

HealthTalk: Maintaining Weight Loss

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Q: I'm frustrated. I started to lose weight with new eating and exercise habits, but after just a few days off, I'm having a terrible time getting back to my new lifestyle. What can I do?

A: A short break from new healthy lifestyle habits does not have to affect overall weight loss. Studies show that people lose about the same amount of weight over the long term (at five months and at one year) whether they continue straight through with new habits or have an occasional short break of a week or two. So, to get back on track, get rid of any guilt messages you may be repeating to yourself. Negative messages don't help you climb back up, they just drag you down. Second, don't bundle all the changes together in an all-or-nothing mentality. Even if you get back to some changes, like taking 10 or 15 minutes for a walk, even every other day, it provides some physical benefits and avoids the picture of yourself as being back at the beginning. Later, begin working your way to accumulating 30 to 60 minutes a day. Third, realize that this is not the last time something will get you "off track." Many studies show that learning how to overcome these relapses, or setbacks, is an important part of long-term weight loss success. Think ahead about situations, such as celebrations, stressful situations or obligations that might make it difficult to stick with your weight loss strategies. People who develop multiple ways to cope with tough situations usually go on to lose more weight. Learning to handle emotions and negative thought patterns is also vital. Overly strict eating rules may lead to short-term but not long-term weight loss and they can promote binge eating once you break a rule. Instead, work to create a lifestyle with some form of daily physical activity, a stable healthy eating pattern and portion control based on true physical hunger. Occasionally include high-calorie foods to avoid a sense of deprivation. The good news: as difficult as it may seem to continue healthier behaviors, over time it does get easier.

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The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) is the cancer charity that fosters research on the relationship of nutrition, physical activity and weight management to cancer risk, interprets the scientific literature and educates the public about the results. It has contributed more than \$91 million for innovative research conducted at universities, hospitals and research centers across the country. AICR has published two landmark reports that interpret the accumulated research in the field, and is committed to a process of continuous review. AICR also provides a wide range of educational programs to help millions of Americans learn to make dietary changes for lower cancer risk. Its award-winning New American Plate program is presented in brochures, seminars and on its website, www.aicr.org. AICR is part of the global network of charities that are dedicated to the prevention of cancer. The WCRF global network is led and unified by WCRF International, a membership association which operates as the umbrella organization for the network. The other charities in the WCRF network are World Cancer Research Fund in the UK (www.wcrf-uk.org); Wereld Kanker Onderzoek Fonds in the Netherlands (www.wcrf-nl.org); World Cancer Research Fund Hong Kong (www.wcrf-hk.org); and Fonds Mondial de Recherche contre le Cancer in France (www.fmrc.fr).