

Losing Weight the Smart Way

by L. J. Pierce

What if... What if you never had to try another newest, latest, greatest diet? What if you could feel good, energetic, and alive, without constantly obsessing over a regimented food intake schedule? What if something so simple could actually work? The good news is that simple does work. We know *what* we should and should not do, but the bad news is (or more good news, depending on how you look at it), we actually have to do it. By focusing on the time, frequency, and consistency of our eating habits, we can enjoy overall benefit, with weight loss being a natural byproduct. By normalizing our intake, our metabolism increases, our energy levels soar, mood swings decrease, and everything just falls into place naturally.

Keeping this idea of simplicity in mind, when making changes in our eating habits, the trick is to make small, steady changes,

reaching attainable goals one step at a time. New habits must be formed so that our routine becomes just that – routine. Remember, new habits take a mere 21 days to solidify, and when making lifelong changes, 21 days is pretty reasonable. We will eat healthier and make healthy choices because we truly *want* to and not because we feel that we have to because of what we've been shown and told. Eat early, frequently, and consistently. Breakfast, a substantial mid-morning snack, lunch, a substantial mid-afternoon snack, and dinner, including a protein, a carbohydrate, and a fruit or vegetable at every sitting, are vital.

Protein, used by the body to provide structure, regulate bodily functions, and supply energy, can be found in meats, cheeses, eggs, milk, legumes, nuts, tofu, and grains. Carbohydrates also contribute to energy levels, but they break down in the body more quickly than protein; therefore, for longer lasting substantial vigor, don't skip the protein. So, you may wonder, why even include carbohydrates? In addition to energy level enhancement, carbohydrates contribute to our blood sugar and glucose levels. Carbohydrates can be found in most food choices, so care should be taken not to overindulge in simple carbohydrates, skillfully disguised as dextrose, sucrose, maltose, fructose, and corn syrup, to name a few. These are simple carbohydrates, and although they provide calories, they do not contain any other important nutrients, such as starch or fiber, which are found in complex carbohydrates.

For this reason, complex carbohydrates are preferred to simple and can be found in whole grains, legumes, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are also good sources of fiber, which is linked to the prevention of several disease pro-

cesses, including colon cancer, diverticular disease, cardiovascular diseases including hypertension (high blood pressure) and high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity. Fiber maintains our digestive processes, warding off constipation and hemorrhoids, and curbs our over-eating tendencies by making us feel full when having absorbed water. Water, although comprising 60 percent of the adult human's body weight, should be consumed daily throughout the day. For adults, the total water consumption for a 130-pound person should be 65 ounces and 100 ounces for a 200-pound person.

Again, we've all heard this before, so none of this is news, begging the question of how to put it all together. First and foremost, keep it simple. If the process becomes too complicated, our chances of failure increase, when and only *if* we even choose to give it a try. In the morning, start off with some fruit and water, munching on this while making breakfast. The fiber in the fruit will expand in your stomach, thereby decreasing your overall intake. The protein consumed will provide the lasting effects of fullness. While preparing breakfast, plan your mid-morning snack, packing something to take along with you as you head out the door. It doesn't have to be something huge, but make it substantial and, of course, simple. One of my personal favorites is apple slices with peanut butter. There are so many choices found in today's supermarkets, ranging from granola bars to packaged fruit and cottage cheese that travel easily and, you got it, keep it simple. At lunch, plan your mid-afternoon snack. For example, wrap up half of your lunch to consume later. By the time dinner rolls around, you will be hungry but not starving. Having done the "food thing" throughout the day, your chances of overeating at dinner will be slim to none. In regards to water consumption, fix a pitcher in the morning and take it along, making sure to drink it all during the day. Adding a citrus fruit to your water will kickstart your metabolism.

As your new habits form, so will your body's responses to them. Be patient with yourself, remembering to give yourself time for these healthy new lifestyle behaviors to establish.

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