Weight-Loss Goals: For Real

Set small goals. Losing weight, even just a few pounds, can boost your confidence, your energy and your desire to succeed.

Have small, nutritious meals and snacks. It’s the best way to keep your energy and metabolism elevated and your appetite low.

Plan every meal and snack. Without a plan, once your hunger strikes you’re very likely to make choices that slow down weight loss.

Include favorite foods. Severely limiting food choices doesn’t aid weight loss. Just eat high-calorie favorites less often and in smaller portions, and fill up on fruits and vegetables.

Weigh weekly. People who weight themselves once a week are more likely to meet their weight-loss goals and keep the weight off.

Exercise. You need to do regular physical activity beyond what you do ordinarily each day. Try to burn at least 100 extra calories a day.

Track your food and activity for a few weeks. You’ll find eating behaviors that may sabotage your weight goals, and those which help you succeed.

Fruit Toss

1 (20-ounce) can pineapple chunks in natural juice
1 (10-ounce) can mandarin oranges in natural juice or lightly sweetened
1 large banana
1 large apple
1 cup seedless grapes
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Drain pineapple and oranges. In a large serving bowl combine pineapple chunks, oranges, banana, apples and grapes. Pour lemon juice over fruits chunks. Toss to coat. Serves 6.

Secrets of Salt

Sodium is the primary component of salt. Sodium is also added to many packaged foods as a flavor enhancer or preservative base. If you need to reduce sodium in your diet, removing the salt shaker isn’t enough.

What is? Cutting back on processed and restaurant foods – they provide about 90% of the sodium we consume. Salt added at the table or in cooking accounts for just 10% of sodium we eat. While the average American gets more than 3,400mg of sodium daily, guidelines recommend 1,500 to 2,300mg a day. For many people, too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure, which is a risk factor for heart disease and other ailments.

Fortunately, cutting back is easy with a little preparation:

1. Eat fewer canned items, especially soups, pickled foods, deli meats, dressings, sauces, condiments and frozen entrees.
2. Check food labels. Sodium levels vary among brands in the same category.
3. Cook from scratch more often. Use citrus, flavored vinegars, garlic, onion, herbs or spices instead of salt.

Salt substitutes? Those containing potassium chloride may not be recommended for people with heart or kidney disease, or those taking medications such as diuretics. Consult your health care provider.

Sea salt or salts from exotic places? They offer different tastes and texture, but they contain the same amount of sodium as regular table salt.

Decrease your use of salt gradually, and your taste buds will adjust.
Black Bean and Corn Quesadillas
1-15 ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
1-15 ounce can of corn (no salt added), drained
½ cup salsa
1 cup reduced-fat cheddar cheese, shredded
10 6-inch whole wheat flour tortillas

Mix first four ingredients together in a medium-size bowl. Spray frying pan with non-stick cooking spray. Place tortilla in a frying pan. Spoon ¼ cup vegetable mixture on the tortilla. Spread vegetable mixture evenly over the tortilla leaving ½-inch round the edge. Place another tortilla on top. Heat over medium heat for 2 minutes. Turnover and heat the other side for 2 minutes. Cheese should melt and vegetables should be hot. Remove from pan and divide into four portions. Serves 10.

Nutrition Facts: serving size: 1 equals: 210 calories, 6g Total Fat, 2.5g saturated fat, 10mg cholesterol, 370mg sodium, 32g total carbohydrate, 5g dietary fiber, 9g protein.

Southwestern Grilled Salmon
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
dash of salt
freshly ground pepper
4 (4 ounce) skinless salmon fillets
1 lime, cut into wedges

Prepare grill to medium-high heat. Coats grill rack with cooking spray. Combine cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper. Rub spice blend on both sides of salmon. Place salmon on grill 4 minutes on each side or until done. Serve with a squeeze of lime and Black Bean Corn Salsa. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition Facts: 1 serving equals 235 calories, 1g carbohydrates, 15g fat (3g saturated fat), 62 mg cholesterol, 90 mg sodium, calories from fat 58%.

Black Bean Corn Salsa
1 (15.25 ounce) can low-sodium whole kernel corn, rinsed
1 (16 ounce) can low-sodium black beans, rinsed
1 cup chopped fresh tomato, or 1 (14.5 ounce) can fire roasted tomatoes
1 red pepper, finely chopped, or 1 (12 ounce) jar roasted red peppers, drained and chopped
2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 teaspoon cumin
2 tablespoons lime juice
Baked tortilla chips

Combine all ingredients except tortilla chips. Refrigerate 1 to 2 hours before serving. Serve salsa with baked chips, or top grilled chicken, halibut, or salmon. Makes 16 – 2 ounce servings.

Nutritional Facts: 1 serving equals 118 calories, 6g fiber, 2g sugar, 4mg sodium, calories from fat 40%.

Making Sense of Vitamin D

Could you be D-deficient?
Vitamin D is a hormone produced by the body in response to sunlight. It also occurs in fatty fish such as salmon and is added to some foods such as milk and orange juice. If your D level is low, you most likely wouldn’t notice any symptoms. Factors that may lead to deficiency:

- Darker skin may absorb less sunshine to make vitamin D
- After age 50 our skin tends to make less D.
- Unhealthy kidneys are less able to convert D.
- People with milk allergies or lactose intolerance may consume less D.
- People who live north of the line connecting San Francisco and Philadelphia.

Supplements and safety – Heavy doses of vitamin D may lead to excess calcium in the blood that can damage the blood vessels, heart and kidneys. In response, the Institute of Medicine has set a safety limit of 4000 IU per day. **Best advice:** Consult your health care provider before exceeding your daily requirement.