



### Resolved: Keep sanity in diet plan

This is a great time to make "New Millennium Resolutions." From the perspective of simple mathematics, such resolutions should be 1000 times more binding than New Year's resolutions. So, it's time to make sane resolutions for changes that can really last and make life-long differences.

Like New Year's resolutions that we have all made and revoked in a week or two, most weight loss diets are designed for short term "cosmetic" effect and generally do not consider long term health and well-being. Any millennial resolutions for weight loss or weight maintenance should be sane enough to last at least a few decades.

Looking back over hundreds of crazy weight loss diets promoted over the last 30 years, a sane weight control program seems like a new concept. A great resolution for 2000 would be to live a lifestyle that promotes a long and high-quality life, fitting with your age, the way you live life, and your individual genetic potential.

Sane weight control means more than just changing your diet in some way. That may be part of the change, but keep in mind that the "one diet fits all" mentality is short-sighted and can even be

dangerous. Most of us need to change a number of misconceptions about body weight, body composition, exercising and diets. It means taking control of your body image and therefore, weight goals should be focused on maintaining a body weight that will at least not trigger negative health conditions.

Even when a person is considerably overweight, the goal should be focused on losing body fat not weight. If a person loses more than a couple pounds a week, they are losing body water and muscle. In the long run, this loss of muscle decreases calorie needs. It takes less food to maintain weight and waistlines can increase even though body weight decreases or stays the same.

Body weight (in the form of the correct proportion of body fat) is all about balance. To maintain this balance, a person must eat as many calories a day as the body uses for normal organ functioning and physical activity. Either increased calorie intake (too much food) or decreased calorie expenditure (too little physical activity) will result in gaining body fat. This gain isn't always obvious at first because a person can lose muscle weight while putting on

fat weight. The end result is a body less suited to staying healthy.

Exercise or other physical activity is important for maintaining both a healthy muscle mass and body weight. Being physically active with aerobic activities like jogging and some type of strength training are both important for overall health. Even people in their 90's can increase muscle mass with the right type of exercises and diet.

The success of weight loss diets is typically judged by the speed and the amount of weight loss. These criteria are constantly promoted in weight loss advertisements of all types. The result is individuals consume imbalanced diets that contain abnormally high or abnormally low levels of fat, protein, or carbohydrate. These diets also may not contain the vitamins and minerals necessary for good health.

Is there one perfect weight loss diet for everyone? NO. Can a weight-reducing diet be beneficial for one person and harmful or even cause death to another. YES. Our next column will address the benefits and hazards of the most common types of weight loss diets.

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