



## Choosing The Proper Diet And Exercise Program

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Home Page

Cover Article

Reflections

Business  
Spotlight

Been There  
Now What

Laughing  
at Life

Gourmet  
Cooking

Kids Crafts  
& Puzzles

Health  
& Fitness

Men's Issues

Places Of  
Worship

Monthly  
Meetings

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By Mail

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Losing weight has major health benefits. You decrease your risk of getting many diseases, including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer and type-2 diabetes.

According to the recently revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans, building your diet around a foundation of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lowfat dairy can help you lose weight.

Despite the recommendations, most dieters want a quick fix.

“To make the dieting process easier, some people follow the latest fad diet,” says Liz Vargo, Professor of Nutrition and Director of the Dietetics Technician Program at Community College of Allegheny County. “These diets are geared to trick the metabolism. It gives you a jump start by manipulating the metabolism, but only for the short term.”

Dr. Bridget Chufo, President and Founder of Healthy Performance, agrees. “Most of these programs can’t be followed for the rest of your life and the weight comes back.”

Instead of trying to choose among the many fad diets out there, focus on a smart weight loss plan, which should have you losing no more than two pounds each week.

“If you lose a lot it’s not healthy,” says dietician Kate Hanna from Gibsonia who is a consultant for Sugar Creek Rest and the Chicora Medical Center in Butler County. “It’s easier to gain that weight back if you lose it all at once. You have a better chance of keeping off the weight if you do it slowly.”

To control your weight permanently, we offer these tips:

Exercise daily. Working out can be simple, like walking at a fast speed for 30 minutes. “Even the little things you do in your daily regimen helps, like taking the steps at work instead of the elevator,” says Hanna.

Plan your eating. “Look ahead at what you’re going to eat because if you don’t, you’ll grab the closest thing you could find and most often they’re not likely to be healthy choices,” says Chufo.

Eat smaller portions. Portion control is the best way to diet says Hanna. “You don’t have to totally eliminate sweets,” she says. “Just know that you need to eat smaller portions of the variety of foods you consume.”

Eat healthier. “Overdose on vegetables, fruits and lean protein such as fish and chicken,” says Chufo. She cautions against these five food groups: starches (breads, pasta, rice, cereal and potatoes), dairy products (especially cheese), salt, sugar and fat.

“If you have to eat any of these five food groups, eat them in small amounts,” she adds.

Vargo adds, “Always read the labels on anything you buy and consume the foods that are nutrient-dense. For instance, when you look at milk and soft drinks, you see right away that milk offers more vitamins and minerals.”

Avoid fast food and be wary of restaurants. If you have to eat out, Hanna says to opt for the low-fat meals.

Better yet, fill up before you go, says Chufo. "If you're  $\frac{3}{4}$  full before you go to a party or to a restaurant, you won't eat as much. And don't look at the menu – the foods and the photos are tempting – just ask the waiter for grilled chicken or fish with vegetables."

Drink plenty of water. "Ninety percent of us are running around dehydrated," says Chufo. "Think of your body organs as grapes. If they are dehydrated, they'll become like prunes. Water makes your organs function more effectively." She recommends drinking at least half of your body weight in fluid ounces because it fills you up, helps eliminate fat and it is also great for your skin, nails and hair. For instance, if you weigh 130 pounds, you should drink 65 ounces of water per day (eight 8-ounce glasses).

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