

Healthy Resolutions

You don't have to go through another year overweight and out of shape. Take these 10 steps to good health.

Would you choose to fly on an airline that had a track record of arriving safely at a destination only 5 percent of the time? Of course not! You wouldn't dare set foot on one of that company's planes. Yet every day, dieters around the world embark on a new diet with the same success rate.

Some hop on board the latest hyped-up, low-fat, wonderworking program that has made it past the late-night infomercial phase to become a *New York Times* best-seller. Still others prefer a more adventurous journey with a no-carb, miracle pound-shedder that has a host of B-list celebrities touting its amazing results. Of course, almost all who set out to lose weight via one of these diets swear that it will be absolutely, *positively* the last one they'll ever try.

It seems everyone is looking for the "diet to end all diets." Sadly, people are looking for something that doesn't exist. Why? Because in the long run, dieting just doesn't work.

Some reports indicate that only 2 percent of all dieters manage to lose weight and keep it off for good; others claim it's closer to 5 percent. Although those figures are hotly contested, what we do know for certain is that even those researchers who support dieting concur that diets fail at least 80 to 90 percent of the time.

After a year, the overwhelming majority of dieters regain whatever weight they've lost. Worse still, almost two-thirds end up weighing even more within four or five years than before they started their yes, there are those who may lose 100-plus pounds on certain programs. However, the vast majority of patients gain the weight back—and usually more weight—because they have become metabolically compromised.

You're probably wondering: *Dr. Colbert, why would you even recommend a diet plan if diets don't work? And why should I bother trying to lose weight if it will most likely come back?*

I'll be honest with you: If you are just looking to continue the pattern of following here-today, gone-tomorrow fad diets, you may as well put down this article now. Why? Because I think dieting, over the long haul, is one of the surest ways to become frustrated, discouraged, fed up and even depressed about losing weight.

After treating more than 40,000 patients during the last 25 years, I have observed some definitive commonalities among those who repeatedly attempted to lose weight, only to gain it back. I have also found a medically verifiable answer that leads to lifetime success in this area.

So what makes my "I can do this" diet different from diets in other books? The "can do" part, for one thing! It's doable, and it works. As a medical doctor, I deal with getting results—verifiable results that prove a patient is on his way to long-term health, not just fixing an immediate problem.

Yes, my diet is far more than a diet; it's a lifestyle. It does not offer you a quick-fix approach to anything. But it does offer you principles that are meant to last for life, principles that have been proven to work for thousands of individuals for more than a decade and counting. If you want to lose weight and keep it off, follow these 10 steps to a healthier life:

- **1. Make a commitment to lose weight.** A commitment is more than a goal. It is a framework for your progression in life, a long-term vision that goes beyond just reaching your targeted ideal weight. And when you combine rock-steady commitment with positive emotion that propels you to the next level, suddenly succeeding on a daily, weekly or monthly basis becomes much easier.

- **2. Set reachable goals.** When you embark on a lifestyle change to lose weight, it's crucial to establish goals. However, they must be realistic if you hope to reach them. An unrealistic goal for weight or clothing size sets you up for discouragement, and people who become discouraged will usually stop the program altogether and eventually gain back all their weight.
- **3. Keep a food journal.** Keeping a food journal while losing weight is a tremendous motivator for most individuals because it creates accountability. I am not recommending that you track your calories every day during the program. That, like many dieting techniques, can become such a burden that it is more harmful than helpful. To get an idea of how many calories you are ingesting daily, however, you need to start this program by recording everything you eat and the associated calorie intake for three weekdays and one weekend day.

You may discover your meal portions are too big. Or you may find out your calorie count for a particular meal is much higher than you thought. It will be easy to determine such problems if you simply take the time to record what you eat and the number of calories consumed in a food journal.

- **4. Measure yourself.** You do not need a scale or any other fancy tools to evaluate your progress—just a simple tape measure. By focusing on your waist measurement and achieving your goal measurement, you will eliminate one of the main risk factors for disease, toxic fat in your abdominal area. You can track other measurements, such as body weight and body fat percentage, along with your waist measurement *once a month*—not once a week. Log these in your food journal so you will have a clearly established goal.
- **5. Eat the right foods in the right combination.** Your body needs three food components daily: carbohydrates,

proteins and fats. All the calories you consume can be attributed to one of these groups. Healthy, low-glycemic carbohydrates should comprise about 40 percent of your total calorie intake per day, good proteins 30 percent, and healthy fats another 30 percent. Each meal should contain all three components. Avoid all white flour and white sugar as well as beverages and food products that contain artificial sweeteners. (For more details about exactly what foods to eat and beverages to drink, see *Dr. Colbert's "I Can Do This" Diet*, available January 5.)

- **6. Eat at the right times.** One of the most important principles of the "I can do this" diet is to eat three meals a day, with no carbohydrates after 6 p.m. The reason is that these three meals provide the fuel your body needs at the times it needs the fuel most. The most important of these three fueling times is breakfast—a meal many people often skip.
- **7. Eat healthy snacks.** The correct fuel mixture at meals should control your hunger for three to four hours. Yet most people go longer than that between meals, allowing their blood sugar to drop and causing a noticeable decrease in energy and mental clarity. The right mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks will enable you to remain hunger-free and productive for several hours, and a snack an hour before bed will help ensure restful sleep.
- **8. Control your portion size.** Most Americans eat *more* of what they eat than is healthy for them. We have become accustomed to ignoring serving sizes on food labels and eating the amount we've trained our stomachs and brains to demand. It's time to exercise some portion control!
- **9. Engage in physical activity.** Exercise is essential. This truth applies universally to every human being, but

especially to anyone hoping to lose pounds. You can restrict your diet and eat less than your daily requirement, yet without burning off calories through physical activity, you have only half the equation.

- **10. Take safe weight-loss supplements.** A weight-loss supplement is a nutritional product or herb intended to *assist* your healthy eating and activity plan with the ultimate goal of losing weight. A supplement comes alongside; it does not replace.

Most supplements for weight loss have no sound clinical research supporting their claims, and some—including those containing fenfluramine, ephedra and aristolochia—are dangerous. However, there are a number of safe and effective dietary supplements that look promising for weight loss. My favorite is PGX fiber because it suppresses appetite by making you feel full, but there are several others described in my book that you may want to try.

Following the lifestyle principles described above will provide many benefits beyond weight loss. It will help you improve your overall health, manage stress and prevent stress-related eating. In fact, it is the best program you can be on during not only the good times but also the most chaotic times of your life.

Don Colbert, M.D., is board-certified in family practice and anti-aging medicine. He has also received extensive training in nutritional and preventive medicine. Colbert is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling book *The Seven Pillars of Health*, as well as best-sellers *Toxic Relief*, *The Bible Cure* series and *Eat This and Live*. His most recent book, *Dr. Colbert's "I Can Do This" Diet* (), releases January 5.

LOSE IT FOR GOOD

Did you resolve, to no avail, to lose weight last year? Visit [this link](#) to find practical ways to stick to this year's health resolutions and lose it for good.