

Killing Ourselves with Convenience

Approximately 55 percent of the U.S. population is overweight or obese. Maintaining a normal weight requires a balance between calories taken in and used for energy. Previous generations ate a lot more calories, but they worked a lot harder. They walked many places whereas today we drive even short distances. Instead of working in the fields, we sit at our computers. On our way home, we stop for fast food and spend an average of three or more hours watching television in the evening.

Too many calories and too much sitting are strongly linked to weight gain. A recent study found that our children are gaining weight too for the same reasons. Overweight parents tend to have overweight children. Overweight people are more likely to have high blood pressure, diabetes, some types of cancer, and joint problems related to arthritis.

Can this trend be reversed? The answer is yes, but if you have tried to lose weight and increase your activity level, you know changing is not easy. Eating high caloric foods and sitting in front of the television is much easier.

Changing eating and activity patterns requires effort and planning. Spend time learning about whether or not you need to lose weight and if you can safely begin an activity program. Learn about your options. Just because you have tried before and not been successful does not mean you cannot be successful this time.

Losing weight and increasing activity does not mean you have to suffer or spend a lot of money for special foods, pills, books, or equipment. People who went from an average weight of 210 to an average of 145 pounds and maintained their loss for an average of 5½ years attributed their success to controlling calorie intake, limiting portion sizes, eating five meals each day, never skipping meals, eating out no more than three times each week with only one of those times at a fast food restaurant, and using up about 2,700 calories a week in physical activity beyond that required for daily activities like gardening or housecleaning. A majority of these 629 successful losers in the National Weight Control Registry said they had been overweight since childhood or had a family history of obesity.

Getting started is hard. Programs claiming quick weight loss with little or no effort tend to help remove little more than your dollars.

If you and your family, friends, co-workers, or church group want to get started on the road to better health, call your county Extension agent, _____ at _____ to learn about Walk Across Texas. Walk Across Texas can help you start walking and/or losing weight. The program is free and can be an important step towards better health for you and your entire family.