

Healthy habits

Tweak what you eat, and stay on your feet

By Lashonda Stinson Curry
Staff writer

Lots of people want to get healthy. It could mean losing weight, building muscle, eating less fatty foods or not smoking or drinking. Whatever the goal, experts agree, decide if the commitment is permanent or temporary. Do you want to lose 20 pounds or lose 20 pounds and keep it off?

Susan Burke March, author of the new book "Making Weight Control Second Nature: Living Thin Naturally" said people need to stop looking at "numbers on a scale" and look at the decisions they make. March, a registered and licensed dietitian for 18 years in Flagler Beach, suggests

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recording everything you eat and drink and then writing down one specific action you will do for the next four weeks. Eat a green salad before dinner. Drink less soda or coffee. Cut down trips to the vending machine.

"Look at your own lifestyle, and select one thing you believe is holding you back," said March, who lost 50 pounds years ago and has maintained it. "I never say eliminate. I say substitute. You want to feel fueled not deprived."

March said "diet" is a

word many people misuse and misinterpret when trying to lose weight.

"It's used as a verb, and it's supposed to be used as a noun. Your usual food and drink is your diet," she explained. "It's not about going on someone else's diet. It's finding a way to live on what you eat and drink. ... Make your usual diet healthy, and stay thin naturally."

The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences has recognized the challenge of staying on the healthy bandwagon and is offering a free, six-week program to motivate people to stay on track with improving their health. "Small Steps to Health and Wealth," which also focuses on personal finances, will give participants 10 recommended daily practices — five that involve health and nutrition, five related to money management. Points will be awarded for those who stick with daily practices, which include replacing sugary drinks with water or unsweetened beverages; eating at least four cups of fruits and vegetables; getting 30 minutes of exercise; walking at least 10,000 steps with a pedometer; and learning

something new about health and nutrition, according to an IFAS press release.

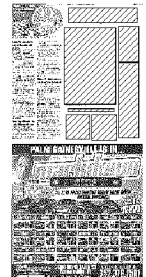
To sign up for the challenge, visit <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw> or call 955-2402.

Training yourself to shop at the supermarket will keep food in the fridge and you out of the drive-through line. March recommends going grocery shopping early Saturday morning or late Sunday, when the aisles are less packed. Make a list of what you want at the store, and then plan out your meals. Cook on the weekends, and triple a recipe so you can have food during the week. Freeze and label the leftovers and eat them for lunch or dinner later.

Getting in shape is not all about adjusting eating habits. Adding activity to your schedule is key, too.

March said the best way to monitor fitness is with a pedometer. Wear it for four or five days, and write down the step count at the end of each day. The next week, make it a goal to add 500 steps per day each week.

A good benchmark is 10,000 steps, which is about 5 miles. Exercising doesn't always mean working out, either. March said doing 30 minutes of vigorous



activity — walking in the neighborhood, dancing in the living room — at least three times a week is suitable for burning fat.

She added, “take activity where you can.” If you work or have to go somewhere on a higher floor, use the elevator, get off at a lower floor and take the steps the rest of the way. Or, before you go into work or after you leave, walk around the building once or twice.

Jeff Pickover owns Pick Fitness in Ocala and believes people should do their best to squeeze in exercise at available moments. He recommends setting the alarm clock back 15 or 20 minutes in the morning and using that time to get on your Wii Fit, pop in a fitness DVD or turn on one of those early-morning cable exercise shows. For sports lovers, he has created a fitness football challenge that links different exercises to specific events or plays during the game. For example, do five to 30 push-ups for a first down or 20 jumping lunges for every touchdown.

“People think they have to push for 40 to 60 minutes all at once, but that’s overwhelming, and eventually the retention level bottoms out,” he said. “Just break it up, and do what you can.”

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SUSAN BURKE MARCH, author

Tips for getting healthy in 2010

- Each week, plan to take at least one specific action regarding what you eat and drink.
- Make a food journal of your usual diet and then assess it by using online calorie-counting programs on weight and fitness management Web sites such as MyPyramid.gov, Nutrihand.com and Calorieking.com.
- Find support and motivation by working with a

buddy or joining Zwurly.com or Sparkpeople.com, Web sites that connect people who are interested in health and fitness and offer access to experts.

- Take activity where you can. Walk around your office building, apartment complex or neighborhood before or after work. Do jumping jacks or sit-ups during commercial breaks at home.
- Focus on portions as well as calories. Eating smaller, healthy meals more often equates to fewer calories.

Weight-loss seminar

What: Karen Coley-Cannon, certified weight-loss coach, will present a free seminar, “How To Lose Body Fat,” for those with weight-loss resolutions.

Where: Gainesville Health & Fitness Center, 4820 Newberry Road, Gainesville

When: 7 p.m. Jan. 26

Information: To register, call 377-4955.



AARON E. DAYE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tanya Fookes, right, performs the Heisman cardio exercise during the School of Strength class at Gainesville Health & Fitness Center on Jan. 13.