

Weight Loss Maintenance

Losing weight is one thing. Stopping it from coming back on is another. In fact, preventing regain may be the single most important factor in long-term weight loss.

According to Professor Tim Wadden of the University of Pennsylvania, there are four potential causes of weight regain after significant weight loss. These are:

1. Compensatory changes in metabolic rate;
2. Non adherence to a diet and exercise program;
3. Living in a 'toxic' or 'obesogenic' environment (with high fat take-aways and sophisticated technology); and
4. The adverse behavioural effects of dieting (in particular hunger, binge eating, rigid perfectionist thinking and depression).

Mechanisms of regain

The rebound effect of greater weight gain after a big loss appears to be the body's defence against possible future periods of starvation. It probably occurs as a result of physiological changes in appetite mechanisms and metabolism, but what signals the brain to stimulate these mechanisms is not clear.

According to Dr Wadden, techniques aimed at overcoming regain and improving maintenance include:

1. Maintaining physical activity at a rate of 1500-2500 Cals per week (i.e. the equivalent of walking roughly 3-4km (or 7,5000 steps per day - but not necessarily all at once.)
2. Losing weight slowly. Slow weight loss, in contrast to sudden losses do not seem to cause the same 'bounce back' phenomenon.
3. Continuing to eat a low fat/low total energy diet.
4. Monitoring food intake, such as through a daily food diary, and
5. Learning techniques of dealing with periods of stress, particularly where this is a stimulant to over-eating.

In some cases it may be just as important for you to maintain weight at a higher than desirable level, than it is to try to reduce it against all the odds. This makes it easier to do. In any case, if you 'fall off the wagon', this is not a tragedy. You can get back on at any time. Because remember, if you don't, you'll wind up putting on even more fat.

For more information on healthy lifestyles and achieving a healthy weight go to www.lifestylemedicine.net.au
OR email: info@lifestylemedicine.net.au