

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Katie Gravesen, DC

Eat Smart for Healthy Weight This Year

Do you want to make 2017 the year you finally kiss excess weight goodbye? You're not alone — losing weight is one of the most common New Year's resolutions. With rates of obesity and related diseases skyrocketing and life expectancies dropping, it's a smart goal for many people. But it's not always easy to do in a sustainable way — by the end of January, most dieters are back to their old ways.

In a culture brimming with diets du jour, why can't we lose weight and keep it off? While several individual factors may be at play, many people give up because they feel overwhelmed by restrictive meal planning.

The trick is to start with dietary changes manageable enough to stick to for good. Dr. Gravesen has identified five basic recommendations, which research indicates can jumpstart you to a lifetime of healthy eating.

1. Check Your Motivation

What is your motivation for losing weight? People who focus solely on their appearance and clothing size often make choices that are counter-productive to overall well-being. This narrow focus leads to crash diets, "yo-yo" dieting, diet pills and pre-packaged foods that are high in additives and low in nutrients. All of which are detrimental to long-term health.

Instead, make achieving optimal wellness your primary motivation for losing weight. Focus on how your life will improve when you have more energy to engage in activities with friends and family. Also, imagine how a healthy weight will prevent disease,

increase longevity and boost quality of life.

Scientific studies show that maintaining a healthy weight wards off a vast array of disorders, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, dementia, erectile dysfunction, insomnia, sleep apnea and many more.

Excess weight also puts tremendous strain on the musculoskeletal system. Research links obesity to increased rates of osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint condition. Excess weight burdens weight-bearing joints like the knees, causing them to wear down faster. Obesity is also connected to decreased bone density, which leaves bones more susceptible to fracture.

In addition, the spine is less mobile when the body carries extra weight. This may trigger a condition known as **vertebral subluxation**. This common malady, which is associated a myriad of health problems, occurs when motion is restricted or spinal bones (vertebrae) become slightly misaligned.

Dr. Gravesen corrects vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**. However, it is key to prevent



vertebral subluxations from occurring in the first place. Maintaining a healthy weight will help you do just that.

2. Avoid Soda

There is one simple change that Dr. Gravesen cannot recommend highly enough — stop drinking soda and soft drinks! Clever marketing has made soda seem like a normal part of our diet, but it provides no nutritional benefit — and its calories add up swiftly.

A 20-ounce serving of soda contains an amazing 17 teaspoons of sugar. A daily soda adds up to 39 pounds of sugar over the course of a year. According to a 2009 report from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, adults who drink one sugary drink a day are 27 percent more likely to be overweight than those who indulge infrequently.

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Many sodas contain high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a manufactured sweetener.

A big reason to avoid HFCS is its surprising effect on weight gain. Several recent studies highlight the effect of fructose on weight gain, particularly in the abdomen.

Fructose is particular among sugars in its contribution to leptin resistance. Leptin, a hormone important in both appetite and metabolism, is produced in fat cells and becomes overabundant when the body has too much fat. The brain can become desensitized to leptin, which signals feelings of satiety (*Am J Physiol Endocrinol Metab* 2010;299:E685-94).

When this important aspect of appetite control malfunctions, a cycle of overeating and continuing weight gain becomes even more difficult to break (*Am J Physiol Regul Integr Comp Physiol* 2009;296:R493-500).

Although diet sodas do not contain sugar or HFCS, artificial sweeteners may not be diet-friendly, either. In addition to health risks too numerous to detail here, artificial sweeteners actually cause weight gain in animal studies (*Behav Neurosci* 2008;122:161-73).

A paper presented at the American Diabetes Association in San Diego notes that every daily serving of diet soda is associated with an astounding 41 percent increase in obesity.

3. Cut Down on Refined Carbs

The simple carbohydrates in white bread, pasta, white rice and commercial baked goods are greatly responsible for the pounds we continue to pack on. The reason for this is not just their high calorie counts.

The body converts dietary carbohy-

drates — especially the simple carbohydrates in sugar and refined white flour — into glucose, which moves through the bloodstream to fuel all cells throughout the body. Cells can also get energy from dietary fat, but the body defaults to the quickly available energy from glucose before burning fat.

When there is too much glucose in the bloodstream, the body converts it to fat. When the body has fewer carbohydrates to tap as a source of energy, it burns fat instead.

A meta-analysis of thirteen clinical trials compared the results of low-fat/low-calorie and low-carb diets. The research consistently shows that the low-carb dieters not only lost more weight, but also improved their cardiovascular health. They were more likely to stick to the regimen than their low-fat/low-calorie counterparts, suggesting that a low-carb diet is more sustainable for long-term weight loss (*Obes Rev* 2009;10:36-50).

However, it is essential to focus primarily on cutting out refined carbs, such as processed white flour, pasta and baked goods. On the other hand, do not avoid carbohydrates from nutrient- and fiber-rich whole foods, such as unprocessed whole grains, whole fruits and whole vegetables.

4. Don't Fear Fat

Grocery store shelves attest to our cultural obsession with low-fat and fat-free foods, but our collective weight does not speak well for their effectiveness. That's because contrary to what marketers would have us believe, a very low-fat diet does not lead to sustainable weight loss.

Multiple studies reveal that people who regularly consume natural, full-fat dairy products are less likely to gain weight than those who choose

low-fat or fat-free dairy. And they are significantly more likely to keep it off over the long-term (*Am J Clin Nutr* 2006;84:1481-88).

Think about enjoying a hunk of regular cheese versus “light” or fat-free cheese — which is more satisfying? Not only does the “real” cheese taste better, but its high fat content makes it more satiating. That's why higher fat consumption is associated with lower overall calorie consumption (*J Neurosci* 2010;30:8096-101).

A type of fat called medium-chain triglycerides — found in coconut and palm kernel oils — may even actively reduce body fat in overweight individuals, according to one study (*J Nutr* 2001;131:2853-9).

The secret is to focus on “healthy” fats. These include olive oil, naturally produced full-fat dairy products, raw unsalted nuts and avocados. On the other hand, avoid fried foods, processed meats, red meat and commercially produced baked goods.

5. Don't Go It Alone

Implementing dietary changes is not always easy. Our office can offer advice or point you to trusted local resources. We can help you make smart choices while meeting your body's nutritional needs. Make a commitment to achieving a healthy weight today. Call our office and schedule an appointment.

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