

Looking for the best way to lose fat?

We can help!

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Well this is a commonly asked question in the wellness world. The short easy answer is that one way isn't any better than another... most of the time. Keep reading for the long, more complex answer.

There are several aspects to fat loss: nutrition, activity level, sleep habits, stress levels, some medical conditions and medications. Everybody will respond differently to a wellness program and may need more assistance in one aspect than another. We do have some general principles that are more effective and safer than others and they work well for the majority of the population.

Activity Level: Activities and exercises that incorporate many muscle groups and are weight bearing activities use more calories per minute and are therefore better suited for fat loss than non-weight-bearing activities that do not use as many of the large muscle groups. As well, circuit style and interval workouts where we are constantly working some aspect of the body and maintaining an elevated heart rate are more successful at burning calories than steady state activities and



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workouts with too much rest time built into them. We also know that heavier strength training exercises increase the metabolic rate (the calorie furnace) of muscle higher and for longer periods of time than lighter higher repetition weight training programs. A combination of cardiovascular and strength training results in more fat loss than either exercise regimen alone (*Dolezal & Potteiger 1998*), possibly because individuals who perform both activities spend more time exercising. Lastly, getting daily activity periods of 30 to 60 minutes is ideal for weight loss as opposed to the longer workouts every third or fourth day and you will likely experience less muscle soreness from daily activity.

Nutrition: I am not a dietician but there are, again, some widely accepted general principles that we try to pass on to individuals struggling with weight management. Firstly, use **Canada's Food Guide** and you will be on the right track in no time. The most important thing to remember when using the Guide, or counting calories for any program, is to pay attention to portion sizes. We hear so often "I eat really healthy food" but what people often forget is that healthy food has calories too. It's a matter of doing the math: total calories in has to be slightly less than total calories used to lose weight. Most often water intake is not adequate. Yes, you can drink too much water but most of us

wouldn't get close to that and more often than not we aren't drinking enough. Water helps to curb hunger, balance out electrolytes, assist with digestion, increase energy levels, reduces headaches and more. Another aspect of nutrition where folks often go wrong is not eating often enough. We think that skipping breakfast or lunch is a great idea since we would take in fewer calories over the day. What happens is that our metabolism actually slows down since it isn't getting regular fuel, kind of like a wood stove. Then later in the day we shovel lots of fuel into our body to make up for the shortage earlier in the day, like we would to get our home warm with our wood stove. This excess food we eat later in the day is often stuff we can grab quickly, high calorie and less healthy. We need to eat something every 2 to 3 hours – it's what we choose to eat this often that makes the difference. Remember, total calories in must be equal to total calories out to maintain our body weight. To lose weight, total calories out must be slightly less.

Sleep Habits: It has been shown time and again that getting adequate sleep at night assists with weight management. Getting to bed early enough and sleeping

long enough – 6 to 8 hours for typical adults – helps us stay active, make smart eating choices and let's our bodies rest and repair so we can keep up our fitness routines.

Stress Levels: It has also been shown that decreased stress levels helps keep our weight in check. We often make poor food choices and just plain over eat when under higher stress levels. Many folks use exercise to decrease stress levels to prevent those poor eating choices and reap the rewards of calories burned from the workout, killing two birds with one stone. Work on good coping skills and decreasing stress levels to help maintain body weight.

Medical Conditions and Medications: This area would be the furthest from my area of expertise and is best discussed with your physician. Just know that there are conditions (i.e., thyroid) and medications (i.e., steroids) that can contribute to either weight gain or weight loss. If you are doing everything routinely and you experience unusual changes in body weight or are honestly doing everything you can to lose weight sensibly and nothing is happening then you may need to see your doctor for some advice.



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