



Careful diet plan sheds fat

If you plan to make weight loss your New Year's resolution, then steer clear of the "rabbit-food approach." Changing your resolution from weight loss to "fat loss" is much better for long-term health. Too often, people equate weight loss with fat loss, but when weight is lost quickly, what you're losing won't be fat.

When a diet does not meet the body's need for essential nutrients, the wrong type of weight is likely to be lost. Unfortunately, this commonly leads to failure in maintaining weight loss over the long term.

Question: What's wrong with just focusing on weight loss?

Answer: Three major sources of weight can be lost in dieting: fat, muscle and water. There also is evidence that bone mineral content is lost during rapid weight loss. This is a concern for future problems with bone health, but it doesn't represent much weight loss.

Any rapid weight loss is pri-

marily water and muscle loss. Fat cannot be lost quickly. This is the ultimate bane of dieters. Quick weight loss is mentally satisfying, but it represents little or no fat loss. Fat loss is associated with improved appearance and health, but muscle loss is not.

Also, muscle tissue uses a lot more calories than fat tissue, even at rest. Consequently, loss of muscle tissue significantly reduces calorie needs. This, in turn, makes it more difficult to maintain any weight loss.

Q: What helps to preserve muscle during weight loss?

A: An adequate intake of all essential nutrients is important during weight loss, but protein is especially important for preventing muscle loss. Research by Dr. Donald Layman at the University of Illinois showed that during weight loss, protein needs are about double standard recommendations. For many of us, that just means maintaining our intake of high-protein foods

and cutting calories by eating fewer foods high in fat, oil, sugar and starch.

People who have a diet low in high-protein foods may need to focus more on meeting their increased protein needs during weight loss.

Exercise is another key element in preventing muscle loss during weight loss. So, focusing on fitness along with fat loss greatly increases the odds of maintaining reduced weight.

Q: How much protein is needed during weight loss?

A: Multiply your body weight in pounds by 0.7 to get the grams of protein needed per day, according to Layman's research. For example, a 200-pound person should consume about 140 grams of protein per day during weight loss.

There are 6 to 8 grams of protein in an ounce of meat, fish, poultry or cheese; a cup of milk or yogurt; a large egg; a half-cup of beans; or 3 ounces of tofu.

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