101 Fitness Tips that really work!

Hey there,

First of all, welcome!

Part of the mission we have here at Dragon Gym is to spread the benefits of martial arts, kettlebells, yoga and fitness training to the community. We've been helping people for over 40 years!

Getting and staying fit isn't always easy.   Sometimes there are ups and downs and life throws us unexpected roadblocks. At other time our fitness routines may have stopped working or have just gotten frustrating or boring.

So, we complied this list with a couple of thoughts in mind. One, to introduce you to some new strategies that you may not have thought of and could be just the tip you're looking for. Two, have some fun again with exercise and fitness.   We wanted to make this list both fun and easy to get through.

How to get through this list:

- The 101 Fitness tips have been put together in "meme" format so that you can quickly skim through all of them and see what resonates with you.
- Don't try to implement all 101 tips at once!
- Start with one or two strategies and try to add more if it makes sense
- Some of the tips might be contradictory. Remember, you don't have to all 101 tips at once. They all work, but you have to find what works for you!

We're here to help you with your health and fitness needs. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if you would like more information regarding working out, nutrition, martial arts or fitness.

Sincerely,

Somnath Sikdar
President
Dragon Gym Martial Arts & Fitness

www.dragongym.com

DG Fit Tip #1

DRINK GREEN TEA

This probably isn't news to you, but drinking green tea promotes weight loss. This is because it contains a wonderful group of polyphenols (antioxidants) known as catechins. Research has discovered that not only is green tea beneficial to health, but some studies have shown that it can also prevent the accumulation of fat inside fat cells. Green tea is also a mild appetite suppressant.

Don't Save Calories to Splurge on Junk

DG FIT TIP #2

Junk food will not leave you satisfied later in the day – plain and simple. If you 'save calories' to splurge on junk food, then later on you're still going to be hungry because junk food lacks the nutrients that healthy food has in abundance. Treat yourself occasionally, but stick to high-quality, healthy foods which will satisfy you in the *long-term* and move you closer to your ideal healthy weight.
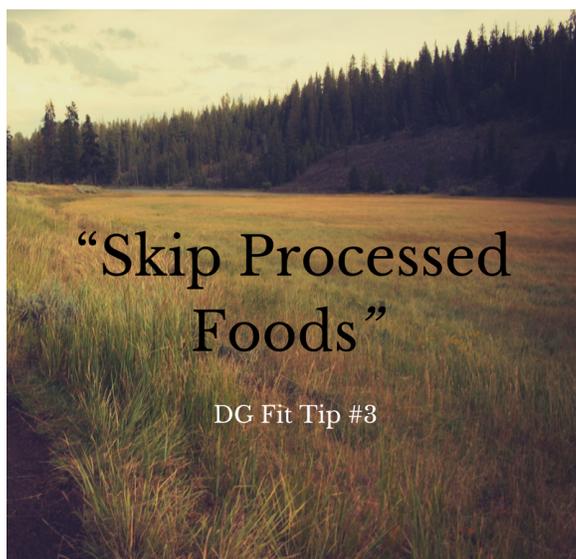
"Skip Processed Foods"

DG Fit Tip #3

Most processed foods are filled-to-the-brim with sugars and hydrogenated fats, while providing a fraction of the nutritional value you'd get from the healthy non-processed food. What's more, the sugar-free, fat-free, carb-free meals are usually packed full of chemicals you don't want in your body. Ditch the processed foods and make your health and weight-loss a priority.

DG Fit Tip #4

Get Enough Sleep
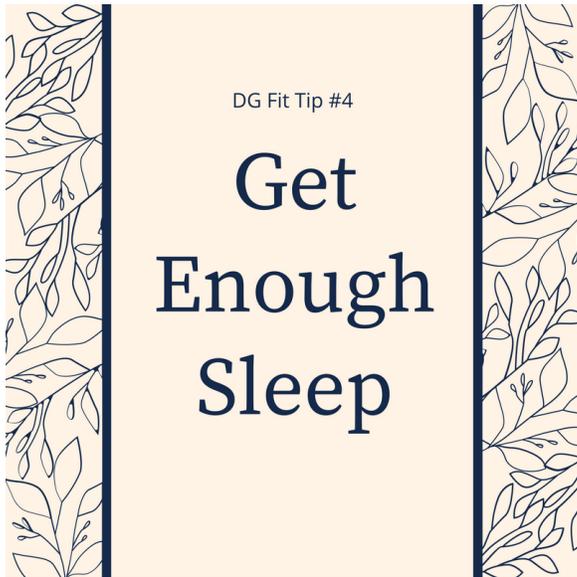
Great news for all us sleep-lovers, recent studies show that getting enough shut-eye is good for your health and your weight loss goals. The gist of it goes like this: most of us are sleep-deprived, getting less than the optimal 7 – 9 hours of sleep; in the study the group that got 8.5 hours sleep lost more weight than the 5 hour sleepers. There is also evidence that adequate sleep can turn off obesity-related genes. So if you're not already getting enough sleep, do it for the health benefits and to help you reach your ideal weight.

• DG FIT TIP #5 •

Get Active at Home.

We're spending more and more time sedentary at home; watching television, on the internet, etc. See if you can get active – try watching T.V. standing up, do short bursts of exercise during commercial breaks, ditch the remote, try using a standing desk while you're on the Internet.

DG FIT TIP #6

DON'T EXERCISE ON AN EMPTY STOMACH*

Common sense would seem to say that exercising on an empty stomach would burn more fat, but the research actually shows that the calories burned actually come from muscle rather than fat. Remember, not only do you want the muscle because it looks good, but it also increases your at-rest fat-burning metabolism. In addition, by not being properly fuelled you can't exercise as intensely, so grab a simple carb snack 15 – 30 minutes before you hit the gym (carbs give your body energy and simple carbs digest easily).

WEIGH YOURSELF WEEKLY

DG FIT TIP #7

While some studies have shown that daily weigh-ins promote maintenance of healthy weight, it's not necessarily true when you're trying to lose weight. Losing weight takes time and your weight fluctuates from day-to-day (as well as monthly), so rather than doing daily weigh-ins, opt for weekly weigh-ins – as long as you've been making healthy choices and upping your activity level, you should see good results and you'll be motivated by your success. Also remember, the best time to weigh yourself is in the morning.

DG FIT TIP #8

DRINK RED WINE

There are already many studies which have found that a small glass of red wine (about 125ml) a day is beneficial for health, and now there is increasing evidence that the resveratrol (a powerful antioxidant) found in wine could help to release fat. Another study showed that women who were light drinkers had less weight gain and less risk of obesity than those who drank no alcohol, in addition a study using animal models found that the resveratrol also helped increase exercise endurance. If you'd rather not drink, peanuts, blueberries, cranberries and pomegranate are good non-alcoholic sources of resveratrol.

DG FIT TIP #9

Limit The Amount of Salad Dressing

Most salad dressings are surprisingly high in calories, for example: 2 tablespoons of French dressing can easily be as much as 150 calories. We love getting enough good healthy fats, but it has to be done in moderation if you want to drop those pounds. Opt for some low-calorie, healthy alternatives instead: try a squeeze of lemon juice, balsamic vinegar or even some salsa (a powerhouse of nutrition).

DG FIT TIP #10

Focus on Eating, When You're Eating

The day and age of multitasking in which we are in is not a friend to weight loss. It turns out that if you eat while multi-tasking, you're apt to eat more, partly because the distraction makes it harder for you to recognize feelings of fullness. Psychologically, you're also less likely to count it as an actual meal, so it's easy for it to slip by unnoticed. The solution is to drop the multi-tasking when you're eating, set some time aside for your meal, sit down and focus on eating your food and little else.

Use a Food Journal!

DG FIT TIP #11

Journaling is a great way to make hidden habits and triggers obvious. When you track the food you eat (and physical activity), it will help you to identify the habits and emotional triggers you have to eating. Journaling is one of the most powerful tools to aid in weight loss according to the National Weight Control Registry.

DG FIT TIP #12

" TAKE SMALL STEPS "

Diving head first into a super-strict diet is much harder to do than taking small steps into a new way of eating. According to wellness expert Kathy Freson, if instead of focusing on cutting out prohibited foods, you begin to crowd them out with healthy alternatives, then little by little you'll have no room left for the bad stuff. So set a plan to add one healthy piece to your diet every single day: swap some candies for fruits, add a couple of veggies, drink water before your meals, try some ground flax seed etc. By the time you've been going for a month, you'll already be well on your way to a healthier and leaner body!

STAY COMMITTED TO YOUR GOALS

DG FIT TIP #13

Losing weight isn't always easy, there are usually lots of factors: from your relationship, to food addictions, to emotional triggers – the list goes on. But it is possible, because people do it all the time and they keep the weight off, and it is possible for you to do too. You need to realize that you will have moments of weakness, but just because you mess up 1 meal doesn't mean the whole day is ruined – the sooner you can get back on the wagon the closer you'll be heading to your goals and the better you'll feel. Stay committed because you're worth the commitment and show the world what you can do.

DG FIT TIP #14

GET

MOVING

The less time you spend sedentary, the better. If you work an office job, you already spend most of your day sitting down (which burns very little calories). So stand up, move around. Remember, every little bit of activity you do all adds up to your daily total: the more small bits of activity you do, the more calories you'll have burnt by the end of the day. It all counts!

FOLLOW THE NUTRIENTS

DG FIT TIP #15

Try to pack your diet full of as many nutrient-rich foods as you can: lean meats, low-fat dairy, fruits and vegetables. Include as many of these foods (in the right proportions) as you can at every meal.

Don't heap food on your plate, otherwise you'll be inclined to eat it. The exception is if it's vegetables, in which case go crazy (but not with potatoes).

REDUCE YOUR PLATE SIZE

It sounds strange, but studies have shown that the smaller your plate, the less food you tend to eat. For example, a simple change from 12 to 10 inches can decrease the food you eat by up to 22%, isn't that awesome?

Desert should be a infrequent treat, not a daily occurrence. Even the so-called 'light' versions are often not that diet-friendly (and they're usually loaded with other unhealthy additives), plus they come in bulk packs which only make it harder to resist overeating these treats: remember, if it's in the house you'll eat it, so stock healthy and you'll eat healthy. So, have deserts once in a while, but don't turn them into a reward, just enjoy them for what they are: an indulgent treat.
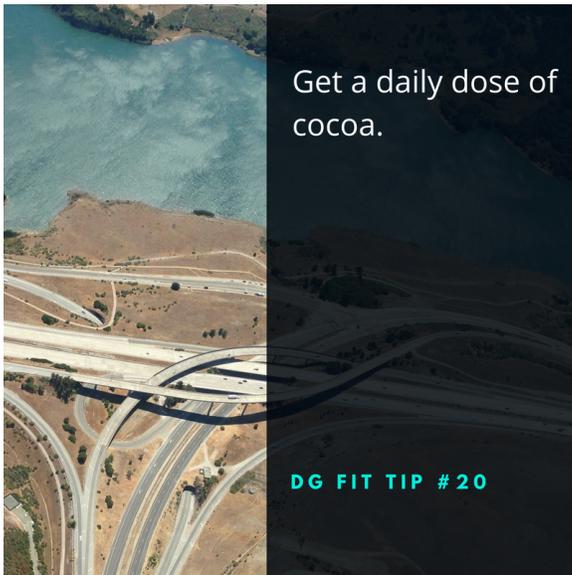
Get a daily dose of cocoa.

DG FIT TIP #20

Now you're talking our language: an excuse to eat more chocolate? Bring it on! Well, not exactly... a study from the Journal of Nutrition found that the antioxidants in cocoa reduced fat deposits in mice (as well as reducing degeneration in the aortic arteries). The trick is, normal chocolate wont do because it's loaded with sugar, so opt for a high-cocoa (80-90%), low-sugar chocolate. Or even better, get unsweetened cocao powder and add it to smoothies and other recipes.

Eat Healthy Fats.

DG FIT TIP #21

Fats have gotten a bad rap, but not only are healthy fats essential to good health, a Harvard study found that eating good fats actually makes your body more efficient at burning fat. In the study, the group eating healthy fats lost 5 more pounds than the low-fat diet group. Healthy fats are usually high in calories, and you should aim to get about 20% of your calories from these nutritional powerhouses; good sources include: nuts, avocados, extra virgin olive oil and wild salmon.

Eat More Flax Seeds.

DG FIT TIP #22

These little gems are an ideal weight loss food: they're packed with healthy fats, fiber, minerals and vitamins. The high fiber content (1 ounce is 32% of your RDA) makes you feel full because it promotes the release of leptin (the hormone that makes you feel full), but even more so with flax seeds, because they form a gel-like substance which enhances the feeling of satiety. In addition to this, the healthy fats help increase your metabolism. For weight loss, make sure you have ground flax seed, which is far easier to digest and divide it into portions to have with you meals throughout the day (sprinkled on food, or in smoothies).

LAUGH.

DG FIT TIP #23
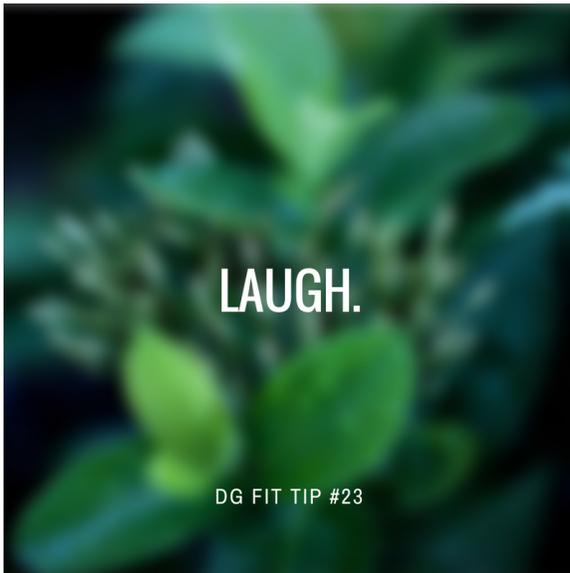
You probably already know that laughter is a good way to reduce stress (and we've talked about the weight loss benefits of lower stress), but did you also know that British researchers have found that 1 hour of intense laughter burnt up to 120 calories – that's a pretty good workout! So if you're going to watch TV, make sure you watch the sitcoms, grab some healthy snacks and ditch the remote – your waist will thank you.

DG FIT TIP #24

A HEALTHY FOOD ISN'T ALWAYS LOW-CALORIE

Especially when you talking about foods high in fats and oils, for example: an avocado has about 145 calories while olive oil packs a mammoth 120 calories per tablespoon. So even though they're healthy, if you gorge yourself on them it won't help you to lose weight at all. Find some healthy, low-calorie foods you can eat in a lot of and snack on those when you're hungry, try: celery, spinach, cottage cheese, carrots.

DG # 25 FIT TIP

NUTRITION LABELS CAN BE MISLEADING

★ ★ ★

Make sure you check the sugar and fat content when you shop for food.

Plan Ahead
DG FIT TIP #26

Spend some time in the evening planning what you're going to eat the next day. When you have no idea what you're going to eat and hits lunchtime, it's easy to reach for the most convenient or most familiar food – not usually the healthiest option. By planning ahead you will be prepared to make the healthy choice when the time comes. Check out restaurant menus, calorie counts or if you want to be really prepared: make and pack your healthy meals and snacks for the next day – well done!

SKIP THE SOLID FATS
DG FIT TIP #27

Solid fats are an example of empty calories – high calorie foods, with little (or no) nutrients: butter, beef fat and shortening. These are fats which stay solid at room temperature and are added to many foods to appeal to our tastebuds (as well as occurring naturally in some foods), e.g. cakes, cookies, cheese, pizza and bacon. The problem isn't that they're necessarily bad, but that most people just eat far too many of them, so serious moderation is key!

## TALK TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS
DG FIT TIP #28

We humans are funny creatures, often people get attached to having you remain a certain way, for whatever reasons of their own (maybe even unknown to them). Unfortunately, this rarely serves you in being the person who *you* want to be. When you want to lose weight, and when you start losing weight family and friends may seem to tempt you off the path, the best way to deal with this is communication: explain to them that this weight loss is truly important to you and you'd love their support. If they're unable to do that, respect them but stay focused on your weight loss goals – this is your life, not theirs.

Find out *your* caloric needs.

DG FIT TIP #29

Fundamentally, weight loss is pretty simple: burn more calories (energy) than you consume. If you want to lose weight you need to consume about 500 calories less than you need every day, but in order to do this you need to know your daily caloric needs. Without knowing this, it'd be like trying to shoot a target while blindfolded – you have no idea where to aim.

CHEW GUM

while you cook!

DG FIT TIP #30

If you nibble on food while you're cooking then try chewing a stick of gum while you prepare your meals. You'll freshen your breath and you'll reduce your total calorie intake.

"Don't do diets."

DG FIT TIP #31

Yes, you read that right. The problem with being on a 'diet' is that it puts negative psychological pressure on you. A diet by it's nature is temporary; however, reaching and maintaining your ideal healthy weight is something which requires making lifestyle changes which stay with you for good. Find out what works for you, which activities are the most fun, the healthy foods you enjoy most and make those part of your life – remember, the more fun and enjoyable you make this, the more successful you're going to be!

Find out what motivates YOU.

 Reaching your ideal healthy weight isn't going to be easy in the beginning: it requires making hundreds of healthy mini-decisions every day. When you have to choose between a piece of cake and a piece of fruit, your taste-buds are going to tell you to eat the cake, so you have to dig deeper from the beginning and find out why you're really doing this and why it's important to you, because if it is important enough to you then you'll make the healthy decision. This doesn't mean that you won't have times when you make mistakes, but it does mean that you wont waste time getting back onto the health-wagon when you do.

EAT
WATERMELON

A recent study found that the group (animal models) who ate watermelon had a 50% decrease in arterial plaque, high levels of citrulline (which is good for general health) and even more exciting 30% less weight gain. Watermelon is such a treat, just make sure you also get close to the rind, where there is an abundance of citrulline.

Eat more broccoli.

Broccoli is a powerhouse of nutrition: it contains more vitamin C than an orange, is contains a paltry amount of calories in comparison to its' incredible nutritional profile and contains as much calcium as a glass of milk. It's the perfect Volumetric diet food, with a very low amount of calories per bite and studies have even shown that it can help boost DNA repair in cells. Add raw grated brocolli to salads, or even try snacking on small florets.

COUNT TO 100

Next time a craving comes up, slowly count to 100 while you focus your mind on both your short and long-term weight loss goals.

Drink Water

Zero calories, super-hydrating – need we say more? Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Add a slice of lemon and boom, you've got yourself a great-tasting, hydrating drink.

RECORD
YOUR
CALORIES

Studies have shown that people who count calories have dramatically more success at losing weight and keeping it off than those who don't. It also helps you to structure your eating and reveals some surprising high-calorie culprits!

DG FIT TIP #38

WATCH YOUR WEEKENDS!

Many people are able to stick to a pretty healthy diet during the week when they're following the work-week routine, but once the freedom of the weekend arrives: woohoo, all bets are off! You need to be strong, not weak, on the weekend. So one of the things you can do to make things easier, is allow yourself a single 'cheat meal' each weekend. This does not mean that you make up for a weeks-worth of not having deserts, but simply that you're a bit more relaxed with the foods you allow for that meal. Warning, do not let your 'cheat meal' turn into a 'cheat day' otherwise you risk undoing all your hard work from the week! Many people skip 'cheat meals' entirely, so it's down to your personal preference.

DG FIT TIP #39

DON'T DRINK YOUR CALORIES.
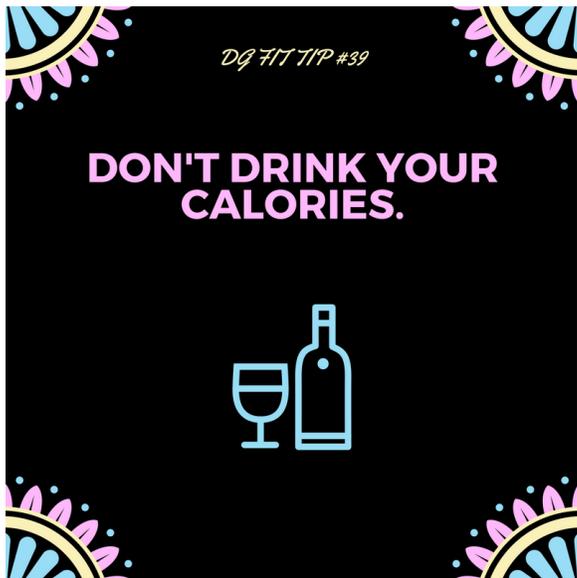
Ditch the sodas, most of them are just water loaded with sugar. Limit how much fruit juice you drink to a max of 1 glass a day – it's high in natural sugars and thus very calorific. Alcohol is also very high in calories and contains almost no nutritional value (it's actually a toxin), so take it easy on how much you drink.

Eat Nuts

IN MODERTATION

DG FIT TIP #40
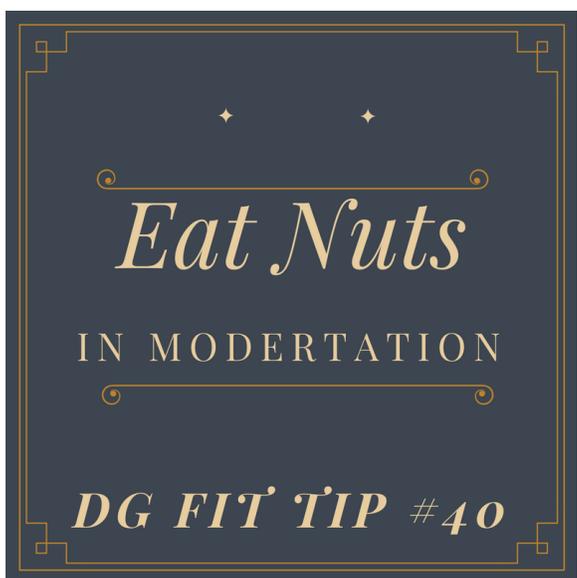
Nuts are jam-packed with healthy compounds, from healthy fats and antioxidants to essential minerals and vitamins. Research is showing that for weight loss, eating bigger portions of healthy foods is actually more important than dieting because, simply put, you'll have less room and less inclination to eat junk food when you've already got a belly full of the healthy stuff. Nuts are a great for this, because they are high in fibre and slow to digest, plus the healthy fats help make you feel full. Remember, we're not talking about the roasted, salted kind – keep your nuts natural and grab a handful to snack on before you go out to keep hunger at bay.

REWARD YOURSELF

Have a list of rewards which will keep you motivated to attaining your weight loss goals. Make them realistic and achievable, but don't make your rewards about foods – go for something totally different, yet just as rewarding, e.g.: watch a movie, go shopping, whatever tickles your fancy.

GET ACTIVE AT WORK

DG FIT TIP #42

Let's face it, most of us do a lot of sitting during work hours. So break it up as frequently as possible, get up from your desk for a standing break, talk to collegues face-to-face rather than email, take the stairs! And, if it seems like your kind of thing, see if you can convince your work to get you a standing-desk. Commuting via the train? Stand to burn extra calories. Remember, all the small steps add up.

DON'T SNEAK SNACKS!

If you sneak in little bites from other peoples plates (friends, kids, spouse) then stop it. All those calories add up, especially the sweet stuff, and if you're taking a bite from here and there, pretty soon you'll be looking at a big increase in calories for that meal… and one that's often discounted because it wasn't on your plate – but it still adds up! Not only that, most people don't count these sneaky bites in their food journals. If you want to share a desert, cut your own slice so you can account for those calories.

cut up your food

As strange as it sounds, a study has shown that cutting up your food can help you feel more satisfied by your meal. The reason is that we judge food quantity by number (with larger numbers taken to mean more food), so the psychological effect is that you feel like you've eaten more. Try it out and let us know!

DG FIT TIP #45

EAT SOUP

Food in a liquid form is absorbed slowly, and because of the water content, expands your stomach causing you to feel full.

Experiment with Volumetrics
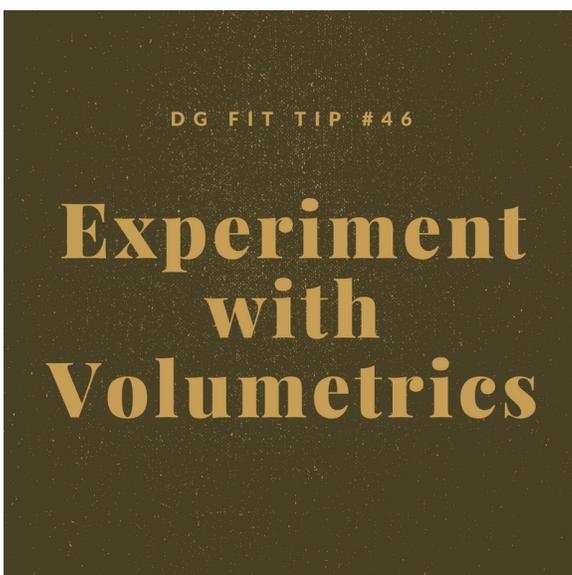
Volumetrics is a way of eating which is based on calories per bite: the less calories per bite, the bigger the portion size, but the less calories per meal. Volumetrics aims at making you feel satiated (i.e. not hungry) at each meal but with less caloric intake. The trick is to eat mainly high-volume foods: brothy soups, vegetables and fruit and limiting low-volume high-calorie foods.

Start with Veggies

Veggies (especially the dark green leafy and cruciferous types) are nutritionally dense and will help fill you up – meaning less room for junk-food snacking! Also, since recent studies show that we need 7 (instead of 5) daily servings of fruits and veggies, the more vegetables the better. The only exception is potatoes – go easy on these, because they pack a hefty caloric punch.

DG FIT TIP #48

- RELAX -

Stress is bad for our health in many ways, but it's also an enemy of weight loss. Boo for stress! When you stress yourself out your body produces a shot of adrenaline and cortisol to deal with the perceived flight-or-fight situation. The adrenaline leaves your system pretty quickly, but it's the cortisol which hangs around for longer stimulating insulin, which in turn can result in an increase in appetite. Not only that, a Swedish study has found that cortisol may also lead to increased fat storage around the abdomen. Lack of sleep has also been found to increase cortisol levels. Uh-oh. So make sure you take time to relax during your day, or make a little me-time in the evenings where you won't be disturbed, do some yoga in the mornings or even try meditating. Not only will you be more mentally calm and able to deal with life, but you'll look better while you do!

DG FIT TIP #49

DON'T EAT OUT AS OFTEN

When you eat out at a restaurant, you typically have less control over portion sizes, ingredients and cooking methods. If you eat out, find out the low-calorie, healthy food choices before you arrive, and if it means having to be a fussy eater, then so be it, after all you'll never see the waiter again, but your health is with you your whole life.

SAY NO TO SUGAR

DG FIT TIP #50

Refined sugars and many artificial sweeteners are the enemy of weight loss (and good health). The main problem is the amount of sugar the average person consumes is huge! Things like candies and cakes are almost devoid of nutritional value and displace your desire for healthy foods – you're not going to snack on some snap peas after you've had a cake, are you? The American Heart Association recommends most women get no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugar a day (24 grams). The problem is that it's tucked away in places you'd never thing to look (until now) from condiments to crackers – so read the labels. The healthy alternative is to treat yourself with fruits instead, and maybe try a healthier, weight-loss friendly sugar alternative like stevia.

DG FIT TIP #51

BE FLEXIBLE

Trying to stick to an overly regimented and disciplined diet is no fun at all – weight loss should be fun, when you think about it you get to be healthier and look better – those are good reasons to smile. You're going to make mistakes and you're going to have days when you wonder why you're doing this at all, but when you see it through and you can see and feel the results of your efforts, you'll know it was worth it. Rocky said it best: "It's not about how many times you can hit, it's about how many times you can get hit and get back up". The most important thing is to stick to it every day, make it fun and you'll be there sooner than you think!

DG FIT TIP #52

PUT IT IN A BOWL

Don't eat food directly from the bag: ration it out, put it in a bowl or on a plate and then pack the container safely away before you eat. This way you'll be much less likely to go back for another handful (especially if you make it really difficult to reach the container again).

DG Git Tip #53

Use Olive Oil

You've probably already know how good the Mediterranean diet is because it's packed with high-quality proteins, an abundance of vegetables and healthy fats. Well, it turns out that olive oil is also a big part in making this diet so healthy – it's packed full of polyphenols (antioxidants) and vitamin E. In addition to the many benefits of olive oil, studies have shown that it also speeds up the rate of fat oxidation, in other words it helps you to burn fat faster! Olive oil is quite high in calories so moderation is key and if you can, go for extra-virgin olive oil, yes it's more expensive, but it's so worth it. Be careful though, olive-oil packs a serious calorie punch: 120 calories per tablespoon! So if you do use it, make sure it's just a teaspoon, about 40 calories.

DG FIT TIP #55

DO IT SLOWLY
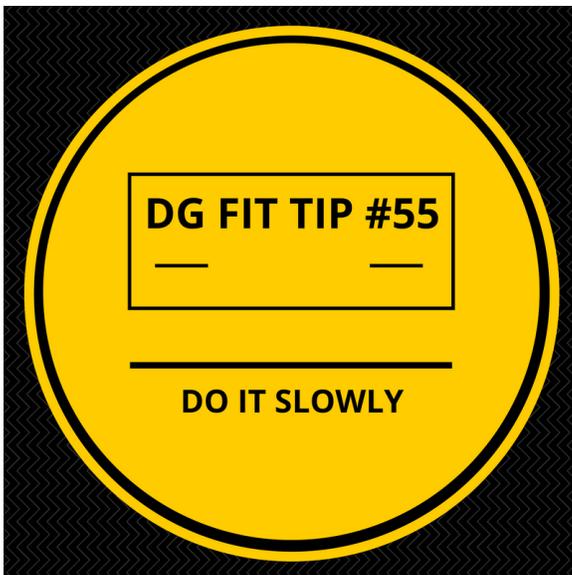
Like the saying goes: "You didn't put it on in a day; don't expect to get it off in a day." Studies have repeatedly shown that the most successful approach to lose weight and *keep it off* is slow and steady; aiming to lose about 1-2 pounds per week means that the weight loss will primarily be fat as opposed to muscle.

DON'T EAT STANDING UP

DG FIT TIP #56
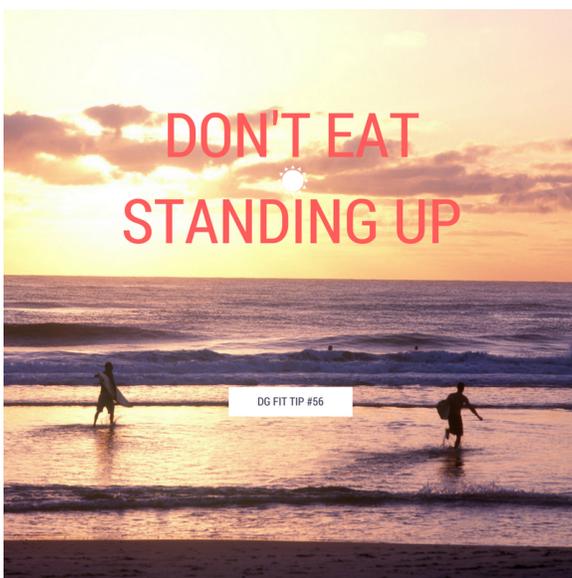
Research has shown that people tend to eat more food and faster when they eat standing up – i.e. away from the meal table. Psychologically, it's much easier to discount those mini-meals we have away from set meal times, yet they all add up to a higher total calorie count – bad for weight loss. It's good to eat when you're hungry once you've reached your ideal healthy weight because you will have retrained your eating patterns to follow a more healthy schedule. Until that point, if you find yourself eating while standing, you're probably snacking when you shouldn't be (unless it's a healthy snack), so save it for your scheduled meal time!

DG FIT TIP #57

DON'T WATCH COOKING SHOWS

We love looking at images of delicious sticky, sweet and savory foods we know we shouldn't be eating, as much as the next person. But… neuroscientists have discovered that spending hours pouring over these images provoke a real emotional and physical hunger – duh! To make matters worse, they have found that people who are overweight appear to be more sensitive to the effect of viewing delicious foods. Studies have also found that looking at images of delicious foods actually increases the level of ghrelin (the hormone which makes you feel hungry) and further to that, studies have shown that people looking at food porn were more likely to overeat later than those who were looking at the actual food on a plate in front of them! So, stay away from the food porn… or try the healthier options: images of healthy food and exercise.

REST YOUR CUTLERY BETWEEN BITES

#KICKOFF14

Most of us eat way too fast, lots to do right? The problem with this is that it takes about 20 minutes from the time you start eating for your brain to tell you you're full. In other words, by eating too fast, your brain doesn't have enough time to tell you: "Whoa stop, the tank is full". By eating at a slower pace, you give it plenty of time to send the signals and help you avoid over-eating.

DG FIT TIP #59

Pack Healthy Snacks

If you pack healthy, you'll eat healthy. For e.g. fruit can give you that sugar fix when you need it and it's a totally guilt-free snack.

FIND AN EXERCISE YOU LOVE

May the warmth and glow of each candle
you light make your heart and home happy,
your Hanukkah bright

Just because most people think about gym when they think about weight loss, doesn't mean that's what you need to do. There are lots of exercise options out there: from basketball to running to rock climbing. Find an exercise you love to do and you'll have a lot more fun getting the weight off. Just make sure that it burns enough calories, golf is fun but you're not going to burn a lot of calories playing it (well, unless you use two clubs at a time and run the course).

DG FIT TIP #61

BEWARE OF HIDDEN CALORIES

Many of our everyday foods contain calories which add up quickly. Especially beware of calorie-dense foods which contain huge amounts of calories even though you get very little food.

Eat at Regular Intervals

DG FIT TIP #62

Although the latest studies have shown that meal frequency is not related to weight loss, it can still be a good idea to eat at regular intervals. The reason? Recent studies have shown that skipping meals can cluster together with other behaviours (like lack of meal planning) with the result that you reach for unhealthy, high-calorie but convenient foods.

TEAM UP

DG FIT TIP #63

Buddy up with someone who has the same goals as you and is *serious about reaching them*, then set a plan and stick to it. Hold each other accountable.

DG FIT TIP #64

DRINK YOUR COFFEE BLACK

We love a good cup of joe, and there has been some talk about it being good for weight loss (but the jury is still out on whether it's actually good for weight loss or bad for it). What we do know for certain though, is that loading your coffee up with sugar, milk and whipped cream is definitely *bad* for weight loss! So if you're going to enjoy coffee (and we still do) stick to a shot of espresso or a cup of joe, black no sugar.

DG FIT TIP #65

FOCUS ON SHORT & LONG TERM GOALS

People who sucessfully lose weight and keep it off tend to have short-term as well as long-term goals. Establish your long-term goal and then break it down into smaller, more attainable pieces – daily, weekly and monthly goals. Quick tip: some research has shown that if you make goals which seem almost a little too easy that it can be much more motivating because it feels more attainable. In addition, a recent study has found that when cravings come up if you focus on your short and long-term weight loss goals it activates the prefrontal cortex which dulls the craving; as an added bonus it also increases your ability to resist temptation.

DG FIT TIP #66

Lift Weights

You'll get more muscle and muscle increases resting metabolic rate – that means you'll burn more calories even when you're not working out. So not only do you get better body composition and look more toned, but you also get fat-loss thrown in for free. If you're a woman, you don't have to worry about getting huge muscles – it's a myth (women don't naturally have the testosterone). Studies have found that when you lift 85% of your max load per exercise, for 8 repetitions you burn 8 times as many calories after your workout than if you lifted less weight for more repetitions – in other words, lift heavy (but not crazy heavy).

DG FIT TIP #67

DON'T EAT TOO MANY FRUITS

We love fruits, they're a great healthy alternative to candies and cakes, but moderation is key. Fruits are packed full of natural sugars; for example grapes are almost all sugar, and there is some evidence that sugary foods actually leave you feeling more hungry. So treat fruits like treats – don't gorge yourself on them, try some low GI fruits and trade up some fruits for vegetables. Try snacking of snap peas, cucumber slices, celery or whatever tickles your fancy. Also try to get the most bang-per-fruit by sticking to the nutrient-powerhouse superfruits.

DG FIT TIP #68

Eat More Protein
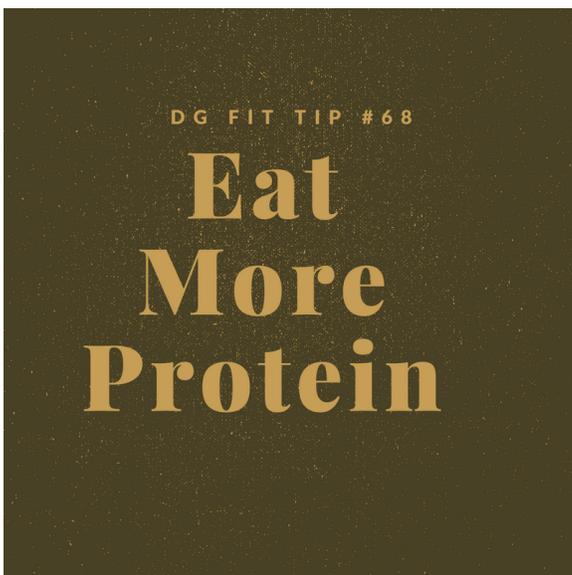
Eat a high-quality source of protein with every meal. Studies have shown that protein helps you retain muscle mass and reduce body fat while you're losing weight. Protein is also high in Peptide YY (PYY) which is an appetite suppressant. Just make sure it's part of a balanced diet, because too much protein will put a strain on your kidneys amongst other less than healthy effects. So remember those veggies too!

Stick to Low Glycemic Index Foods

DG FIT TIP #69

Studies have shown that eating a diet with low-glycemic foods has a significant effect on weight loss (particularly in women) – in one study, the lower glycemic group doubled their fat loss when compared to the high glycemic group. So go for the lentil soup, snack on a banana, or try some of these other low GI foods.

DG FIT TIP #70

CARRY A SNACKABLE SOURCE OF PROTEIN.
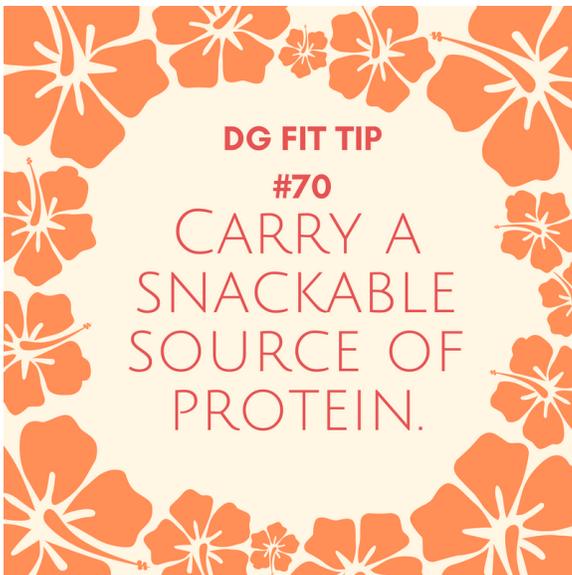
We've already shown how protein helps you lose weight, but most protein sources aren't exactly grab-and-go, so make sure you've got a high-protein snack on you whenever possible. Some great options are: boiled eggs, protein powder, nuts or jerky! Keeping topped up on protein will also ensure that you lose fat and rather than muscle.

DG FIT TIP #71

RECALCULATE

Most people underestimate the amount of calories they eat and overestimate the amount of calories they burn. This is where keeping a food journal is going to be your best weight loss friend: if it enters your mouth jot it down. In the beginning you will need to measure everything so that you get a good understanding of what healthy portion sizes actually look like, or use recipes that have already worked out the calories per serving for you. What happens when you do this is you begin to develop an awareness of how many calories you're actually eating. Especially take note of calorie-dense foods you may be eating: dips, salad dressings, fruit etc. The other mistake is overestimating how much calories you burn when exercising. For example, if you spend 30 minutes on the treadmill and burn about 300 calories, you may go home and think: "I've worked out, I can afford to eat a few cookies…" Well, a few cookies later and you'll have wiped out the calorie-burning effects of that workout. So, spend time getting to grips with how many calories your taking in and how many you're burning – write it down!

USE A
SUPPORT
NETWORK

DG FIT TIP #72

The Internet has some really fantastic support communities for people who want to lose weight, so no matter your specific weight loss goals are, get involved in the communities and participate. Remember though, ultimately it's all down to you… and you can do it.

DG FIT TIP #73

FIND OTHER
EMOTIONAL
OUTLETS

You've heard of comfort food? Well, there's a clue in the name – emotional eaters often turn to foods to satisfy an emotional craving, usually the high-calorie, sugary, fat kind. In other words, the exact opposite of what you want to be eating to lose weight. The truth is though, when you turn to food to cope with stress or boredom, it doesn't really resolve the underlying negative feelings – in fact, you can often be left feeling worse. The solution is to find out what is triggering your emotional eating and make a positive change at that level – it could be your job or relationship or something else. Until then, make a list of other non-food related activities you could do, which you believe would be a step towards satisfying those emotional needs: running, watching a sitcom, talking to a friend, reading, or anything else. And if you find activities which are moving you towards being healthier then you get even more bang for your buck.

DG FIT TIP
#74

Cook less food at one time.

Cooking just the food you should be eating, will cut down on any second-helpings which get in the way of your weight-loss goals.

DG FIT TIP #75

GET A PERSONAL TRAINER

Sometimes it's easier to motivate yourself if you have someone else kicking your ass. Not only that, but you'll also learn the correct form for your exercises, how to warm up and cool down and thus make getting injured much less likely. Personal trainers can be expensive though, so the next best option is to get hold of one of the many fantastic exercise programs out there.

PURGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

DG FIT TIP #76

If you're really serious about losing weight, then you'll need to change the messages you're getting on what to eat: pack away the cookbooks, get some healthy meal cookbooks on your coffee table, get rid of the tubs of ice-cream and muffin mix, watch the healthy eating channels, skip the junk food TV commercials and ignore the marketing by focusing on *your* weight loss goals. Avoid the kitchen treats at work and get your colleagues on board to get healthy (but remember, it's ultimately up to you). In other words, look around you and declare: "there's a new sheriff in town!"

Eat More Dairy.

DG FIT TIP #77

Studies have shown that the calcium found in dairy products, increases the amount of calories burnt in each cell. The basic idea is that the more calcium in the cell, the more fat that is burnt. Just make sure that it's a low-fat dairy source. If you're lactose intolerant you can also get calcium from other food sources, e.g.: dark leafy vegetables, almonds, oats and salmon.

Walk Off Those Calories

DG FIT TIP #78
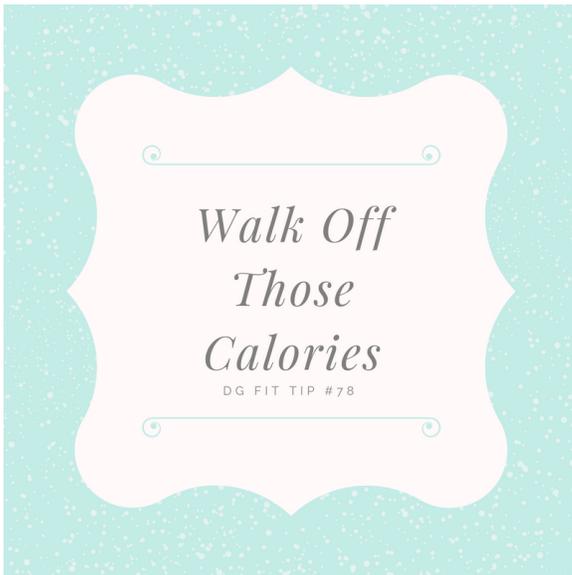
Get a pedometer and up your activity level. Take the 10,000 steps a day challenge and you will burn off about 300 – 400 calories. It sounds like a lot, but you can work your way up to it and research has shown that it will significantly improve your health.

DG FIT TIP #79

Disable Food Cravings

All cravings start with a cue: it could be the sight of that gooey-sweet glaze or the delicious aroma of cinnamon. On an emotional level: apple pie could give you a feeling of comfort because it reminds you of home, or you may associate the end of the work-week with Chinese takeaway. So you can end up craving these foods when you actually want the feeling associated with the foods, e.g.: apple pie if you've had a bad day. *You're not craving the food, but for the emotion.* So next time a craving comes up, head it off at the pass: think about the emotion you're trying to fulfill and find another way to fulfill it which isn't food-dependant. If you're not able to satisfy that emotion fully, take whatever small steps towards satisfying it that you can.

SKIP THE FADS

DG FIT TIP #80

Losing the weight and *keeping the weight off* (that's the important part) requires a lifestyle change, but you don't have to do it all at once: just taking small healthy steps every single day will move you closer and closer to your weight loss goals. The important part is to realize that this is about long-term changes, fad diets and diet pills may work in the short term (with who-knows-what consequences to your health) but all-to-often people end up putting the weight back on, then you have to do all the work again when you want to lose weight again! Take the long-term view and small consistent healthy decisions every day and you'll enjoy the process and have much better success.

DG FIT TIP #81

BEWARE OF HIDDEN SUGARS

Did you know that foods often contain hidden sugars? So even if the label doesn't say sugar, it could still contain some of the sweet stuff! For e.g. high-fructose corn syrup, dextrin, glucose-fructose… the list goes on and on. Get to know these hidden sugars, so you can avoid them!

Don't Bring It Into Your Home.

—

DG FIT TIP #82

If you don't want to eat it, don't let it in. We made this mistake for years, thinking we could bring in a box of cookies, or tub of ice cream and ration ourselves – it doesn't work! If it's in the house, you'll eat it, so stick to the healthy foods and snacks.

DG FIT TIP #83

REDUCE THE FATS

Try reduced fat versions of spreads, dairy products and salad dressings. Remember, though, that healthy fats are good for you in moderation!

Set S.M.A.R.T.
Goals

Maybe you've already heard about this method of goal setting. S – specific, M – measurable, A – achievable, R – relavent and T – time-based. Goals set in this way have a much better rate of success, so don't make it nebulous: "I want to lose some weight" but "I want to lose a total of 20lbs by the 23 November, losing 1 – 2 pounds a week while eating healthy and reducing junk and processed foods". As you move towards your ideal healthy weight, you'll probably want to adjust your goals according to your progress.

Shopping malls are designed to part you from your money and nowhere is this more evident than when you're waiting for your turn to pay: display counters packed to the brim with candy bars, soda and all manner of weight-loss saboteurs. Marketers know that this is a moment of weakness for people, in fact, research has shown that impulse purchases accounted for an excess of 14,000 consumed calories per woman, per year! So not only do these impulse buys contribute to overspending, but they can also make you fat! The good news is that once you know the trick it's much easier to resist. Just think: "they're trying to blow my budget and make me fat!", put on the blinkers (figuratively) and walk on by. Opt for the self-checkout too, because further studies show that impulse purchases drop by 32% when you scan and bag your own groceries.

DG FIT TIP #85
AVOID THE IMPULSE BUYS
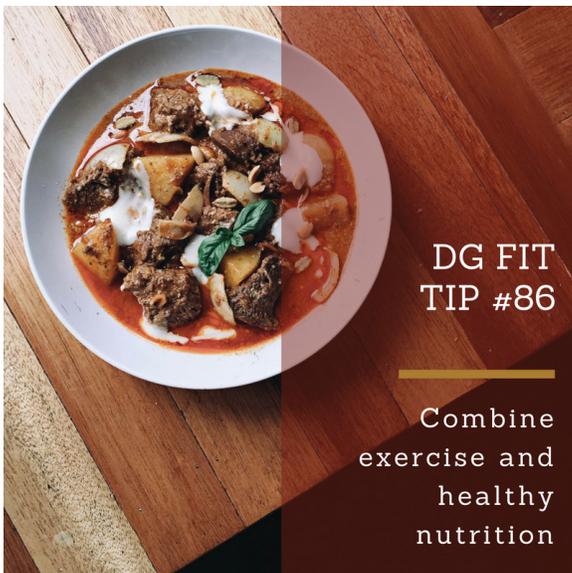
Exercise alone just won't cut it, in fact of the two – a healthy diet is probably the most important part (although you need both if you want to be truly healthy). As the saying goes: you can't out-exercise a bad diet. So eat healthy and find exercise you enjoy and you'll be well on your way to reaching your ideal healthy weight.

DG FIT
TIP #86

Combine
exercise and
healthy
nutrition

CHANGE THE COLOR OF YOUR PLATE
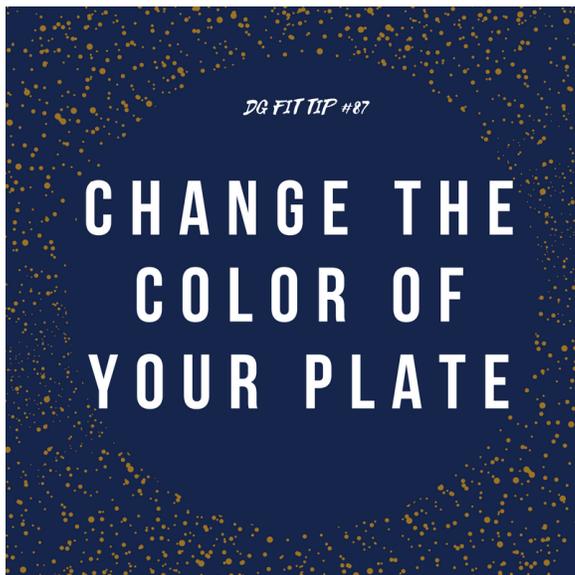
It sounds strange, but if you choose a plate which has a contrasting color to your food, then you should eat less. A Cornell University study found that contrasting plate color would result in a serving size that was 20% less than those who had plate colors which blended in with the meal color. While you're at it, next time you have a desert try it on a blue plate – many people find that it works as a natural appetite suppressant. Weird, but that's science for ya!

Know what you really want.
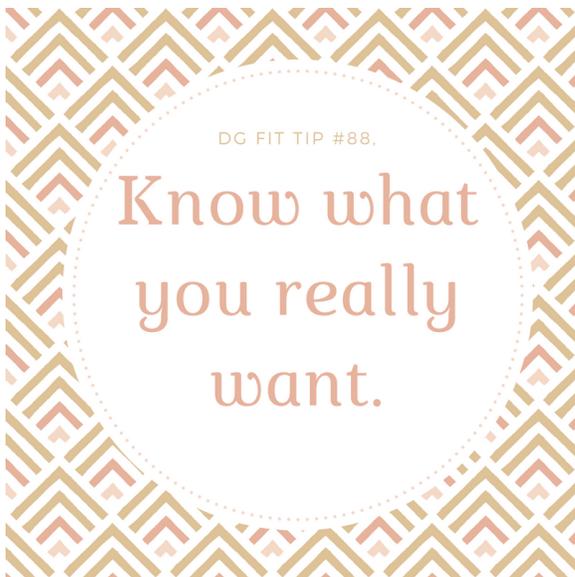
Many people talk about losing weight, but what they really want is to be more confident, or feel sexier, or be fitter, or get more romantic interest. Whatever you reasons are, take some time to really clarify in your mind what it is you want and begin to build your resolve around that, so that when temptation creeps up you can squash it with the strength of what's really important to you in the long-term. Another way of thinking about it is: you're not losing weight, but rather, gaining something much more important.

TRY HIGH INTENSITY TRAINING

Studies have found that training with high-intensity for a brief amount of time burns more calories than training with moderate or low-intensity for a long period of time. In other words, spending an hour walking on the treadmill is not the best way to lose weight – 15 minutes high-intensity interval training (HIIT) is far better than 1 hour slow cardio. One of our favourite ways to do HIIT is with a jumping rope, Harvard Medical School has determined that a 125lb person will burn 300 calories in 30 minutes – more if you use the HIIT protocol. Remember, you have to build up slowly to higher intensity training so as always, consult your doctor before making changes to your diet or physical activity.

DG FIT TIP #90

GET YOUR GOTO SNACKS READY

Find your favourite quick and healthy snacks and then have them in bowls around the house and in your refrigerator at eye level, so that if you get the urge to snack you can reach for one of those healthy guys and move closer to your weight loss goals.

Increase Your Fiber Intake

DG FIT TIP #91
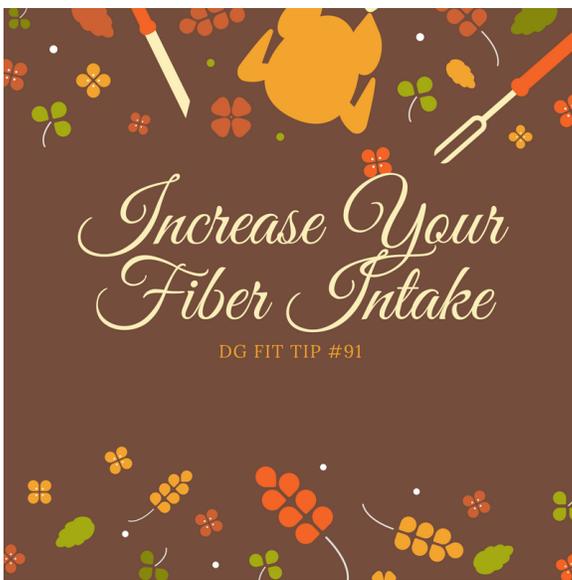
Getting enough fiber is critical for weight loss, in fact it's probably one of the most important tools you can use to help you reach your ideal healthy weight. The reason: it makes you feel full – the fiber absorbs water and expands in your stomach, which in turn promotes the production of leptin, the hormone which makes you feel full. Find some sources of fiber you enjoy and eat them every day, try brocolli, flax seeds and apples!

DG FIT TIP #92

3 MEALS

+

2 SNACKS

Most people only need to have 3 meals and 2 snacks to get their daily caloric requirements. Knowing this you can plan ahead, ration your caloric intake per meal and per snack and then stick to it – make them healthy and you'll be heading closer and closer to your weight loss goals.

DG FIT TIP #93

Exercise.

Duh, right? We all know that exercise burns calories, but did you also know that it burns calories while you sleep. So, it's even better than we thought! The recommendation from a Harvard study (2010) was to do 60 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a day for weight loss; the study found that 30 minutes a day conferred many of the health benefits, but did little for weight loss.

DG FIT TIP #94

DON'T EAT AND WATCH TV

First, studies have repeatedly shown that there is a correlation between obesity and time spent watching T.V. – that's why we have the phrase: "couch *potato* and not couch *celery*. Further, studies have shown that people who eat while watching T.V. consume as much as 280 calories more than those who don't. In fact, for every 2 hours T.V. you watch, your chance of obesity goes up by 23%. Not only that, but if you're watching T.V. you're not exercising or sleeping. So, sit down at the table to eat your meals, get active during commercial breaks with mini-workouts and trade 1 hour of T.V. for 1 hour of exercise – if you do this every day you will get closer and closer to your weight loss goals.

GET YOUR PARTNER ON BOARD

DG FIT TIP #95

It can be tough to lose weight when your partner is gorging on cakes and deserts, so get them on board. Let him (or her) know that you need his support, if you go to a lot of restaurants or are always getting takeaway, do a little research and get some of the healthy options, maybe skip (or split) desert, spend an hour working out together. If you involve your partner (and are firm about your own weight loss goals) then you'll make it much easier on yourself.

MIND OVER LETTUCE

DG FIT TIP #96.

It sounds crazy, but it's true, studies show that if you think that you're eating a 'light' meal then you won't feel as full. And it's not just psychological, your perception of the meal can actually cause you to create more of the hormone ghrelin, which can prevent you feeling full. So instead of focusing on the lettuce in your salad, focus on the more calorific parts: the cheese, avocado, the nuts. It also helps to choose foods which are healthy, but seem like a treat, e.g.: a delicious broth or lemon-garlic shrimp & vegetables.

DG FIT TIP 97

Intermittent Movement
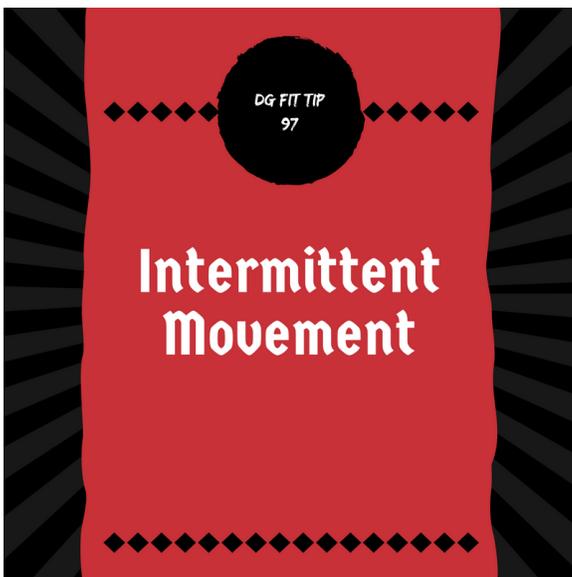
Research has shown that spontaneous physical activity (SPA) like fidgiting, doing the dishes, getting up to change the T.V. channel etc. can add up to burn an impressive 350 calories a day. Remember, like so many things in life: it all counts! All the small pieces add up to a big result, so don't discount even small, consistent actions – keep them up and they'll soon add up.

DG FIT TIP #98

Drink Water Before Meals

It is often claimed that drinking water can help with weight loss, and this is true.

Drinking water can boost metabolism by 24-30% over a period of 1-1.5 hours, helping you burn off a few more calories.

One study showed that drinking a half liter (17 oz) of water about a half an hour before meals helped dieters eat fewer calories and lose 44% more weight.

EAT EGGS FOR BREAKFAST

DG FIT TIP #99

Eating whole eggs can have all sorts of benefits, including helping you lose weight.

Studies show that replacing a grain-based breakfast with eggs can help you eat fewer calories for the next 36 hours, and lose more weight and more body fat.

If you can't eat eggs for some reason, then that's fine. Any source of quality protein for breakfast should do the trick.

COOK WITH COCONUT OIL

DG FIT TIP #100

Coconut oil is very healthy. It is high in special fats called medium chain triglycerides, which are metabolized differently than other fats.

These fats have been shown to boost metabolism by 120 calories per day, and also reduce your appetite so that you eat up to 256 fewer calories per day.

Keep in mind that this is not about *adding* coconut oil on top of what you're already eating, it is about **replacing** some of your current cooking fats with coconut oil.

Take Action!

DG FIT TIP #101
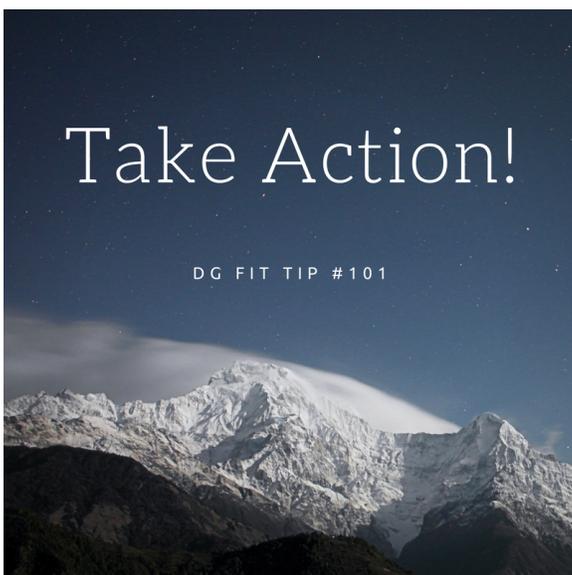
Okay, we hear you: this may not seem like a real tip, but it is… Just a few of these tips sprinkled in to your daily life could make a huge difference to your weight loss goals, so try them out and find out how well they work for you!