

S.P.E.E.D for Weight loss
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More than two thirds of Americans are overweight. Aside from the general discomfort of carrying extra weight, there are numerous co-morbidities. These include arthritis, heart disease, type two diabetes, gall bladder disease, certain cancers, hypertension and strokes.

There are dozens of fad diets and nutritional supplements for weight loss. Some work in the short term, but the weight often returns. In addition, some diets can cause muscle loss, which can negatively affect metabolism as well as health.

SPEED is an acronym standing for “Sleep, Psychological, Environmental, Exercise and Diet”. According to Jeff Thiboutot, M.S., C.N. and Matt Schoenberger, M.S., CES, authors of the book SPEED, addressing these five factors increases the chance of long term, sustainable weight loss.

Sleep is essential for weight loss. Research shows that less than 7-9 hours of sleep can adversely affect hormones, leading to weight gain. These include increased cortisol (a stress hormone), increased insulin (a fat storage hormone), a reduction in leptin (an appetite suppressant) and an increase in ghrelin (an appetite stimulant). There are many ways to improve sleep. Some of them include eating a protein snack before bed, taking an Epsom salt bath, avoiding stimulants (e.g. caffeine, sugar, TV, reading), and taking supplements such as melatonin and tryptophan. Acupuncture can also help balance the nervous system and circadian (sleep-wake) rhythms.

Psychological factors play an important role in the success of any weight loss program. What sort of relationship do you have with food? Do crave certain foods? Are you an emotional eater? These factors can often be identified by keeping a food journal and writing down what, when and why you eat. There are numerous books as well as specialists (nutritionists and therapists) who can help to address emotional eating habits.

Environmental factors can have a significant impact on weight gain. Chemicals know as “obesogens” permeate our food chain and are found in plastic bottles/containers as well as contaminants in processed foods, including baby food! Identifying and eliminating these sources is essential for weight loss and health. In some instances, a detoxification program is necessary to rid one’s body of these chemicals and help it to function properly.

Exercise, if done correctly, can accelerate fat loss. If done following conventional recommendations, it will cause carbohydrate cravings and be counter-productive. Intensity is the key for using exercise to lose weight. High intensity interval training (using weight lifting or aerobic activities) leads to EPOC (excess post exercise oxygen consumption). EPOC is the phenomenon whereby your body burns fat as part of the exercise recovery process. This can last for a couple of days after the exercise session. Focusing on exercising in the “fat burning zone” (the conventional way) leads to more efficient fat burning. This might sound favorable, but you actually burn less fat because your body becomes more efficient at using it for fuel (similar to a car having more efficient gas consumption- it uses less).

Diet can be a bit more complicated. Essentially, eating a “whole foods” diet with minimally refined/processed foods, low glycemic load carbohydrates, good fats and moderate protein is the foundation. Addressing each person’s unique food sensitivities is also important. Eating small, frequent meals is helpful. All calories are not equal. Foods have different thermal effects (it requires different amount of energy to break down different foods). For example, 100 calories from a bowl of broccoli requires more energy to break down than 100 calories from a bowl of Captain Crunch. Each of these foods affects hormones in the body, either leading to fat loss or fat storage.

A word about supplements

Some work, many don’t. Research has shown that some effective supplements for weight loss include:

1. Whey protein
2. Green tea and caffeine
3. Fiber (e.g. PGX) for sugar cravings
4. Fish oil
5. Bitter orange (synephrine)
6. Cayenne
7. Multivitamin/mineral

For more information about using S.P.E.E.D for weight loss, contact Evergreen Integrative Medicine (www.eimed.com) to find out about one-on-one counseling and group programs.