

# Fit for Life

*A guide to losing weight and keeping it off*

This is my formula for losing weight, keeping it off, and having a healthier body! Follow the steps outlined below to help you regain the body you know is hiding in there, somewhere! And do it all without giving up the food you love or starving yourself!

Remember - this is my formula, and I'm not a doctor or trainer or anything - just a regular person, trying to stay healthy. *Always check with your doctor before starting any fitness or diet program!*

Good luck, and happy losing!

## Lifestyle Change

Recognize that what you are doing is making a lifestyle change, and commit yourself to sticking with it. The things in this guide are not short-lived. If you want to be healthier, you need to make some changes in the way you look at life, food, and exercise. Be realistic and be honest about it. Take good care of your body and it will take good care of you for years to come!

## Realistic Weight Loss Goals

Don't set yourself up for failure, or you'll never have the motivation you need! Aim for 1-2 lbs a week, *after the first two months*. Don't expect to lose any weight before that. While you may, there is also a good chance you will gain some weight during this initial time frame. Remember that this isn't a bad thing, as long as you're doing everything right! Muscle weighs more than fat, and as you exercise you will start building muscle in addition to burning fat. This means that while you may lose 5 lbs of fat during the first few months, you may gain 7 or 8 lbs of muscle, so you'll see your weight go UP 2-3 lbs instead of down. It will take some time for your body to build up the muscle you will require to keep up with your exercise increase. So expect to see your weight either remain steady or go up during the first several weeks. **\*IMPORTANT\*** *Don't give up or get discouraged when this happens!* Give yourself at least 6 months of consistent exercise and you'll be VERY pleased with the results!

## Share Your Goals

Make it known that you are trying to lose weight and become healthier in general. This is something that a large majority of people want to do, and they will be supportive of you. When people know what you're working for, they will encourage you and notice changes you are making. It feels good to have support, especially if things get rough. And it's great to have someone to celebrate with when things are going well!

## **Be accountable to someone**

It's a lot harder to justify missing your exercise for the day if you know you have someone to report to. Call a friend or a relative and ask them if you can report to them once a week on how you did meeting your goals. Join a group of people striving for the same goals in weight loss. Or if you feel like you need some extra help in this area, you can hire someone (a personal trainer, basically) to hold you accountable. But remember - if the only person to whom you have to explain why you didn't work out today is you, there will be very little motivation to keep you going. It's a lot easier to let yourself down than someone else.

## **Eat Right**

This is probably one of the most important things you can do for yourself. If you don't already, start eating a balanced diet. Get your fruits and veggies every day! Don't eat too many sweets, and don't eat more food than your body needs. Make sure you are getting enough protein and calcium. Don't run out and start on a crash diet - that isn't going to solve anything. You're going for a balanced diet that will allow you to eat what you like, while still meeting your fitness goals. If you find yourself eating more food than you need or more sweets than you really should, do an extra exercise session. It will help burn off some of the extra calories you ate, and it will also drive home the idea that you need to be aware of what and how much you are eating.

## **Drink Enough Water**

Water is essential to your body, and you don't want to become dehydrated while you are exercising. Make sure you drink when you are thirsty. Aim for at least 64 oz a day of water intake - more if you feel you need it. If you're working out 60+ minutes a day, you may want an extra 16 oz or more. Water will also help you eat less. Amazingly enough, sometimes your body can't tell the difference between hunger and thirst! So if you're feeling hungry and it isn't time to eat, try having a glass of water first. Of course, don't try to suppress hunger by drinking water, but do give yourself a chance to quench your thirst before you feed it! If water tastes bad to you, there are a few different things you can try: 1) drink it cold, 2) drink it warm (room temperature), or 3) drink flavored water (they make that stuff now). Also, I find that having water available (in a water bottle or cup) wherever I am makes it easier to drink. If it's no (or very little) work to get the water, I drink more.

## **Rest For The Weary**

You will be amazed how much better you will feel if you are getting adequate sleep at night. And your body will thank you for the rest. You will feel better emotionally and physically if you have a combination of healthy eating, adequate sleep, and daily exercise. It boosts your energy which will make your workout that much easier!

## Realistic Exercise Goals

Don't expect that by doing 20 minutes of exercise 3 times a week that you'll be able to lose that extra 20 lbs - for most of us, that just isn't going to happen. Your body needs to burn about 3500 calories to lose just 1 lb of fat. Figure out how much time you want to exercise every day to reach your health goals. Consider this: In my daily 90 minutes of riding on my exercise bike, I burn roughly 1500 calories. Nowhere near what I need to burn to lose 1 lb! This is why you're going to need to set some realistic goals. If you want to maintain the weight you are at, working out 30-60 minutes a day will be sufficient. However, if your goal is to lose weight, you've got to step that up to 60-90 minutes a day! I know, it sounds like a lot, and it is. But it is worth it if it means you can lose an extra 35 lbs in 8 months, without any extreme and (potentially) unsafe methods!

## Make Time for the Workout

Maybe you've decided that 60 minutes a day, 5 days a week, will help you reach your goals. That's great! But if you don't make time in your schedule for that 60 minutes of work-out time, you won't get it done. I have found that for me, working out in the morning, before anyone else in the house is up, works best. That way I know I won't have any interruptions. The phone doesn't ring, the kids don't need to be fed or changed or taken to and from school. I don't have to worry about getting dinner on. And best of all, it doesn't take away from the time I would normally spend with my children or my husband. So I get up 2 hours before my kids wake up - this gives me time for a 90 minute workout and then I also have time to shower (believe me - you'll want to build in time for this) before I start my non-stop day. Sure, I'm losing a little sleep in the mornings, but I make up for this by going to bed a little earlier. And really, a little less sleep or an earlier bedtime is a small price to pay to reach my fitness goals. And I know that once I reach my weight goal, I'll be able to take the exercise down a notch and I'll get a little more sleep each morning! Maybe mornings won't work for you, but you do need to find some time in your day that you can set aside just for YOU. Do your workout. And don't feel like you have to do it all at once - three 30 minute sessions are just as good as one 90 minute session. Just get the time in there.

## Work Smart, Not Hard

I'm a fan of this in all aspects of my life, but especially in exercise. If you want to make the most of your exercise time by losing as much weight as possible, you need to exercise in your target heart rate. This can be calculated by taking 220 minus your age, then multiplying that by .65 (for the low end) and .75 (for the high end). This is your target heart rate for weight loss, meaning this is the range where your heart rate should be while you are working out with a goal to lose weight. Don't push your heart rate up above the high end of that while you're trying to lose weight. Want to know a good way to find your heart rate? Stop exercising for a sec, take your pulse for 10 seconds, then multiply that number by 6. It should be in the range you have figured. Want an easier way? Buy a heart rate monitor. I bought one at Target (it's a wrist watch) for about \$40. Check your pulse at different stages in your workout. I have to work harder at the end of my workout to get my heart rate up where it should be than I do at the beginning.

## **Find Something To Do While You Work Out!**

I've found that while I exercise, it is a lot easier to pass the time if I have something to do. I watch TV, read a book, or listen to a podcast while I work out, and the time seems to pass so much faster when I do this! Try finding a friend to work out with you or find something you enjoy doing that can keep your attention. If you're not focused on how hard it is to keep exercising for 90 minutes and how much you'd rather be sleeping, it will be a lot easier to get it done! And if you are doing something you look forward to while you're working out, it will help motivate you to get out there and do it in the first place.

## **Find Exercise That Works For You**

While you don't want your exercise to be particularly easy, you also don't want it to be painful. I choose to ride an exercise bike for a few reasons: 1) running gives me pain in my legs and knees, 2) I work out early in the morning and don't want to freeze or get mugged outside, and 3) it allows me to do something else (read or watch TV) while I'm working out since I don't have to watch where I'm going. Find something you can enjoy (as much as you can enjoy working out) and stick with it. If you can't stand doing it, you likely won't keep it up for long.

## **Track Your Work**

You're doing a lot, after all, and if you don't write it down, you may not remember at the end of the day whether or not you met your goals for healthy eating, drinking water, and exercise. And you will also find that if you track what you are eating and when, you may notice some bad habits that could be improved. For instance, once I started tracking what I was eating, I noticed that the more bread (homemade white bread.... mmmmm, yummy) I sliced and put on the table, the more bread and butter I ate at dinner. Also, once I started writing down what I was eating I was more conscious of how many helpings I would allow myself. Instead of 5 helpings of spaghetti, I toned it down to more like 1 1/2. It's emotionally a lot easier for me to write 1 1/2 helpings of spaghetti than 5! (And just so you know - I don't eat that much of everything, but I do happen to really really REALLY like spaghetti.)

## **Measure Success**

What good will it do if you have no idea what progress you have made? It is easy to become discouraged if you don't know where you started and where you are now. Take stock of yourself on a regular basis. See how your clothes are fitting. Step on the scale (though remember that at first this isn't a good indicator of how you're doing). And write it down! If you don't write it down, you'll have to guess, and your memory isn't as good as you want it to be! Since your progress isn't going to be huge over short periods of time, you'll want to give yourself a way to look back and see what you have accomplished.

## **Reward Yourself**

Set mini-goals and as you reach them, reward yourself! Just be careful that your reward isn't counter-productive (going out to dinner may not be the best way to celebrate losing 5 lbs). Make it something you'll be able to look forward to - something you can use to motivate yourself when it gets hard to keep working out and eating right! You've worked hard and you deserve to celebrate when you make progress.

## **Keep The End In Sight**

Remember the reason you are doing all this exercise and eating less junk! There is a purpose, and while it may be hard to feel motivated to do things on a daily basis, your end goal is weight loss and better health overall. And that is worthwhile, and will prolong your life and improve the time you have! And THAT is an end worth working for!

Good luck in your weight loss efforts. If I can do this, I know you can! Take it from someone who has "been there, done that" and just get out there and do it! You'll be glad you did.