if you stray from your meal plan that your family respond neutrally (make no comment). This might subliminally remind you that you are off of your path.

As you can see, the road to weight loss doesn't just begin with diet modification alone. A three step component of nutrition, exercise and addressing psychological aspects can result in improving your health and lead to lifelong weight control.