



Is Dieting the Answer?

For those who want to shift a few kilos for health, or who want to make sure they get the right food to keep up energy levels, it can seem like there are so many conflicting opinions and advice that it's tough to know what's right.

We do need to be taking care of what we eat. Despite all the advances in health and science that should be helping us live a longer and healthier life, we are facing a future where many of us have a shortened life due to unhealthy food choices, and lack of regular physical activity.

Many people try and improve their diet by investing time and money in food plans, quick fix diets and 'detox' plans that promise results for little effort. While their intentions are well meaning, if health is the aim, then a balanced sensible approach, and advice from a professional rather than from an advertisement is more likely to provide the health results you want.

Sugar

If you have taken on board the many health messages, and want to consume less sugar, well done. There is no shortage of research that will confirm that reducing the amount of sugar, and thus the amount of processed food will contribute to your health.

When it comes to sugar the less we consume the better. For some this may mean a complete removal from their diet, and for others a reduction. It is important to note that sugar provides calories but has no nutritional benefit, so there is no health benefit in consuming it. It's just about taste and convenience.

Real food or supplementation?

No one chemical, food or supplement is going to make you healthier. In fact, it's our reliance on processed food that is causing much of the damage.

Real food, in as close to its natural form is going to have better health results than anything out of a packet or fast-food outlet. Combine plenty of unprocessed food in a balanced diet with treats kept to a minimum, with regular exercise to help you maintain a healthy weight.

What the Fat?

This is an area that seems to have completely conflicting information depending on who you speak with. The area around animal versus vegetable fats is full of debate at the moment, and continuing research is giving us more information. Too much fat is not good for us, and regardless of its source, should not be over consumed as too much of any food, be it 'good' or 'bad', is not the best option for our health. Many processed foods contain high quantities of fat without much nutritional value, so a diet full of whole foods is going to be better for you.

It's going to take some effort

With the huge volume of unhealthy but cheap and readily available food on offer, and the increasing demands on our time, any change of lifestyle is going to be some work. Time and effort spent preparing healthy meals and taking time out to get active may be a challenge in the short term, but the long-term gains will be worth it. The added benefit of exercising is that it can improve your mood and increase your energy levels, which will make the effort worthwhile.

Exercise plays an important role in health.

It is true that you can't out exercise an unhealthy diet, but exercise is an important contributor to health. While the latest diet product may claim that you can lose weight effectively and maintain good health, without exercise the World Health Organisation reports that physical activity is fundamental to energy balance and health. And the NZ Ministry of Health recommends lifestyle approaches rather than single factor approaches to weight management.

So instead of looking for a quick fix, look at making sure you eat a well-balanced diet, and talk to a Registered Exercise Professional about making exercise a part of your health plan.

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

