



Thursday » March
15 » 2007

Lose those last 10 pounds

The final slog in trimming down may be the most important

Michelle Magnan

For The Calgary Herald

Monday, March 12, 2007

Those final 10 pounds. You know the ones -- they're stubborn, unattractive and annoying.

If it seems your scale won't budge, you're not imagining things. The closer you get to your ideal healthy weight, the slower the loss. But don't let the pudge get you down. We've all been there.

"Those last five to 10 pounds are definitely the toughest," says Calgary's Jeff Funnekotter, a personal trainer and owner of Random Acts of Fitness, a corporate health and wellness provider.

"The good news is you've gotten into really good shape," he says. "The bad news is your body is saying, 'OK, what next?' "

What's next is crucial if you're dedicated to shedding that weight. And there's good reason to make the effort. A recent study by the National Cancer Institute in the U.S. shows that you don't have to be obese -- just moderately overweight in middle age -- to increase your chances of dying prematurely by 20 to 40 per cent. Carrying as little as 10 pounds of excess weight increases your risk of everything from heart disease and stroke to diabetes and certain cancers.

In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey found that more than one-third of adults were overweight and nearly one-quarter obese -- bad news, considering even a little extra weight can be harmful.

"Ten pounds is about the size of 10 pounds of butter," says Andrea Holwegner, a registered dietitian and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting. "For some people, that makes a huge difference on their health. For other people, they're already in a healthy range."

How do you know if you're in that range? Calculate your body-mass index (BMI), which is your weight divided by the square of your height (kg/m²). Or, if math hurts your head, see our factbox for a website that will do the calculation for you.

A BMI within 18.5 to 25 is considered healthy, while 25 to 29.9 is overweight and over 30 is obese. Keep in mind, though, that BMI doesn't account for gender or muscle mass.

Holwegner takes a more subjective approach. "My question is, how are you feeling in your clothes?"

If the answer is 'not good' -- or your BMI is too high -- there are some things you can do to help you drop those final pounds.

The first is to take a hard look at what you've been eating. There's a good chance you're

not getting enough fruits and vegetables. Holwegner recommends filling half your plate with vegetables, a quarter with starchy foods like potatoes or rice -- preferably whole grain -- and the remaining quarter with a source of protein such as fish or chicken. You should also cut your portion sizes, even if it's by a smidgeon.

"I call it portion distortion," says Holwegner. "Instead of a cup of rice, go for three-quarters and add more vegetables. The calorie count will be less."

Don't underestimate the cumulative effect of these tiny steps. "Bite-size changes equal supersize results."

While Funnekotter agrees clever nutrition strategies are your best allies, he also suggests sneaking in more exercise whenever you can. Keep exercise gear in your car. When someone you're meeting is running late, take the opportunity to take a quick walk to fill the gap.

Or swap one activity for another. "Instead of watching every episode of American Idol, take a long walk," he says. "Over the course of a year, (you'll have) cut out a reality show and all those minutes add up to a lot of calories burned." Trading American Idol to fit into your skinny jeans? You have nothing to lose in trying. Except those 10 pounds, of course.

mmagnan@theherald.canwest.com

Four More Tips to Drop the Final 10

1. Sorry, there's no getting around it. You need to sweat more to lose more. "You've got to spend those extra five to 10 minutes, go the extra mile," says personal trainer Jeff Funnekotter. So, add some reps, up the intensity on your cross trainer or tack another kilometre onto your run. "Really push yourself beyond what you're used to doing."
2. Track your progress to stay motivated. Looking at what you've already accomplished often gives you enough of a push to keep going. As Funnekotter explains, "You wouldn't hike halfway up Mount Everest to turn around and say, 'I'm good.' You want to see how much more you can go."
3. Enlist a professional's help when weight loss slows. "General books and information probably won't help you much because it's not tailored enough," says registered dietitian Andrea Holwegner. To fine-tune your efforts, book a one-on-one with a fitness pro and/or a dietitian.
4. Keep in mind that if the pounds stick around, it could be that you have none to lose. "There's a difference in what people think they should weigh and what their body wants to weigh," says Holwegner. "Don't get so hung up on the numbers."

© The Calgary Herald 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.