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Breaking Plateaus

Most people who have lost weight before will probably say it's easy to lose the first few pounds but there eventually comes a point when you all of a sudden stop seeing results. If you feel like you've been doing all the right things and you've been staying on track, maybe you need to make a few changes to start seeing positive results again. Before you get too discouraged, you should know that hitting a plateau is very common and you are not alone. Weight loss usually slows down and sometimes stalls completely as your body gets used to the changes you've made.

Here are a few suggestions to help you get over your weight loss plateau.

- Re-examine
- Trick Your Body
- Cut More Calories
- Add More Activity into your day
- Resources

Re-examine

Pay extra attention to your food intake and exercise. Have you been a little lenient lately? Make sure you haven't loosened up on the guidelines by letting yourself have a few extra "treats" or larger portions here and there. Even if you are eating fewer calories you could still be eating enough calories to maintain your current weight at your current activity level. Make sure you are sticking with the exercise and not making excuses telling yourself you will do it tomorrow.

Trick Your Body

Eventually, after roughly 6 to 8 weeks, your body will get used to the exercises you do if you do them repeatedly so make sure to vary your exercise routine. Bring in new elements such as lengthening the workout, adding an extra day, increasing the intensity or changing the equipment. For example, go from 30 minutes to 60 minutes for each workout, go from 3 days to 4 days, go from walking to jogging or lift heavier weights, go using the treadmill to using the elliptical or from using weight machines to using dumbbells.

Cut More Calories

Weight loss is the equation of calories you take in vs. the calories you burn. If you are eating 1,800 calories a day, try lowering it to 1,700 or 1,600 calories a day. For women, it's recommended not to go below 1,200 calories a day and for men not to go below 1,500 calories a day. Too little of calories will cause your body to go into starvation mode which could result in weight gain as well as being simply not healthy. Not getting enough calories will leave you feeling hungry and increase your chances of overeating or eating foods higher in fat, salt or sugar.

Add More Activity into your day

The second part of the equation, the amount of calories you burn, is a little more desirable option to change since the number of calories you limit yourself to if too low will not be able to supply you with enough nutrients or energy. To break through the plateau, you could take a quick walk on your lunch break, use the stairs instead of the elevator, or stand up and pace while talking on the phone. Little changes may not seem like much but they could add up to make a big difference. However, remember not to mistake these forms of activity for regular aerobic exercise.

Resources

- American Council on Exercise: www.acefitness.org (<http://www.acefitness.org>)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov (<http://www.cdc.gov>)
- Healthfinder.gov: www.healthfinder.gov (<http://www.healthfinder.gov>)

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