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Want to lose weight? How about keeping a food diary?

posted by **richie garard** for **fitness** - thu, 12 may 2011 10:10

Did you know that what you eat accounts for **60-70%** of your weight loss success? That's why keeping a food diary is a great tool for helping you reach your health and fitness goals. Recording your food intake for a period of 4 to 6 weeks is one of the best strategies to implement if you are serious about losing weight and adopting a healthy lifestyle. It takes discipline and motivation, but here are some key reasons why keeping a food diary is an important part of your weight loss strategy.

Awareness - A food diary promotes awareness of what, how much and why you eat. By being more aware of your food choices and portion sizes, you can develop a better understanding of the emotions and behaviours that trigger over eating, as well as the opportunities to improve or make positive changes.

Reinforces your commitment - Every time you record your consumption, you are strengthening your focus and taking a step towards reaching your goal. This not only helps to improve your motivation, but also promotes continuous improvement. Balance - Keeping a food diary can take your focus away from dieting and deprivation, and instead, focused on making healthy and sustainable food choices. By doing so, you can improve the balance of your meals to make sure that you're consuming enough of the right foods to ensure good health and wellbeing.

Controls binge eating and calorie intake - The added accountability of having to write down exactly what you eat and drink can encourage mindful eating, while at the same time, deter binge eating situations. This forces you to think about the circumstances and triggers of when you are most likely to over eat, and instead, helps you to focus on what and why you're eating.

Food diaries often get thrown into the 'too hard' basket. Here are five great tips to make sure you have the best chance of success:

- Do what works for you** - The most important thing to remember when creating and recording your food diary is to do what works for you, and use a format that allows you to easily and consistently update and record your meals. The basic recordings are your food, time of meal, portion size and mood. However, you can be as detailed or as simple as you want to be as long as you do it daily.
- Don't cheat! Be honest with your recordings** - You cannot have an accurate picture of what you consume if you're not honest with yourself. Furthermore, this defeats the purpose of the exercise. Being honest in your recordings and measurements is the only way that you can make improvements in your food choices. Understand that slips-ups are normal and there is nothing to be ashamed of.
- Record your food as soon as you consume it** - Instead of waiting until the end of the day to record what you ate and drank, make it a habit to record it straight away. You will save yourself time, improve the accuracy of your recordings, as well as

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eliminate the hassle of trying to remember everything you ate throughout the day.

4. Measure your portion sizes - Measuring your portion sizes will assist in the accuracy of your recordings. It will also give you a better understanding of what a recommended portion size is which will raise your awareness and deter future possibilities of over eating.

5. Review and Reflect - One of the most important steps of keeping a food diary is to take the time to review your food choices and reflect on what you did well and what you can improve. Make it a habit to spend at least five minutes at the end of each day reviewing your food diary and thinking of the food choices that you made throughout the day. For added accountability and feedback, have it reviewed on a regular basis by a personal trainer, dietitian or doctor.

If you are serious about improving your health and overall wellbeing, keeping a food diary can help you reach your goal. Recording your meals, drinks and snacks on a daily basis takes commitment and organisation, but the results are worth it. Challenge yourself to keeping a food diary for four weeks and you will reap the rewards!

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Hi Martine, thanks for your comments. While I agree with some of your points and believe in eating healthy, whole foods, this post really isn't about being obsessive. A food diary is a tool to assist you in building awareness, mindful eating and developing some accountability with what you eat. This is essential if you are trying to lose weight, which is the main focus of this post. I know from experience that my clients who get the best results, lose weight and keep it off, are always the ones that combine consistent healthy nutrition practices and exercise. To do this, in some way or another - they track and monitor their food consumption, even if it is for only a few days. I wish...

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Food is about body needs.....and some pleasure; fresh, wholesome foods as much as you need; fats, sugar, and treats in moderation; soft drinks, never. This program is not about being attentive, it's about being obsessive. Eating is a natural body function, not a science; listen to your body, it will tell you what you should eat and what to avoid.

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