

When I revealed the amount of calories you burn after a half hour of brisk walking was less than 300 calories, my client turned to me and said, "so, if I just didn't eat 300 extra calories my body didn't need, then I could forgo the walk?"

Well, not exactly. You see over eating and inactivity is the reason we gain unwanted pounds. When you eat the same number of calories you burn off in a day you maintain your weight. If you want to loose fat you must somehow tip the scale so that you burn off more than you consume daily until you have reached your goal weight. You can do this by one of two ways. Reduce the calories you consume or increase your activity so you use more of your stored calories for energy.

There are 3500 calories in one pound of fat. One pound of extra fat also brings with it 1 mile of extra capillaries bringing more fat to the fat and three pounds of pressure over the low back and hips. We know it takes a fair amount of activity to burn 300 calories. It also means that you have to do that activity for a total of approximately 12 hours over one week to lose one pound of fat that week. Reducing your daily calories by 500 for seven days will also result in a one-pound loss of fat in one week.

So, what is the best approach? Double-team those fat cells. Diet and activity together pack the biggest punch against unwanted pounds. A one to two pound weight loss per week is realistic, safe and attainable without completely altering your lifestyle to succeed. And you'll get there faster when you combine both strategies.

Exercise not only burns fat, it also improves the fitness of your heart, especially when you choose activity that requires an intensity that elevates your heart rate above 60% of its maximum and is sustained for at least 20 minutes at a time. When you improve the fitness of your heart you become more efficient at fat metabolism (using fat for energy). Aswell, the more you exercise the better you are at releasing fat from stored cells. It takes time for these physiological changes to take place though and most people give up before their bodies have a chance to show them what can really happen.

We all have a tendency to over eat. A 500-calorie reduction in calories is pretty easy to do. Try it for one day. Put skim milk in your coffee instead of cream. Have poached eggs instead of fried without the bacon. Lightly spread butter on your toast or try jam instead. Have a no fat yogurt in place of a latte and muffin. Have a tossed salad with dressing on the side in place of the ever-loved ceasar salad. Is the appetizer really necessary? Serve dinner on a smaller plate. Try sherbert in place of ice cream. Enjoy only a half bag of light popcorn in place of the zesty nachos. You need to think a little, but it's easy to do if you give it a try. Once you've gotten through the day give yourself a pat on the back and try it again tomorrow. If you can start some good habits now when Christmas temptations are ramped you are in for some awesome results.

So, I say no to my client about forgoing the walk, and yes to steering clear of the extra 300 calories because we have a goal to be healthy, happy with our weight and feeling great because of it all.