

may lead to the desire to quit. Instead, increase your exercise level in the stages described below. It is also important to make sure your exercise plan suits your lifestyle. For example, if you are a morning person, select that time to exercise.

And remember that sedentary people over the age of 50 should consult their doctor before starting any vigorous exercise program.

1. Increase your amount of everyday physical activity. Look for ways to add physical activity into your lifestyle: For example, walk rather than drive, or take the stairs rather than an elevator or escalator. When doing errands or shopping, park some distance from your destination and walk the rest of the way.

2. Add a formal walking program. Walking is appealing because it can be done anywhere, requires no special equipment (other than a supportive pair of shoes), and almost anyone can do it. Set your own pace: You expend approximately the same number of calories during an hour of slow walking as in half an hour of brisk walking. Start by walking for half an hour, three times a week. Once you become comfortable with this level of activity, walk for the same length of time five days a week. Next, gradually increase the duration of your walking to 40 minutes, then 50 minutes, and ultimately 1 hour. As you become more physically fit, you will be able to walk faster and go farther—and thus burn more calories in a given period of time.

3. Vary your activities. If you enjoy walking, make it the foundation of your exercise program. To prevent boredom, and also to work different muscle groups, choose other activities to substitute for walking on some days. Good choices include aerobic dance classes, bicycling, line dancing, or swimming. The most important rule, however, is to engage in activities that are enjoyable and convenient to do regularly.

4. Start a weight-training program. Working a muscle against resistance increases muscle size and strength. Because muscle takes up about 20% less space than fat, building muscle results in a leaner physique. In addition, having more muscle increases your metabolism, because it requires more energy to maintain muscle than fat tissue. (For more on strength training, see the feature on pages 38–39.)

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL TREATMENTS FOR OBESITY

Because the following treatments can be demanding for the patient and carry the risk of adverse side effects, they are appropriate only for people who are severely obese—especially those with, or at

NEW RESEARCH

Large, Low-Calorie Salads Can Aid in Weight Loss

Eating a large salad before a main course can decrease the overall amount of calories a person consumes, a new study finds, but only if the salad is low in calories.

The study included 42 healthy women between the ages of 19 and 45 who ate one study lunch a week. The lunch was served with no salad or started with a salad that was low, medium, or high in calorie density, depending on the type of salad dressing and cheese used. Small and large versions of each were tested, and participants were required to eat the entire salad. The main course of pasta was always the same, but participants weren't required to finish their serving.

Compared with no salad, eating a low-calorie salad decreased overall calorie intake at the meal—by 7% for the small version of this salad and 12% for the large. Eating a calorie-dense salad increased energy intake—by 8% for the small salad and 17% for the large.

The study authors conclude that eating less is not always the best strategy when it comes to weight loss.

They recommend that when dieters prepare salad as a first course, they use plenty of vegetables and keep the overall calorie count to about 100.

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