

# Lose weight - and keep it off



Losing weight is hard enough. Keeping it off is even harder. Only 20 per cent of us manage to lose it and keep it off. But though difficult, it's not impossible, say the authors of a new report in the latest *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Researchers looked at a group of about 4000 people on a US database called the National Weight Control Registry. Volunteers of the registry had to provide information about their peak weight and then how much weight they'd lost. It was required that they have lost at least 10 per cent of their body weight and have kept it off for at least a year.

In practice most of the subjects were more successful than this – on average losing a whopping 33 kilograms - and going from a body mass index of 37.6 to 25.1. And on average they kept it off for more than five years.

### How they did it

- Exercise. Most did an hour of moderate intensity exercise per day. Three-quarters did brisk walking; the rest did cycling, aerobics or weightlifting.

- They ate a low fat, low kilojoule diet. On average, they consumed about 7,500 kilojoules (1800 calories) a day. (Compare this to the average Australian daily intake of 13,800 kilojoules or 3,300 calories). They achieved this by limiting the volume of food and drink they consumed overall, by counting kilojoules and by restricting their intake of high-kilojoule foods. On average, 24 per cent of their energy intake was from fats. And they avoided fast food - eating less than one such meal a week.

- Most ate breakfast daily (usually fruit and cereal). Why was this important? The researchers think it stopped them binge eating later in the day.

- They weighed themselves regularly – 44 per cent weighed themselves daily and 31 per cent weekly. This allowed them to detect small gains and take action early when success was more likely.

- They maintained a consistent eating pattern – varying it little, even on weekends or holidays. Those who were less strict about their regimen on weekends and holidays tended to put weight back on.

The people who kept their weight down most successfully were disciplined, had good self esteem, and didn't suffer from depression. Most sought the help of a nutritionist, GP or a weight loss program to help maintain their weight.

The more weight they lost, and longer they managed to keep their weight down, the easier it became to keep it down in later years. After two to five years staying on track, the chance of longer-term success increased greatly.

Source: ABC Online

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