

Weekly Challenge

Healthy spring clean

30 August - 5 September 2009



With the winter blues safely behind you, it's time to come out of hibernation and restart your weight-loss plans with gusto. It's only natural that your enthusiasm for exercising and healthy eating dwindles in the colder months but spring has finally sprung and there's no better time to refresh, renew and re-evaluate your get-healthy regime.

Here are a few pointers to get your healthy spring clean underway and make sure you feel fit and fabulous in time for summer.

Have a clear out

Keepsakes can remind you of happy memories but hoarding and clutter might stop you from looking forward. Cleaning, clearing and reorganising are effective ways to get you into new routines and boost positive thinking. So bin those naughty treats you have stashed in the cupboard and get rid of old, unflattering clothes, saving only those that make you feel good.

Downsize and slow down

According to research by Professor Brian Wansink from the University of Illinois, USA, the larger the plate, the more food we intend to eat. By serving larger portions, Professor Wansink showed that individuals eat more, even if they don't like the food.

Choose narrow drinking glasses, smaller side plates and shallower bowls to avoid consuming too much. Give your body the time it needs to register that you've eaten enough by taking smaller mouthfuls and chewing slowly.

Get back on track

Comfort eating is natural when it's colder so if heavier meals and winter snuffles have taken their toll on your health, make a pact to eat smarter.

Biggest Loser Club dietitian Dr Clare Collins says, "A realistic and good weight loss is around half to one kilo per week. So, if you need to lose around 5kg you can get back into your summer gear in about 5 to 10 weeks. It takes hard work to lose weight and your success is determined by whether you're willing to 'suffer' a little."

To get your healthy plans back on track Clare advises, "For at least four days weigh and measure all your foods and drinks. Record every single morsel you eat into your diary – don't round down as it all counts. This will also help pinpoint the times that are difficult for you, whether it is weekend socialising, a lack of vegies or out-of-control portion sizes.

"Take note of your exercise too, but don't round it up as you won't actually be burning the calories that you think that you are. By doing this you'll get the most information from The Club about your actual energy balance, reach your goal weight sooner and you'll find maintaining your weight loss afterwards is easier too."

Shake up your exercise routine

Cold winter weather is a common excuse to let your exercise routine fall by the wayside so use spring as an opportunity to kick-start your regular fitness program.

Sydney-based personal trainer Roza Bacelas says, "The new season is a great time to take a fresh look at your

exercise routine. Try something new such as a series of morning boot camp sessions or do some pre-breakfast walking. Exercising at a different time of day and varying the location will also keep things interesting.

“This is a fantastic time of year to make the most of the great outdoors. Enjoy the warmer evenings by getting out for a family game of cricket at the park or in your garden.”

Spring clean your motivation

Louise Adams, clinical psychologist at Self Essentials in Sydney (www.self.net.au), agrees that spring is the ideal time to maximise your motivation. “It is natural for motivation to go up and down and if yours needs reviving, now's the time to do it,” she says.

Louise advises, “List the reasons that you decided to lose weight and get fit in the first place. Next, go through your answers and mark each point either with an ‘E’ or an ‘I’.”

‘E’ stands for external motivation. These are reasons for other people, such as, ‘so my husband thinks I'm sexier’ or ‘my doctor told me I need to lose weight’.

‘I’ is internal motivation. This is solely driven by you, for example, ‘I want to feel healthier’ and ‘I want to take better care of my body’.

According to Louise, “Research proves that people are more likely to stick with lifestyle changes if they’re internally motivated, rather than when they feel they are being pressured to change.” So the more ‘I's’ you have on your list, the more prepared you will be to make the changes that you need.



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