



FOOD MATTERS

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

TRACKING YOUR FOOD INTAKE

Recording what you eat and drink can help you keep weight off and is the closest thing you'll get to writing off calories.

There's a common misconception that people who are overweight and obese can't lose enough weight and keep it off in order to make a difference in their health. But new findings published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* indicate that they can lose weight by using behavioral strategies, such as keeping food diaries and attending weekly group meetings where changes to eating and lifestyle habits are taught.

After an initial weight loss, the subjects in a weight-loss maintenance trial kept off 12 pounds for six months—enough to reduce their elevated cholesterol and blood pressure and make a significant difference in their well-being. A major predictor of weight loss was the number of food diary entries each person kept per week.

why a food diary helps

By keeping a record of your foods and beverages, you'll be more aware of everything you put in your mouth and less likely to eat junk food or sneak extra portions. People who've tried this often say that, while they may entertain the idea of indulging in unhealthy foods, writing down what they eat makes it less likely that they

will do so. This accountability seems to be further increased if they also make a point of sharing their food records with a health professional.

recording your intake

Record everything you eat and drink during the course of the day—meals and snacks included. And don't forget the weekends.

Write down what you eat as soon as you eat it. Otherwise, you will probably struggle to remember details at the end of the day. It's often the small bits that add up to make a difference. Use a food diary template, freely available from many Web sites, or create your own by creating rows and columns in a notebook.

avoiding tedium

If you can't record your intake daily, pick the most difficult days and periods of your life to monitor. After all, that's when what you eat counts most. You can also try online versions, some of which automatically calculate your nutrient intake.

The following are some helpful weight-loss Web sites: www.fitday.com; www.calorieking.com.au; and www.sparkpeople.com.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.