Fitness First: Exercise and Healthy Eating

In addition to trimming your waistline, regular exercise and healthy eating will help you feel better, think more clearly, and live a longer, healthier life.

How Much Exercise Do I Need?

Exercise should be fairly comfortable for you. Your pace should be just below the point at which you start to breathe quickly. Exercising at this pace produces two desirable results: it mobilizes fat burning and helps you develop endurance. This means that for maximum fat burning, longer, slower exercise is more beneficial than short, strenuous workouts. If you are reasonably fit and are exercising at the proper pace, you should burn between 400 and 600 calories per hour during any aerobic exercise. This includes riding a stationary bicycle, walking or running on a treadmill or using a stair climber.

Start Sensibly

Don't begin your exercise program too ambitiously. The key to success is to start slowly and increase the difficulty of your workouts as you become more fit. Those that overdo it experience muscle soreness, become discouraged, and quit. Rather than trying to run three miles on your first day, begin by running a mile and increasing your distance as your fitness level improves. Most importantly, remember that feeling dizzy or ill is your body's way of telling you that you are working too hard. If this happens, take a rest from your exercise or stop your workout for the day.

Counting Calories Means Trimming the Fat

The media is full of widely varying reports on how to lose or maintain weight. It's no wonder that you may be confused about what foods to eat and what to avoid. Most experts agree that eating a well-balanced diet low in fat is the key to losing weight. Since fat contains more than twice the calories of carbohydrates or protein, high fat food equates to higher calories. While lowering your fat intake is important, it is also important to monitor your calorie intake. Your ideal caloric intake depends on your age, body size, and level of activity. Generally, women ages 23 to 50 need an average of 2,000 calories per day, while men in the same age group require about 2,700 calories per day. For more information about healthy eating, visit www.mypyramid.gov.
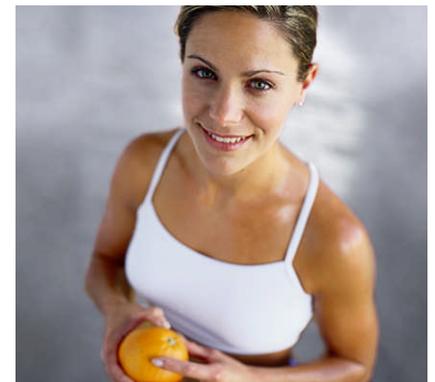
Did you know...?

If you burn at least 150 extra calories per day, you significantly reduce your risk in developing heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, colon cancer, anxiety and depression.