



Health Tip: Maintaining weight loss--- Lessons from the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR)

Undoubtedly, a number of eDoc clients have struggled with "yo-yo" weight loss, experiencing initial success only to later regain the pounds that were lost. In fact, there seems to be a general impression that long-term maintenance of weight loss is rarely achieved, resulting in many people becoming frustrated and giving up on efforts to lose weight. For over 10 years, the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) has maintained a database of about 4,500 men and women who have maintained a 30 lb. or greater weight loss for at least a year. By studying this group of successful weight maintainers, the NWCR has provided insight into the behaviors and strategies that can lead to long-term success with weight control. Let's look at some of the lessons learned from NWCR and their group of weight loss "experts".



Lesson #1: It is possible to maintain weight loss: In surveys performed by the NWCR, almost half of Americans who intentionally lost 10% or more of their weight were able to maintain this for at least one year. Approximately 25% of these people were able to maintain this for 5 years or more. While this is far from a perfect record, it indicates that long-term weight loss is possible.

Lesson #2: Dietary changes must be realistic and sustainable.

Not surprisingly, almost every successful member of the weight loss registry reported that they modified their food intake in some way to lose weight. This could have been achieved by a liquid diet, a commercial diet program, or on a "do it yourself" basis. Most successful maintainers of weight loss reported continued consumption of a reduced calorie/low-fat diet. Women in the registry reported eating an average of 1,306 kcal/day (24.3% of energy from fat and men reported consuming 1,685 kcal (23.5% of energy from fat).

Lesson #3: Get Exercise. In addition to the dietary modification, 94% increased their physical activity. The most common form of activity, reported by 76% of participants, was walking. Ninety percent of participants reported that they spent approximately 1 hour per day exercising. Continuing to exercise appears to be as important as dieting in maintaining weight loss.

Lesson #4: Maintenance strategies are similar, no matter how the weight is



initially lost. People who lost weight via different means (on their own, liquid diets, or organized program) employed similar maintenance strategies; primarily through calorie restriction and exercise. There were some slight differences, however, in that the liquid diet group reported greater use of dietary strategies (for example, counting calories, limiting the amount of calories from fat) and higher dietary restraint, whereas "on own" group was more likely to employ higher amounts of exercise.

Lesson #5: Monitor your progress. Three fourths of successful weight maintainers weighed themselves at least once a week.

Lesson #6: Maintaining weight loss gets easier over time. Those who had maintained their weight loss the longest reported that it became easier over time to keep their weight down. After 2 to 5 years of maintaining weight loss, there was a high likelihood of "permanent" success.

Lesson #7: Consistency matters. Dieting consistency appears to be an important behavioral strategy in long-term weight loss maintenance. Those study participants who ate similar food portions throughout the week or year were more successful in maintaining their weight, as compared to those who allowed themselves to "binge" during the weekends or holidays. The message here is that it's better to stick with a regular eating plan than to repeatedly splurge and then diet.

Lesson #8: Eat breakfast. Seventy-eight percent of successful weight loss maintainers regularly eat breakfast. This appears to help reduce hunger throughout the day, which lessens the chances of binging later on.

Lesson #9: There are a number of paths to successful weight loss. Successful registry participants were split roughly in half between those that were able to achieve their weight goals on their own, with the other half participating in some type of commercial weight-loss program. Success can be achieved even without expensive diet foods or structured weight loss programs.



Lesson #10: Turn off the TV: Individuals who are successful at maintaining weight loss are less likely to spend time in front of a TV. Sixty-two percent of weight-loss maintainers spend 10 hours or less watching TV per week, as compared to the national average of 28 hours of TV viewing per week.

To read more of the fascinating and important work that has been done by this organization, go to the National Weight Control Registry [Research Findings](#).

If you have questions maintaining weight loss or setting weight loss goals, please sign into your eDocAmerica account and send us your questions; we'll be glad to help.

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