



This blog post was created as part of a series for a fitness site focused on total health rather than shape or weight. Some specific elements were requested to be included to subtly encourage enrollment in one of their new fitness training programs.

3 TIPS FOR BETTER SPRING WEIGHT LOSS

You started the year with all the best intentions that by spring, you wouldn't panic about getting in shape for that teeny-weeny bikini, but things haven't gone so well. Like most of us, those resolutions you made in January were forgotten by February and no matter what you've done since then doesn't seem to be having much effect.

Perhaps you're having trouble sticking to your diet, or maybe it's been harder to stick to that new exercise routine than you thought.

One thing you know for sure, the weight loss plan you embarked on so ambitiously in January hasn't had the effects you were hoping for -- at least not yet. Rather than abandon your dreams of a fitter, slimmer summer, it's time to do a spring cleaning of your fitness plans.

Look to your diet

Are you eating the right foods or, more importantly, not eating the wrong ones? You should be doing what you can to avoid starchy carbs. These are found in things like potatoes, fried foods, processed foods, and white bread. Replace these foods with fruits and vegetables and replace those diet drinks with a simple glass of water. If you just hate water, you can squeeze a bit of fresh lemon or orange into it for a burst of good-for-you flavor.

Also keep in mind that to lose a pound, you need to reduce or burn 3,500 calories. You can do this through exercise, which we'll discuss in a moment, but it's much easier to get rid of if you never took in the calories to begin with. Regardless of the weight loss plan you choose, this simple fact will always be true.

Change things up

You know you're supposed to be getting your heart rate up for 30-40 minutes at least three or four days each week and maybe you've even been doing that for the past two months, but you're still not seeing the kind of results you want to see. The reason this might be true is because of the body's amazing natural ability to adapt. When you do the same thing day after day, whether it's jogging or weight training, your body begins to get used to the activity and it no longer needs as much energy to complete the tasks required of it.

Overcome your body's attempts at efficiency by changing up your routine and its intensity once in a while. If you haven't been active, try engaging in different activities appropriate for your health every other workout so your body doesn't know what to expect. This might be walking one day and light weight training another. Weight training is particularly helpful in that it shapes your muscles even while you build muscle tissue. Muscle, of course, is more efficient at burning calories than fat.

If you've already been pretty active but your results have been tapering off, try high intensity interval training (HIIT). This method of exercise changes activities frequently and gets your heart

rate going in short bursts at a time. This has proven to be more effective at burning off the extra calories than a steady routine of the same old thing.

Mind the S's

Something most people don't think of in terms of weight loss and dieting is the effects of sleep and stress on overall welfare. Feeling extreme levels of stress causes the body to produce more of a hormone called cortisol which increases the body's tendency to store fat. Stress also makes it more likely you'll break your diet with snack foods or other unhealthy eating habits. Instead of allowing stress to cause your weight to skyrocket, start practicing healthier habits such as taking a walk, meditating, or doing something active and fun. At the same time, do what you can to reduce the amount of negative stress you experience in your day-to-day life.

Getting enough sleep can also have positive effects on your weight loss goals. Missed sleep causes ghrelin levels to rise which stimulates your appetite while leptin levels go down, reducing your body's natural means of suppressing your appetite. Lack of sleep causes your body to feel more stressed (remember that cortisol), and you are awake longer for more frequent raids of the kitchen.

Conclusion

Taking a combined approach of watching your diet, engaging in varied exercise activities, and taking care of the basics like lowering stress and getting enough sleep will soon have you over that plateau and on the road again toward achieving the look you desire.