

FACT SHEET

3 Steps to a Better Beach Body

Many Americans believe they need to make drastic changes in their lives to get healthy. Just the opposite is true. Small, achievable steps such as walking and practicing portion control are part of the National Institutes of Health education campaign to help reverse obesity. Minor changes in habits can go a long way in helping people delay and possibly prevent the onset of disease such as diabetes. In fact, just by losing 10 to 15 pounds and walking for 30 minutes 5 days a week, people with pre-diabetes can cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by more than half.

Tempted to skip breakfast? Think again. A study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that people who ate breakfast regularly weighed less, exercised more and ate fewer calories during the day than breakfast skippers. In fact, eating breakfast almost every day is the common habit shared by 90 percent of people participating in the National Weight Control Registry, a database of more than 4,000 people who have lost more than 30 pounds each and have kept it off at least one year. (Source: *Obesity Research*, February, 2002)

A study published in *Obesity Research* found that 38 percent of participants who consistently practiced food portion control, lost five percent or more of their baseline weight than other participants. In fact, of the five target behaviors studied, exercise, reducing dietary fat and increasing fruits and vegetables, portion control caused the greatest weight loss.

A new study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found a connection between dairy consumption and the body's ability to burn fat. In the study, women who ate three servings of dairy foods each day over the course of a year burned more fat and calories than women who consumed little or no dairy foods.

According to the National Institutes of Health, adults who eat out frequently have significantly more body fat than those who eat at home. Results in one study suggested people who eat at least one daily meal in restaurants had two times the risk of obesity. (Source: *American Journal of Epidemiology*, July 2003)

Researchers from the Mayo Clinic discovered that overweight people sit 150 minutes more each day on average than their leaner counterparts and burn 350 fewer calories a day. (Source: *Science*, January 2005)

Pump up to cheer up. The health benefits of 30 minutes physical activity each day are many. A review of 32 studies in the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* suggests that physical activity, especially when it includes weight training, may improve a person's mood and helps fight depression.