

[IMAGE]

## Put It in Writing

By Editorial Staff

A recent study suggests keeping a food diary can double your weight loss. The study, coordinated by the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research and conducted at Duke University Medical Center, Johns Hopkins University and other sites, involved nearly 1,700 overweight or obese adults ages 25 and older. Subjects maintained food diaries for six months and were encouraged to eat a healthy diet and stay physically active. They also met on a weekly basis to discuss their food diaries in a group format.

After six months, study participants who recorded their daily food intake six days a week had lost approximately 13 pounds - twice as much weight lost by those who kept a food diary one day or less per week. Number of days maintaining a food diary was the most powerful predictor of weight loss.

Here are a few other good reasons to chart the amount and types of food you eat, particularly if you're trying to lose weight. And remember, all it takes is a pen, paper and a few minutes each day to write down what you eat. If a particular food doesn't have a nutritional label (a banana, for example), several online sites provide comprehensive nutritional information on thousands of common foods.

1. Writing pencil - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark You might be shocked to learn how many calories they're eating on a daily basis - especially for certain foods and drinks. And too many people think portion size is all that matters; that perception will change when they find out a tiny piece of cheesecake has 800 calories and a full day's worth of fat.
2. One way to be motivated over the long term is to be invested in your progress. A food diary is that investment. It also helps you gauge how much exercise you need to do to reach your target calorie count for a given day.
3. A major reason why people don't stick with a nutrition or weight-loss regimen is lack of accountability. Most supervised weight-loss programs require participants to keep a food diary and submit it to their nutritionist, doctor or fitness counselor.

If you're still skeptical about the benefits of a food diary, consider that half of all participants in the National Weight Control Registry, which tracks the habits and practices of people who have lost at least 30 pounds

and kept it off for one year or more, say they use some type of self-monitoring such as a food diary.

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