

## “Recipes for Weight Loss: 1 part Exercise but 3 parts Diet”

A recent study from the United Kingdom examined success variability among weight loss program participants who underwent intense exercise protocols while eating different amounts of food. Their conclusion was that despite consistent rigorous exercise, a strategic Mediterranean style diet was more influential in determining the ultimate amount of weight lost.

The researchers above considered how appetite and food choices, or “energy intake”, affected people in a supervised and monitored five day a week fitness protocol. The study consisted of fifty-eight obese men and women who were prescribed exercise, at an expenditure of up to 500 kilocalories per session with a frequency of five times a week for twelve weeks and an intensity of 70% maximum heart rate. Note that while the 500 kilocalories per session stipulation translates into approximately an hour of jogging at 5 mph, digging and gardening, active swimming, using a cross country ski machine, or hiking, the intensity stipulation helps to ensure that the activity is being done at an adequate and fruitful level. Body weight, composition and foods consumed were recorded four times through the duration of the study.

Though the average reduction in body weight was 7.04 lbs (+/- 4.3 lbs) and considered statistically significant, there was substantial individual variability (-32.34 to +5.94 lbs). “This large variability could be ... attributed to the differences in energy intake over the twelve week intervention. Those participants who failed to lose meaningful weight increased their food intake and reduced intake of fruits and vegetables”. Thus the authors concluded that regardless of high energy expenditure, adherence to strategic eating patterns is a better indicator for successful weight loss and that eating patterns associated with the Mediterranean diet were notably beneficial. In this way, even if one part of your strategy is daily strenuous exercise, successful weight loss relies more on mindful dietary patterns used with three meals a day and carefully chosen snacks between.

The Mediterranean diet has been clinically demonstrated to protect against cardiovascular disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cancer and now even improve weight loss. It consists of daily fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, olive oil, and grains while animal products are greatly minimized: fish or fowl being consumed

weekly and red meat monthly. As a dietary strategy, it has also been compared with many alternative ways to lose weight and shown to be the most efficacious, especially when combined with medical food meal replacements, which have additional ways to optimize physiologic reactions conducive to losing weight and ingredients shown to lower cholesterol, stabilize blood sugar, and help normalize hormones.

A renowned program which ties together exercise, the Mediterranean diet, medical food meal replacements and low glyce-mic food choices is called FirstLine Therapy. This medically supervised program consists of a series of office visits to assess changes in body tissues, construct sample menus, and offer support such as recipe ideas. Readers can go to <http://www.metagenics.com/> patients to find a practitioner certified in FirstLine Therapy in their area.

### Successful Psychologist Tactics For Losing Weight

Last summer the professional journal “Nutrition” published a study assessing the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy for treating obesity when a Mediterranean dietary pattern is used. Their findings not only showed that behavioral therapy based on Mediterranean dietary principles was a successful way to lose weight, but also illustrated the fruitfulness of practical clinically orientated techniques, such as recording food intake and attendance of group therapy.

Both cognitive-behavioral therapy and the Mediterranean diet have been well documented to be clinically effective for achieving different ends and research integrating the practices was perhaps an inevitable strategy for attaining desirable results. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a form of interventional psychology, which emphasizes utilizing, formulated strategies, cultivated through self-awareness, to alter specific behaviors. It is a blend of two different psychotherapy theories, which ultimately share an emphasis on using the present moment to re-structure our ways of being in the world, whether the emphasis is on thoughts or behaviors or both. This action-orientated method has been widely researched for decades and empirically shown to be beneficial in many different clinical conditions. The Mediterranean diet, as

### Reflections

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a strategy for eating, consists of abundant and minimally processed plant foods, with fresh fruit as a typical daily dessert and olive oil as the primary source of lipids; there is little by way of meat or dairy products. Adherence to the Mediterranean diet decreases risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, increases longevity, and can improve outcomes for people with autoimmune disease, Alzheimer's disease, allergies, and arthritis, as shown in epidemiological, clinical, and pharmacological studies.

In terms of this study, the principals of cognitive-behavioral therapy were employed when determining barriers to losing weight as well as individuals formulating strategies based off those identified barriers. The researchers enlisted 1,406 obese individuals between the third and seventh decades of life from southeastern Spain to participate in the weight loss program. Obstacles to success were identified using a "Barriers to Weight Loss" checklist. Progress was tracked by assessing weight, body fat distribution, biochemical variables, blood pressure changes, average duration of treatment, percentage attrition, and one's ability to fulfill a Mediterranean diet plan.

The results were favorable though not overly impressive, with an average weight loss of almost 17 lbs over a treatment duration of 34 weeks. Eighty-nine percent of subjects fulfilled the Mediterranean principles during the program, and all the variables studied were significantly improved. Stress was the most frequent reason for participants not seeing the study through to completion and the main obstacles to weight loss were "losing motivation", being "prone to stress-related eating", and being liable to eat when bored. Keeping written records of what was eaten through the day as well as attending group therapy were considered factors contributing to the success of many participants.

In light of research such as this, people considering temporary and extreme "fad" diets may want to opt instead for a more sustainable approach, which has multiple documented health benefits and can comfortably be modified into a successful lifestyle adjustment.

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