

Weight Loss

This past week (May 25-31, 2008) was a historic week. In the USA, the Centers for Disease Control announced, for the first time ever, that the rate of childhood obesity is slowing down. The tide may be turning. See their site (www.CDC.gov) for more specific information.

I see many children who are overweight each day in my clinic. The majority have overweight parents too. I myself struggle to stay at the ideal weight for my genetic make up. Most importantly, if I am one kilogram heavier than my ideal weight, I pay the price at mile 20 of a marathon - I slow down and hurt more than usual. So for me, carrying the extra weight for 26.2 miles makes no sense!

With all of the experts, researchers, and commercial programs - each sure that they are right - what can we say that can be printed on a thumbnail? The three things I believe are:

1. Only 7% of people who gain weight easily are able to get their weight down without any exercise. You have to sweat; your heart rate must climb; you have to do it daily.
2. Watching fats is more important than watching sugars, although both matter a lot.
3. If you are heavy, you will be fine in the long run if you are active, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, don't smoke, and know your numbers (blood pressure, lipid levels, and insulin level) as being normal.

As a thumbnail sketch, these three points translate into: exercise, watch fats, and do not fuss over size (as long as you are active daily and eat lots of plant-based foods). It's that simple!

Yet, when we know the things we know, why do we do the things we do? My guess is that all of us think we will get away with short cuts and above all . . . it feels good. If you have any ideas why people do the things they do when they know the things they know, let me know at drpeternieman@aol.com!

This week, I saw from first hand experience how a trampoline in the backyard keeps my kids away from TV and computers. But then I used a heart rate monitor while jumping and noticed I could get it as high as 120 beats per minute (20 beats per minute slower than my usual jogging). So, fifteen minutes on the trampoline burns 70 calories - not enough to burn off calories from a non-candy, non-junk food, and non-fast food source such as a banana, which loads you up with 120 calories.

For more information on how to become a calorie detective, look in *Parent Resources* for a book I recommend.

Access www.healthykids.ca for a terrific new resource in helping families raise healthy children - HealthyKids with Dr. Nieman will optimize your child's complete health.

An informed parent is... an empowered parent.