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### The diet that works

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## The diet that works

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healthyweight.

# The diet that **WORKS**

## Help is online

- The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating is a good tool to help you with food choices. This is available online at the Department of Health and Ageing website ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).
- The Healthy Weight Week website ([www.healthyweightweek.com.au](http://www.healthyweightweek.com.au)) is also a useful site, with information about health, diet and physical activity. It includes practical information such as how to eat more fruit and vegetables, healthy snack ideas and how to understand food packages and labels.

*If your New Years' resolution diet just didn't work then try this. A healthy common sense approach is the best diet, say Dr Yasmine Probst and Rebecca Thorne as it will reap long term losses.*

Was your New Year's resolution to lose weight? Has this been a resolution that you repeat year after year with little success? Losing weight can take some time and needs to be approached carefully so that it does not cause long term health problems. Many people are looking for a quick fix and turn to the latest diet craze in the media. The word 'diet' is often associated with this need to lose weight. Many diets exist though not all are good for you. The most common goal of many 'diets' is fast, weight loss with minimal effort. This type of weight loss, however, is often water loss and is quickly regained once you return to your normal eating patterns.

## Make your diet work

### 1 Be SMART

It is important to make sure that your weight loss goal(s) are S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time Framed). When large, unrealistic goals aren't achieved, people often 'give up' and turn back to their old unhealthy eating habits. A healthy weight loss goal would be about 0.5-1kg per week. Your goal this week may be to switch from full cream milk to skim milk in your daily latte or to not buy or eat any biscuits or chips.

### 2 The diet/exercise combo

Research has shown that by combining healthy eating with exercise, individuals are able to achieve greater long-term weight loss when compared with just eating alone<sup>3</sup>.

### 3 Get physical

1. Think of moving as an opportunity, not an inconvenience. It is important for individuals to change their attitude towards physical activity, to think of its benefits and not think of it as a chore.
2. People need to be as active as they can on a daily basis. This form of activity is often referred to as incidental exercise. It encourages you to walk up and down the stairs instead of using the lift, play with your kids or park further away from work and walk in.
3. It is recommended that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, preferably on all days. What is moderate-intensity? The activity should cause a small increase in breathing and heart rate, but you should be still able to talk. This could include going for a brisk walk. It doesn't have to be all at once, you can break it up into a few 10-15 minute sessions.
4. To achieve greater health and fitness benefits the final guideline recommends regular, vigorous activity. This includes activities such as aerobics, jogging and playing team sports such as football, netball and basketball. Team sports are also a great way to meet to people and form new social networks.

(These tips are based on the Australian Government Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian adults)

### 4 Follow a sustainable diet

Keeping the weight off in the long term is the biggest challenge of all. A combination of both healthy eating (not dieting) and physical activity will help you achieve your goals. The weight loss may not be as fast as when you are 'dieting' but you are more likely to keep the weight off and feel better in the long term. So to help you with your New Year's resolution, park your car a little further away or walk to work tomorrow and skip those biscuits at morning tea and grab a quick and easy piece of fresh fruit instead.

## Make your diet work

You may have read about diets such as the Southbeach, Atkins or Zone. Celebrities often use these in preparation for their next movie role, creating a new hype. Each of these diets will help you to lose weight if followed correctly but can also have some very negative consequences. Both the Zone and Atkins diets focus on low carbohydrate intakes while the Zone addresses the ratio of protein to carbohydrate at each meal. They often cut out whole food groups which means you miss out on some very important nutrients (often Calcium which is needed for bone strength). These diets have been shown to negatively affect cholesterol levels<sup>1,2</sup> and put you at greater risk of cardiovascular disease or even having a heart attack.

In recent years, the use of meal replacements has become a popular means for losing weight. Meal replacements are used to replace 1-2 meals per day and are commonly sold as a drink, powder or snack bar which has had a number of different nutrients added to it. Some research has shown that individuals can achieve weight loss using meal replacements but there is little evidence to support maintenance of this weight loss after stopping the use of the products or their use long-term.

There are some diets that have been developed as a result of research. The CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet for example is one of these. Although a higher protein intake is recommended, the balance of the different food groups is better for your health. The Total Wellbeing Diet, however, is still a diet which means that you are making big changes to your food intake and in your day to day routine.

It is important to remember that different diet strategies and methods will work for different people – you just have to find what works for you. But, everybody should consume a balance of food groups including healthy food choices.

For help with losing weight you can visit an Accredited Practising Dietitian who will work with you on your specific goals. If you are unsure about your current health and fitness levels, check with your GP before undertaking any new vigorous physical activity or exercise regimes.

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