

Information sheet 7

Self-control techniques

Many diets fail because they focus on food and not on the eating habits that makes us fat. Often when the diet is over, our weight starts to creep upwards again. To achieve more permanent weight control we have to develop more sensible eating habits.

Outlined below are a number of techniques of ‘self-control’ that are quite easy to learn and can help you eat as you should. The methods are based on ideas of how people learn to change their habits. They are certainly not a magic solution but many people have found them useful.

- 1) If you have a momentary lapse
 - don’t look at it too negatively
 - everyone strays from the diet occasionally
 - one hiccup won’t affect long term weight loss
 - the important thing to do is to decide what it is you would like, eat it, enjoy it and don’t feel guilty!
 - if you try to deny a craving it is quite possible that you will end up eating twice as many calories in other foods.

- 2) When and where to eat
 - eat your meals regular times of the day
 - don’t do anything else (e.g. read, watch TV) while you are eating

- 3) Resisting Temptation
 - work out your danger times, for example- when you are cooking meals, are in company, bored, anxious etc., so that you can be more prepared to deal with temptation, e.g. if you are tempted to nibble while making the family’s meal, keep a low calorie drink beside you to sip instead. If you need to taste food during its preparation, use a small spoon!
 - if tempted to eat, start an activity which makes it difficult for you to eat at the same time (e.g. wash the floor, phone a friend, read the paper, go for a walk). This is not fool proof but certainly helps
 - don’t leave food lying about within easy reach. Store all food in the kitchen and put all extra food away
 - don’t buy the ‘wrong’ sort of foods. Always make out a shopping list. Don’t go shopping when you are hungry
 - if you can, prepare the next meal at a time when you are not hungry
 - make sure you don’t feel hungry if you are going into a situation where you may

be offered the 'wrong foods' (eat a low calorie filler beforehand)

- food is often used as a reward. Could this reward be some other activity e.g. when the children get on your nerves, is an éclair the only answer, or would a soak in the bath be as good?