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By Tonya Rouse Hillenbrand



FRESH CONTROL — WEIGHT CONTROL.

Q: My friend dropped 70 pounds through a weight-loss program. She struggled with my weight for years—do these plans work for everyone? No matter which program you intend to use (Weight Watchers, NutriSystem, Jenny Craig), they all preach portion control and reduced

calorie intake. Short term, eating fewer calories will help you shed a few pounds. But in order to lose weight *and* keep it off, you'll need to find a balanced, nutritionally dense program that will work for you in the long run. Beware of plans that eliminate food groups; you need protein, fats, dairy, grains, veggies and fruit. The best approach is to keep your diet fresh. Try not to buy anything from the grocery store that comes in a box. Instead, load your cart with fruit, vegetables, dairy and meats. And show some self-control when it comes to portion sizes. Snacking every few hours will help prevent those mealtime binges. For some helpful guidelines, check out Canada's Food Guide at hc-sc.gc.ca.

Q: I'm ready to quit smoking. Any tips?

When kicking any habit, the first step is to identify the triggers behind it. Some people smoke for social

reasons—a smoke break with coworkers—while others may smoke to relieve stress. Identifying your triggers can help you butt out for good. If you use smoking as an excuse to get out of the office, steer clear of the smoking section in front of your building and go for a brisk walk. If you smoke when you drive, don't bring cigarettes into the car; put your glove compartment with gum instead. But as anyone who has tried to quit and failed will tell you, these things are easier said than done. Nearly all smokers go through a difficult withdrawal period. Give yourself a month to get over the symptoms. Nicotine replacement products (gum, patches) might also be helpful. My best advice? Take it one day at a time—even one minute at a time. Do whatever you need to succeed.

Q: What's the scoop on the açai berry? It seems to be everywhere these days.

It certainly has had a lot of hype, and the so-called superfood does have its merits. The tiny purple berry boasts one of the highest Oxygen Radical Absorption Capacity (ORAC) values for a fruit. The higher the ORAC, the higher the antioxidant content. It's important to eat a diet rich in antioxidants as they fight free radicals, which are thought to contribute to heart disease, cancer, arthritis and possibly Alzheimer's disease. Frozen açai pulp will get you the most bang for your buck, but the Amazonian berry is also available dried and juiced. Try it in your morning smoothie to get your day off to a good start. ■

DIY WORKOUTS



Forget high-priced trainers and fancy sports club equipment. Take control of your workouts with these affordable at-home helpers.

ONLINE TRAINER: SLIMTREE.COM

From pilates to kick-boxing, SlimTree.com boasts a vast library of great short fitness videos. They're fun, easy ways to inject variety into your workout without a big commitment. Plus, the price is right: You can stream for free or download unlimited programs for about \$6/week.

PORTABLE GYM: TRX SUSPENSION TRAINER

Take your workout to go with the TRX Suspension Trainer (from \$192, fitnessanywhere.com). At less than two pounds, it can be rigged up just about anywhere—even outdoors! Simply secure the straps to any sturdy base (tree branch, fence post, playground equipment) and you're good to go. The TRX uses your own body weight and gravity to provide a killer core workout like no other.

MOBILE NUTRITIONIST: MIO STRIDE WATCH

This ain't your average sports watch. The MIO Stride (\$102, miowatch.com) measures your heart rate, calories burned and motion (steps, speed and distance) to keep you on track with your fitness goals—all without a cumbersome chest strap.

Tonya Rouse Hillenbrand is a certified fitness and nutrition expert, and a former national triathlete and national team member.



Got a question?
Ask it at 2forcouples.com

