

## Success in Losing Weight

Have you noticed promotions claiming “Lose Your Belly Fat”; “Burn 500 Calories the Easy Way”; “Secrets to Being Slim”? All are designed to grab your attention to buy products or services. If losing weight is a multi-billion dollar industry, and our population is getting fatter, then what is being offered isn’t working. Success in losing weight is dependent on a combination of emotional, physical, and mental factors.

Exercise and nutrition are key in achieving your goals. In order to lose weight and keep it off for a lifetime it is vital to develop routines or habits that focus on lifestyle changes.

I am often asked, “Can I lose weight with walking?” or am told, “I need to run to lose weight.” My answer is, you can stride towards weight loss with walking as your exercise component. If your intention is to lose weight, are you ready to implement changes in your lifestyle to begin an exercise program that can improve your health and the quality of your life beginning today?

### Here are eight tips to ponder:

1. Know and accept where you are. What is your current health status? Fitness status? It is important to work with what you have and where you are today. The past doesn’t matter. Each day is a new beginning.
2. Plan to succeed. Preparing for changes is often overlooked. What do you need to have in place to support your efforts?
  - A. Nutrition: Do you need to revamp your kitchen? Find recipes that will work for you? Bring in more fruits and vegetables? Rediscover whole grains, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds? Begin by eliminating or minimizing processed foods.
  - B. Exercise: Do you need child care? How about setting up a buddy system for accountability or to share in the fun? Do you have the

right clothing and footwear?

- C. Plan: Do you have a training plan? A plan is your road map for achieving your goal. You can work with a coach, take advantage of free plans on the Internet, or devise your own. This plan should contain what you are doing each day.
3. Healthy Eating. Your body requires food for fuel as well as to restore general health and well-being. Healthy eating consists of whole foods, not processed. These foods provide the nutrients needed to be healthy. A cross-section of foods is vegetables, fruits, beans and peas, nuts and seeds, and whole grains loaded with phytochemicals, nutrients, fiber, and macronutrients, with all the protein you need.
  4. Be consistent with your activity and nutrition changes. Small changes make a difference with repetition. It’s simple, and you have heard it before, but keep in mind that you need to eat fewer calories than you are burning to lose weight.
    - A. It takes a 3500 kcal deficit to burn off one pound of fat. It takes walking the entire length of a football field to burn one M&M chocolate candy.
    - B. Americans, on average, consume 450 kcal of sugar a day. This is the equivalent of needing to walk or run 4.5 miles to burn off the extra calories to maintain your weight, not lose it.
  5. Have variety in your walking program. Incorporate a warm-up and cool-down into your walking routine. A simple three- to five-minute warm-up routine to slowly raise your heart rate and gently stretch your muscles can significantly reduce the danger of injury during exercise. Start by walking in place, to loosen your hips and increase blood flow to your muscles and joints. Breathing deeply and easily, incorporate some gentle arm swings and

shoulder rolls to help relax your upper body. WALK your plan! Do a cool-down, usually consisting of easy walking and stretches.

6. Challenge yourself. Push your boundaries. Learn to get used to being uncomfortable. The body adapts to doing the same routine or route the same way day after day.
7. Adding strength training can help increase muscle fiber, which can, in turn, increase metabolism.
8. Be clear whether you are training to go a distance or training to lose weight. Too often marathon training is targeted as a tool for losing weight. Long-distance events require adequate nutrition and lots of exercise. Choose a shorter distance for a motivator to keep you moving.

Although you may take walking for granted, it can be one of the most profound activities of your life. Walking is a vital activity, good for body and spirit. In addition to exercising your heart, muscles, and joints, walking can relax, energize, improve moods and self-esteem, reduce the stress of everyday lives, and help you lose weight. It opens us to the fluid rhythms of breath and movement, to our inner world of sensation, to a greater awareness of the world around us.

Each step is a new adventure — to discover new aspects about yourself and the world as you move through this journey of space and time. Each step is an opportunity to return home to your inner self and to experience the miracle of your existence here and now, wherever you may be in your journey.

You may walk for many reasons: to get some place, to stay fit, to become fit, to relax, to explore, to enjoy your surroundings, to escape, to ponder, to achieve a goal, or for a new experience. Sometimes you may walk for no other reason than “why not walk?” **WA**



Judy Heller, founder of Wonders of Walking LLC, advocates walking for well being and pleasure. Judy Heller is also founder of EroFit & Associates, LLC, celebrating Fitness for a Lifetime. Heller offers personalized fitness training and coaching for individuals and groups.

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