Cut the Calories and the Screens to Cut Some Weight

Stand a random American on a scale, and odds are we'll find someone overweight or obese.

Increasingly, America is a nation of men, women, and children where the word *husky* is a compliment.

Many [statistics](#) confirm this expansion of our waistlines: More than 42 percent of adults over the age of 20 are now officially obese, and another more than 30 percent are overweight. Not to mention the over [19 percent](#) of children who are obese. And obesity rates are trending higher.

Though in [some cases](#) genetics can cause weight gain, for most of us, we pack on the pounds because we eat too much and exercise too little. Combine our taste for fast food, chips, and sugary drinks with our [gluttony](#), kick in the hours we spend as couch potatoes watching screens, and before we know it, we can't button the pants we got for Christmas. And it's only February.

That "we," by the way, is no rhetorical device. At one point, years ago, when I first joined the YMCA in Asheville, North Carolina, I used to joke to my teenage son that the hardest part of my workout was tying my shoes. An extra 40 pounds can do that.

Other factors influence this equation of weight gain as well. The COVID-19 pandemic confined many people in their homes for extended periods, and the consequent refrigerator grazing helped keep boredom at bay but plumped up the unwary.

Today's popular body positivity movement, while designed to make everyone comfortable in their own skin, may lead some to believe that being grossly overweight doesn't matter. Then

there are those who insist that obesity is not a choice but a [disease](#). That switcheroo may remove some of the stigma of obesity but also risks diminishing self-control and personal responsibility.

Many researchers and health professionals warn us about the dangers of toting around too many extra pounds. Obesity can [cause or exacerbate](#) heart problems, strokes, Type 2 diabetes, and even some kinds of cancer.

So, what's to be done? How does a person combat, prevent, and reverse weight gain?

The formula is simple, at least in theory. A healthy diet and daily exercise are the keys to weight loss.

And they are also easy to implement. Rather than heading to Burger King for lunch, pack a tuna fish sandwich and some apple slices. Rather than heaping up peanut butter on bread for a snack—one of my occasional vices—eat some carrot sticks or air-popped popcorn. Rather than spending hours watching televised sports or poking around online, head outside for a walk.

These involve changes in lifestyle and willpower, as I well know. It takes time to see any results, but the concept itself is a no-brainer and easily doable. My doctor has told me repeatedly that half an hour of walking a day will do wonders for my blood pressure. Discovering whether he's right means hitting the street and moving my feet.

In 1963, John F. Kennedy sparked the idea of a [50-mile hike](#), a phenomenon that caught on everywhere from the Boy Scouts to the military. Three years earlier, just before he become president, Kennedy wrote "[The Soft American](#)," published in *Sports Illustrated*, an essay expressing his concern about the decline of fitness among the young people of that day. For a little while, 50-mile hikes became all the rage.

My point? If some of these recent ancestors in the '60s—children included—could walk 50 miles at a good clip, we can surely stroll around the block a few times.

Exercise and diet: That's the ticket. I'll do my best to be there with you.

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[ITO](#)