

# Twelve Rules for Weight Control & Better Health

Keith Merritt, MD

1. **YOU HAVE TO WORK YOUR BODY (no excuse will be accepted)**
  - if you are over 40 years old, you should first get medical clearance
  - start slow and build both time and intensity slowly to avoid injury
  - get outside and sweat or be cold or get wet- the weather is no excuse to avoid exercise
  - build exercise into daily routines – park at the far end of the parking lot, walk instead of driving, when possible take the stairs, carry groceries- be creative
  - plant and work a garden – hard physical labor and getting your hands dirty are noble activities
  - use a push mower instead of riding lawn mower, rake leaves – both grass and leaves make great compost for your garden
  - get obsessed and stay obsessed
  - EXERCISE DOES NOT JUSTIFY EATING JUNK
  
2. **AVOID THE TRAPS CONTAINING FAT, SUGAR AND SALT**
  - this trinity creates an addiction and should be treated as any other substance abuse
  - never, never, never eat fast food
  - the best way to avoid eating junk is to not allow it into your house
  - fruit juice is just as harmful as soft drinks – try a piece of fruit instead
  - minimize fruits with a lot of juice- ex- watermelon, grapes, oranges
  
3. **AVOID DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS, WEIGHT LOSS SCAMS and ANYONE WHO IS SELLING YOU SOMETHING –a sucker is born every minute**
  
4. **DO YOUR BEST TO ESCAPE THE WESTERN DIET – this takes some thought and effort (see 5)**
  
5. **“EAT FOOD, MOSTLY PLANTS but NOT TO MUCH”**
  - stop thinking as a nutritionist
  - avoid processed foods
  - don't eat anything your great grandmother would not recognize as food
  - avoid foods products that:
    - are unfamiliar
    - contain more than five ingredients
    - have contents that you cannot pronounce or are unfamiliar
    - contain high fructose corn syrup

- shop around the periphery of the store where the whole foods live and avoid the middle where the processed foods exist (beware, some stores have changed their displays because of this strategy)
- avoid foods making health claims (low fat, low carb, high fiber, heart healthy, etc)
- you are what you eat – organic foods really are worth the expense
- eat lots of fruit and vegetables (at least 5-7 servings daily) – especially greens
- minimize meat and dairy – both are important parts of your diet but should not be the center
- try to eat meat, dairy and eggs that are grass fed without growth hormones and pesticides
  - Baldwin Beef, Yanceyville, NC (Whole Foods Company, mail order [www.Baldinbeef.com](http://www.Baldinbeef.com))
  - research the dairies, consider whole milk instead of low fat – just drink less
  - eat wild game when possible

#### 6. **PLANT A GARDEN**

- A \$2 seed packets of lettuce, turnip greens, kale, etc will grow a lot of food in a small area in both spring and fall gardens
- some of the healthiest plants in your garden are the weeds: lambs quarters, perlane
- beware of plants that are poisonous
  - <http://www.thelivingweb.net/ediblewildplants.html>
  - <http://www.wildfoodadventures.com/northcarolina.html>

#### 7. **ADD AS MUCH VARIETY OF PLANTS TO YOUR DIET AS POSSIBLE**

- remember our bodies were designed using, and therefore do best with, over 3000 species of vegetables, fruits, nuts & seeds
- Joining a CSA (community supported agriculture) is a great way to both add variety and to eat those foods that are locally grown and in season
  - <http://www.ncfarmfresh.com/farms.asp>
  - [http://greenleaf.uncg.edu/community\\_supported\\_agriculture.html](http://greenleaf.uncg.edu/community_supported_agriculture.html)

#### 8. **DON'T EAT TOO MUCH**

- eat until you are 80% full
- cook from scratch – involve the whole family in preparing meals
- eat at the table and not in front of the TV or computer- try not to eat alone
- eat slowly, enjoy the gift of food
- try an apple with a large glass of water before each meal
- do not eat seconds
- avoid snacks but if you must try fruit, carrots, celery
- do not fuel your body at the same place you fuel your car

- if you snack at night, avoid sugar and simple carbs such as cookies, pie, ice cream; instead try a glass of milk, fruit, yogurt
- consider a glass of wine with your evening meal

9. **CONSIDER TRADITIONAL DIETS**

- Mediterranean, Okinawan – remember these are lifestyles and not just diets- must include the daily labor of gathering the food (exercise)
- avoid fad diets, extreme diets and regard nontraditional diets with skepticism

10. **APPLY THE 85/15 RULE FOR YOUR TRANSITION INTO HEALTHY EATING**

- healthy diet 85% with treats 15% of the time
- dark chocolate makes a great treat (antioxidants, low sugar)
- cool glass of water with lime
- pair treats with a protein or fat to lower the insulin spike (cheese, nuts, peanut butter)
- hold mindful enjoyment of the moment- **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FOOD**

11. **GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP**

- Increases the amount of a hormone that burns more calories at rest and that reduces your appetite

12. **RESERVE 30 MINUTES EACH DAY FOR SILENCE**

- Sit in a comfortable place
- Keep your back, neck and head erect
- No music during this time
- Focus your attention on each breath entering and leaving your body
- Don't fret over any thought that you might have- just allow it to come and go like a cloud across the sun
- **STAY AWAKE and PAY ATTENTION**

[Back to Acacia Ob/Gyn Website](#)