

SEVEN STEPS TO WELLNESS & WEIGHT LOSS

Trying to reach and maintain healthy habits usually includes some modifications in diet and exercise. Cutting back on portion sizes, eating less fat and working out at the gym a few times a week are all tried and true methods. But you've probably heard all these things before. Read on for some less known, yet important wellness strategies to help you on a path to health and wellness.

1. Set Goals

By setting clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set.

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective goals:

- State each goal as a positive statement: Express your goals positively – “I will have more energy to exercise” is a much better goal than “I will stop being lazy.”
- Be precise: Set a precise goal by putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it. “I will reduce my cigarettes in half in four weeks”.
- Set priorities: When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones. “I will stop drinking regular soda first and then later reduce my caffeine intake”.
- Write goals down: This crystallizes them and gives them more force. “My goal is to reduce my cholesterol”.
- Keep goals small: Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. “I will lose 4# per month” instead of “I need to lose 50 pounds”.

2. Manage Stress

Often, stress leads individuals to overeat or not eat at all – both undesirable situations. Examine the stressors in your life – they vary for everybody – and try to minimize them. Here are some proven ways to unwind:

- Breathe. Take a few time outs in your day to close your eyes and take a few deep, calming breaths.
- Move it. Try taking a daily walk, or sign up for a yoga class or swimming at the local pool or “Y.”
- Write it down. Taking a few moments out of the day to record your thoughts, frustrations, moods, and feelings can be a stress-relieving activity.

3. Eat Breakfast

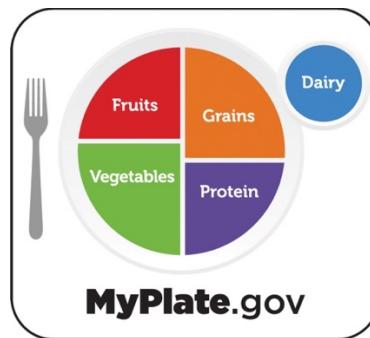
Be sure to “break the fast” every day with a balanced meal of protein (e.g., egg, beans, yogurt or low-fat cottage cheese) and carbohydrates (e.g. high-fiber cereal, whole grain toast or tortilla, oatmeal), plus a small touch of healthy fat (e.g. peanut butter, olive oil, avocado) to round it out and keep you full longer.

4. Get Enough ZZZs

Scientists have discovered a connection between sleep and hormones that regulate hunger and satiety. Ghrelin and leptin are two chemical messengers that work together in the body to control feelings of hunger and fullness. Ghrelin, produced in the gastrointestinal tract, stimulates appetite. Leptin, produced in fat cells, sends signals to the brain when you are full. In a recent study, researchers measured the number of hours a group of 1,000 volunteers slept each night, and then measured their levels of leptin and ghrelin, as well as their weight. Findings showed that those who slept less than eight hours a night had lower levels of leptin and higher levels of ghrelin. Those who slept the fewest hours each night weighed the most.

5. Transition Your Plate

The popularity of high-protein, low-carb diets have confused some people about weight-loss strategies. But research shows that a diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains can be a powerful tool in weight management as well as in combating chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. In addition, the fiber and water in plant foods make you feel satisfied without filling you up with calories. Visualize a dinner plate. Aim for meals made up of $\frac{1}{2}$ (or more) vegetables and fruits, $\frac{1}{4}$ plate whole grains or beans and $\frac{1}{4}$ animal or plant-based protein.



6. Step It Up

Finding time to work out at the gym is not always easy or practical. For many people, using a step-measuring pedometer can be a simple and inexpensive tool to track the steps you take during the day. Try adding 2,000 steps each day to the number that you usually take. For most people, this translates into about 10,000 steps daily. Aim for a total of 10,000 steps each day, a goal recommended by the American College of Sports Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pedometers can be purchased at sporting goods stores or look for apps on your phone to monitor steps.

7. Maintain Gains & Progress

Sustaining the health-promoting habits and behavior changes you have developed is sometimes the hardest part of the journey to lifelong wellness. If you have a small setback, don't be too hard on yourself. Realize your mistake or lapse in judgment and get right back on course! Keeping a small journal to document your short-term weight goals, activity logs, even a food diary is a proven tool to help stay on track. A few other tips to remember:

- Don't skip meals - otherwise fatigue or hunger may undermine your good intentions.
- Keep your fridge stocked with healthful snacks like raw veggies, fat free or low-fat yogurt and low-fat cheese sticks so they are there when you need them.
- Prepare portion-controlled bags of snacks like pretzels, nuts, dried fruits and low-fat crackers and rice cakes.