



In response to member feedback asking for more health information, Peoplecare is pleased to introduce a series of general health articles in your Health News and on our website. The first in the series are about successful weight maintenance and preventing type 2 diabetes. We hope you find these articles informative, interesting and useful.

Successful weight maintenance

For some people keeping weight off is a real battle. Much like other health conditions, weight maintenance requires continual, long-term control.

Even after the weight's gone you need to continue the same lifestyle that enabled you to lose it in the first place. But it's not all bad news - many people manage to keep the weight off, and while it may take some hard work and dedication, you can do it too.

US National Weight Control Registry

The National Weight Control Registry in the US is the largest ever study of successful dieters. From 1993 over 5000 registered people have managed to lose at least 15kg and have kept it off for more than two years. The Registry allows scientists to study the behaviours of these successful slimmers to uncover the best strategies for weight maintenance.

The Registry has identified 5 common characteristics. Adopting these strategies is a good starting point.

1. Eat a Low-Fat, High-Carbohydrate Diet

While there's a lot of buzz about high protein, 'low-carb' diets, a diet that makes you outlaw certain types of food is hard to stick to in the long term. A diet that supplies all of the essential vitamins and minerals, and that is not extremely high in fat or protein is much easier to maintain. The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommends a balance of whole grain cereal foods, fruits and vegetables, lean meat and fish, and low or reduced fat dairy products.

2. Exercise Every Day

On average, people exercise between an hour and an hour and a half a day. This may sound unrealistic to some, but the exercise was usually performed at different times throughout the day. Better still, the most common method of exercise is walking, which is very easy to incorporate into the day.

3. Eat Breakfast Every Day

Eating a good breakfast every morning helps to avoid mid morning snacking and overeating throughout the rest of the day. It also boosts your metabolic rate for the day, helping you burn more kilojoules.

4. Keep Track of Your Weight and Eating habits

Experts don't know exactly why it works but it may be that successful dieters use scales as an early warning system. If you weigh yourself on a regular basis you'll immediately notice if you've put on weight and can implement strategies to prevent gaining more. Keeping a food diary can also help you track exactly what you eat and when you eat it.

5. Stress Management

There are identifiable times in life where weight maintenance is more difficult:

- getting married
- having a baby
- retiring from sport
- prolonged periods of stress
- menopause
- festive occasions
- quitting smoking
- changing jobs

Dealing effectively with these situations and taking time out for relaxation and exercise makes you less likely to fall back to the habits that led to your initial weight gain.

Weight maintenance becomes easier over the years, as the strategies become habitual and require less attention and conscious effort.

*Please note: Information in this article is as accurate and up to date as possible but should not be used as a substitute for medical advice
Source: AHM Total Health 2007.*

