

## **Q.** Is there a secret way to losing weight so I don't regain it?

**A.** You understand the problem. Most people who lose weight on a diet regain it back within a year or less. The secret is this: diets don't work (long term). To lose weight and keep it off you need to change your way of eating and living for a lifetime. Here is what I mean:

### **You need to learn to like lower calorie foods.**

The two lowest calorie food groups are vegetables and fresh fruits. Make this the foundation of your eating. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) DASH Diet recommends eating 7-10 servings of a variety of fruits and vegetables daily. Eat more salads (careful with the dressing). Make vegetable soups, stir fry, and steamed veggies. Eat fresh fruit daily – oranges, apples, kiwi, grapefruit, berries, and melons. Make fruit salads for dessert and fruit plates for appetizers. Eat a fresh fruit 15-30 minutes before dinner to lessen your appetite. These foods are low in calories, tend to fill you up, and are promote health.

**Learn to enjoy physical activity daily** – walk briskly, ride a bike, do dance aerobics, garden, and participate in other physical activities that you enjoy. Aim for 30-60 minutes of physical activity daily (some may need 90 minutes daily). If you can't do that daily, then at least be active most days of the week. Research shows that people who exercise regularly after losing weight are the ones who are most likely to keep their lost weight off. If you walk briskly for 30-45 minutes daily you would expend enough energy to be equivalent to 20 pounds of fat yearly!

*Secret Ways*



*to Keep Off Weight*

**Whole grains are another secret.** Have steel-cut oats for breakfast, a wheat-berry bread sandwich for lunch, and brown rice for dinner.

Aim for at least 3 servings of whole grains daily. These high-fiber foods are absorbed more slowly than white bread, pastry, cookies, snack cakes, and snack crackers. Thus they help keep blood sugar levels in the normal range longer, helping you feel less hungry.

**Eat high-calorie foods (meats, cheese, fats, cheese cake, etc.) in small amounts, and not every day.**

Choose healthier, low-calorie protein foods such as beans, tofu, fish, skinless poultry, and vegetarian entrees. Not only are high-fat meats high in calories but they are also hard on the arteries and your heart.

**Eat restaurant food less often,** especially at fast food restaurants and buffets. Whether you dine in or take out, order a salad and then share an entrée with someone else.

**Watch other habits that can sabotage your long-term weight goal,** such as eating late at night, snacking during the day, skipping meals, using food as a reward, drinking soft drinks (at meals or any other time), eating most of your meals in front of the TV, or not getting enough sleep. All of these common habits contribute to the obesity epidemic in the United States.

By learning to eat more healthfully and be more physically active, you are developing a healthy lifestyle you can keep up for a lifetime. That's the real secret to maintaining a healthy weight for a lifetime.

