

WALKING AND WEIGHT LOSS

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WALKING AND WEIGHT LOSS

Three universal goals most of us share are: to live longer, to live free of illness and to control our weight. Interesting enough, normal walking lets us achieve all three. In fact, walking may be man's best medicine for slowing the aging process. First, it works almost every muscle in the body, improving circulation to the joints and massaging the blood vessels (keeping them more elastic). Walking also helps us maintain both our muscle mass and metabolism as we age. It also keeps us young in spirit. For anyone out of shape or unathletically inclined, walking is the no-stress, no-sweat answer to lifelong conditioning.

All it takes is a little time, common sense and a few guidelines. Unfortunately, there's a lot of misinformation floating around regarding fitness walking, weight-loss and dieting. Walking is one of the best exercise for strengthening bones, controlling weight, toning the leg muscles, maintaining good posture and improving positive self-concept. People who diet without exercising often get fatter with time. Although your weight may initially drop while dieting, such weight loss consists mostly of water and muscle. When the weight returns, it comes back as fat. To avoid getting fatter over time, increase your metabolism by exercising daily.

To lose weight, it's more important to walk for time than speed. Walking at a moderate pace yields longer workouts with less soreness - - leading to more miles and more calories spent on a regular basis.

High-intensity walks on alternate days help condition one's system. But in a waking, weight-loss program, it's better to be active every day. This doesn't require walking an hour every day. The key is leading an active life-style 365 days a year.

When it comes to good health and weight loss, exercise and diet are interrelated. Exercising without maintaining a balanced diet is no more beneficial than dieting while remaining inactive.

The national research council recommends eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Fruits and vegetables are the ideal diet foods for several reasons. They're relatively low in fat and calories, yet are often high in fiber and rich in essential vitamins and minerals. Remember that rapid weight-loss consists mostly of water and muscle - - the wrong kind of weight to lose. To avoid this, set more reasonable goals, such as one pound per week.

Carbohydrates are high-octane fuel. They provide energy for movement and help raise internal body metabolism. They're also satisfying. The key is not adding high-fat toppings to your carbohydrates.

It's everyday habits which define our weight and body composition. A three-minute walk after each meal is worth four pounds less body fat annually. Two flights of stairs a day burns off half a pound of body fat in a year. On the other hand, one candy bar eaten daily will cost you 20 pounds annually.