

Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

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Hi Everyone!

Many of us believe that gaining weight throughout our adult lives is a natural occurrence. Some people start their adult life being a size 10 and end up at age 50 being size 20, believing that this is to be expected ("a fact of life"). In reality the Cancer Council cautions people to limit weight gain to a maximum of 5 kgs throughout their adult life. Those of us who make it to 100 years of age or more have usually maintained a healthy weight range throughout their lives.

The consequences of being overweight are many, including increased risk of heart disease, type II diabetes, arthritis (especially of the knee joint), kidney disease, developing a range of cancers and depression.

The reasons for excess weight gain are lifestyle choices and in Australia we are offered many choices. Most of us have motor vehicles and seldom walk anywhere. We have choices of many fast/convenient, processed foods that are affordable and fit in with our busy lifestyles. We are working longer hours, which leave less time for exercise and food preparation. More people are turning to electronic devices for entertainment such as computer games and the Internet, rather than taking up more energetic activities.

If your waistline is larger now than it was 5 or 10 years ago perhaps you should start to make some sustainable healthy lifestyle changes. Going on a fad diet will not work in the long term, as when you return to your original lifestyle the excess weight will return. Any changes you make need to be permanent and practical. A few simple steps are:

- **Keep physically active.** *Try wearing a pedometer for a few days and see just how active you are. The average person needs a minimum of 7000 steps a day to maintain their weight. To lose weight we need more than this.*
- **Check food labels for fat and sugar content.** *Many foods that appear "innocent" have an enormous amount of calories in their fat or sugar content. We only need about 30 grams of fat a day. Try adding up the grams of fat you consume over a 24 hour period.*
- **Choose low glycemic foods.** *A recent study at the University of Sydney trialing various diets in low carbs/high protein, high carbs/low fat, showed that choosing foods with low glycemic index (GI) doubled the rate of fat loss. Their overall finding was that there is no "one fits all" diet however a high carbohydrate/low GI diet was generally the most effective for fat loss. Low GI foods reduce hunger so you will need to eat less. Diets based on low GI foods and whole grain products tend to be better for the heart too!*
- **Limit soft drink and juices.** *These are usually consumed in addition to food rather than as replacements. Many are very high in calories and therefore add significant calorie intake. Water is the best drink and keeping well hydrated helps keep the metabolic rate elevated.*

And, of course, try and attend as many exercise classes as possible.

Yours in health,

Jeni