

Healthy Weight Management Diets Don't Work!

- Emphasize a **Healthy Ideal** versus an Appearance Ideal. Consider why you want to lose weight: Is it for the formal next month? Or the beach this summer? Dieting can actually lead to weight gain! Why? Weight anxiety and dieting predict later binge eating, as well as weight gain. Research shows that girls who labeled themselves as dieters in early adolescence were three times more likely to become overweight over the next four years.¹ Another study found that adolescent girls who dieted frequently were 12 times more likely than non-dieters to binge two years later.²
- Dieting is *stressful*: Calorie restriction produces stress hormones, which act on fat cells to increase the amount of abdominal fat. Such fat is associated with medical problems like diabetes and heart disease, regardless of overall weight.
- Diets don't work as they encourage restriction. Metabolic suppression is one of several powerful tools that the brain uses to keep the body within a certain weight range, called the set point. The range, which varies from person to person, is determined by genes and life experience. When dieters' weight drops below it, they not only burn fewer calories but also produce more hunger-inducing hormones and find eating more rewarding.
- Avoid fad diets which promote rapid weight loss. In reality, one loses more lean muscle mass and water than they do body fat. Most people regain the weight very quickly when they return to a more typical diet. Gradual weight loss resulting from small changes in lifestyle and eating habits is much more likely to result in healthy and sustainable weight loss.
- Instead of dieting, begin a healthy eating plan, practice mindful eating—paying attention to the signals of hunger and fullness without judgement. (More info on mindful eating on separate link.)
- Direct your energy to establishing daily exercise habits (and perhaps meditation.) The best types of exercise are those that you enjoy, increasing the likelihood of engaging in it regularly. Shoot for 30-60 minutes of exercise, 4-6 times per week. This physical activity should be intense enough to make you sweat and breathe heavy.
- Be more physically active in your daily life. Opt to park further away and take the stairs whenever you have the chance.
- Be aware of the calories you are consuming in liquids such as soda, juice and alcohol. Whole fruits are a better alternative to juices even if you are choosing those with "no sugar added" Water is still the best choice for quenching your thirst.
- Watch your portion sizes. Read the label to determine what a portion size is on packaged foods.
- Enjoy food more while worrying about it less.

¹Stice, E., et al. (1999). Naturalistic weight-reduction efforts prospectively predict growth in relative weight and onset of obesity among female adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67(6), 967-974.

²Field A., et al (2003). Relation Between Dieting and Weight Change Among Preadolescents and Adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 112(4),900-906

