

why dieting doesn't work

Diets may help you lose 'weight' (on the scales), but they don't help you lose body fat, which is what you are aiming for.

When you go on a strict diet that starves the body of carbohydrates, the carbohydrate stores in your muscles (glycogen) are used up. As every gram of glycogen is stored along with three grams of water, the initial fast drop in weight you see on the scales is mainly due to water.

Once the muscles own glycogen stores are used up, the body breaks down some of its own muscle tissue for energy, which is exactly what you don't want. Lean muscle tissue, unlike fat, is active - it uses up energy even when you are not active. Losing muscle tissue reduces your metabolism, meaning your body needs less energy to do the same work it used to.

Your body is also good at adapting to the amount of energy you provide it with. If you starve your body, it tries to conserve energy, slowing down your metabolism.

If you go off the diet, which most people do because it is too hard to stick to, you will generally put the weight you have lost back on, plus a bit extra, because your body now needs less energy to survive than it used to.

If you go on and off diets, your body ends up with less and less muscle and more and more fat.

Finally, most diets don't work because they are too hard to stick to. If your eating plan is not something you can stick to forever, if you don't enjoy what you eat, if you are hungry all the time and if what you eat doesn't fit in with your family and social life, it is unlikely to work.

so, how do i lose weight?

Actually, you want to lose body fat rather than weight, so don't focus on the scales - go by how your clothes fit or use a tape measure instead. You want to be smaller, not a number on the scales! It is more important that your body is fit and toned, rather than a particular weight.

Don't think about going on a diet. The only way to lose weight permanently is to change your eating habits and include some regular physical activity. The key is to make gradual changes that will fit in with your lifestyle and that you can continue for a lifetime.

Be patient and realistic. Think about how long it took to put the weight on - you can't expect to lose it overnight. Loss of body fat is slow, but more likely to be permanent.

Recognise and reward your achievements. Feel good about yourself now - don't think "when I lose weight...."

Moderation is the key. There is no need to avoid any foods totally if you enjoy them - all foods can be included as part of a healthy eating plan. Obviously you need to set some limits, but cutting out all your favourite foods and feeling guilty about eating is not the way to go. Remember, your new eating plan needs to be for life. It should mean eating better, not less.

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