

FOCUS ON 5 Losing weight promotes healthy lifestyles

Ernie Medina Jr. is a preventative care specialist with Beaver Medical Group in Redlands. He specializes in areas of behavior change concerning lifestyle-related diseases, specifically focusing on exercise, nutrition, stress management and smoking cessation. He is also a clinical assistant professor at Loma Linda University and co-founder of a family fitness and wellness center in Loma Linda called Xrtainment Zone.

Medina tackles weight-loss issues in this week's Focus on 5.

What should I focus on when trying to lose weight?

Instead of looking at your total weight or even Body Mass Index, try and get your body fat analysis done. That way, you can monitor changes in your fat mass and fat free (lean) mass and know if you're heading in the right direction. If you can't have this done, monitoring your circumference measurements and clothing size can be an indicator of fat gain or loss.

How much exercise do I really need to lose excess body fat weight?

Most credible sources state that if your goal is to lose excess body fat and reach your goal body fat percentage, you need to be doing cardiovascular exercise for a minimum of five times a week, for a total of 50 minutes each time (I refer to this as my 5/50 rule). If you're just starting out, start out with just 5/10 or 5/15, but know that you'll eventually need to be up to 5/50 to reach your goal. And you don't have to do it all at once, you can break it up in the same. Doing strength training a couple of days a week is also important in helping you gain or maintain muscle and bone. Of course, be sure to get cleared by your primary-care physician before starting an exercise program.

How much should I eat?

A recent study on diets showed that it didn't really matter what kind of diet you did, as long as you ate less. You can make it more objective by getting your Basal Metabolic Rate number (our body fat machine calculates this number for our patients). The BMR is the

number of calories you burn just to stay alive, so eating at this level will allow you to lose fat and help you avoid the "starvation zone" - this is where you eat too few calories that your body thinks it's starving so it will start to save fat (a great storage form of fuel) and burn muscle (the tissue that burns up a lot of calories) to survive. Starving causes you to lose the wrong weight (muscle) and gain the wrong weight (fat).

Besides calories, should I watch anything else?

Yes. All calories are NOT created equal. I have seen patients who are eating the right number of calories, and yet they are stuck on a plateau, frustrated they have stopped dropping.

One cause of this is that they are eating too much of the wrong types of calories, so I encourage our patients to start screening everything that enters their mouth for these five "bad guys": white flour, white sugar, corn syrup/high fructose corn syrup, saturated fat and trans fat.

It's okay to have one or two items with one of these 5 Bad Guys, but not every item you eat should contain them, even if it's in the right portion size.

I don't like to exercise; what can I do?

Many people have "excuses" why they don't exercise. Fortunately, there are options now that can overcome just about every excuse.

It hurts? Try something in the pool or use a hand bike.

No time? Break it up into small chunks, or combine exercise with something else you plan to do (ie. Walk on treadmill while reading, bicycle to work).

Boring? Try some of the physically active video games like the Jillian Michael's workout or Bob Greene's workout (EASport Active, released on Tuesday), both for the Nintendo Wii. Or take a dance class.

Too expensive? There are plenty of low-cost things you can do. Walking is probably the least expensive thing out there. Make sure you at least have a good pair of walking or exercise shoes (and leave the hand and ankle weights at home). Throughout the day, use a pedometer to track your physical

activity and aim for 10,000 steps or more per day.

If you give yourself at least half the time it took for you to gain the weight, you'll reach your goal.

Most importantly, make these and other changes, not just to lose weight, but for all the other benefits that come with living a healthy lifestyle of eating right and being physically active and you'll benefit in all areas of you and your family's lives.

About the Author

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