



THE BLOG: *HEALTH AND WELLNESS FOCUS*

Why Tracking Your Food Matters: The Science Behind Better Results

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YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD IT BEFORE: ***“TRACK YOUR FOOD IF YOU WANT TO SEE RESULTS.”*** BUT IS IT REALLY THAT IMPORTANT? THE ANSWER, BACKED BY SOLID RESEARCH, IS A RESOUNDING YES. LET'S DIVE INTO WHY TRACKING WHAT YOU EAT THROUGHOUT THE DAY CAN BE THE GAME-CHANGER IN YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY.

THE RESEARCH SPEAKS VOLUMES

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL OF DIABETES RESEARCH FOLLOWED PARTICIPANTS OVER 49 WEEKS IN A DIABETES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM. THE FINDINGS WERE EYE-OPENING: PEOPLE WHO CONSISTENTLY TRACKED THEIR FOOD INTAKE AT LEAST 5 DAYS PER WEEK LOST AN AVERAGE OF 10 POUNDS, WHILE THOSE WHO TRACKED INCONSISTENTLY OR RARELY SAW NO SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT LOSS.

EVEN MORE INTERESTING? THE CONSISTENT TRACKERS MAINTAINED STEADY WEIGHT LOSS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE YEAR, WHILE OTHERS EXPERIENCED THE TYPICAL HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN AND SUMMER FLUCTUATIONS. TRACKING ACTED AS A PROTECTIVE SHIELD AGAINST THOSE CHALLENGING TIMES WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WAS STRUGGLING.

WHAT DOES “CONSISTENT TRACKING” ACTUALLY MEAN?

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT. THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT TRACKING AT LEAST 5 OUT OF 7 DAYS PER WEEK IS THE SWEET SPOT FOR SUCCESS. THAT MEANS YOU HAVE FLEXIBILITY—YOU CAN TAKE A DAY OR TWO OFF AND STILL SEE EXCELLENT RESULTS.

PARTICIPANTS WHO TRACKED LESS THAN 33% OF DAYS (RARE TRACKERS) OR BETWEEN 33-66% OF DAYS (INCONSISTENT TRACKERS) DIDN'T ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT LOSS. THE MAGIC HAPPENED WHEN PEOPLE CROSSED THAT 66% THRESHOLD—TRACKING MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THE TIME.

WHY DOES TRACKING WORK SO WELL?

1. AWARENESS IS POWER

WHEN YOU WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING YOU EAT, YOU BECOME AWARE OF PATTERNS YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE NOTICED. THAT AFTERNOON SNACK? THE EXTRA SERVING AT DINNER? THE HANDFUL OF CHIPS WHILE COOKING? TRACKING BRINGS THESE HIDDEN CALORIES INTO THE LIGHT.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY KEEPS YOU HONEST

KNOWING YOU'LL NEED TO LOG THAT COOKIE MAKES YOU PAUSE AND ASK, "DO I REALLY WANT THIS?" IT'S NOT ABOUT RESTRICTION—IT'S ABOUT MAKING CONSCIOUS CHOICES RATHER THAN MINDLESS EATING.

3. IT HELPS YOU NAVIGATE CHALLENGES

THE RESEARCH SHOWED SOMETHING FASCINATING: CONSISTENT TRACKERS DIDN'T GAIN WEIGHT DURING THE HOLIDAYS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. WHY? BECAUSE TRACKING HELPED THEM STAY MINDFUL DURING PARTIES, FAMILY GATHERINGS, AND STRESSFUL TIMES. THEY COULD PLAN AHEAD, MAKE STRATEGIC CHOICES, AND STAY ON TRACK WHEN IT MATTERED MOST.

4. YOU CAN MEASURE PROGRESS

WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS MANAGED. TRACKING ALLOWS YOU TO SEE WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT ISN'T. MAYBE YOU'RE EATING MORE CALORIES THAN YOU THOUGHT, OR PERHAPS YOU'RE NOT GETTING ENOUGH PROTEIN. WITHOUT TRACKING, YOU'RE JUST GUESSING.

THE LONG-TERM BENEFITS:

HERE'S WHAT MAKES TRACKING TRULY POWERFUL: ***IT CREATES SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM RESULTS.*** THE STUDY FOUND THAT CONSISTENT TRACKERS FOLLOWED A STEADY, LINEAR WEIGHT LOSS PATTERN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR—LOSING APPROXIMATELY 2/3 OF A POUND PER WEEK CONSISTENTLY.

MEANWHILE, INCONSISTENT TRACKERS EXPERIENCED A ROLLERCOASTER: INITIAL WEIGHT LOSS, HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN, THEN SOME LOSS AGAIN IN SUMMER. BUT BY THE END OF THE YEAR? NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE.

MAKING TRACKING WORK FOR YOU

START SIMPLE YOU DON'T NEED A FANCY APP OR COMPLICATED SYSTEM. WHETHER YOU USE PEN AND PAPER, A NOTES APP ON YOUR PHONE, OR A NUTRITION TRACKING APP, CHOOSE WHAT FEELS EASIEST FOR YOU.

TRACK THE BASICS AT MINIMUM, RECORD WHAT YOU ATE, APPROXIMATE PORTIONS, AND WHEN YOU ATE. AS YOU GET COMFORTABLE, YOU CAN ADD DETAILS LIKE CALORIES, PROTEIN, OR HOW YOU FELT.

BE HONEST THE ONLY PERSON YOU'RE TRACKING FOR IS YOURSELF. INCLUDE EVERYTHING—THE GOOD, THE NOT-SO-GOOD, AND THE "OOPS" MOMENTS. HONESTY IS WHAT MAKES TRACKING EFFECTIVE.

AIM FOR 5+ DAYS PER WEEK REMEMBER, YOU DON'T NEED PERFECTION. FIVE DAYS OF CONSISTENT TRACKING WILL GET YOU RESULTS. PICK THE DAYS THAT WORK BEST FOR YOUR SCHEDULE.

REVIEW AND ADJUST LOOK BACK AT YOUR TRACKING WEEKLY. WHAT PATTERNS DO YOU NOTICE? WHERE CAN YOU MAKE SMALL IMPROVEMENTS? THIS REFLECTION IS WHERE THE REAL LEARNING HAPPENS.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR: CONSISTENT FOOD TRACKING IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING WEIGHT LOSS. IT'S NOT ABOUT OBSESSING OVER EVERY CALORIE OR RESTRICTING YOURSELF. IT'S ABOUT AWARENESS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND MAKING INFORMED CHOICES THAT ALIGN WITH YOUR GOALS.

WHETHER YOU'RE JUST STARTING YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY OR LOOKING TO BREAK THROUGH A PLATEAU, TRACKING YOUR FOOD INTAKE CAN BE THE MISSING PIECE. GIVE IT A TRY FOR THE NEXT 30 DAYS—TRACK AT LEAST 5 DAYS PER WEEK—AND WATCH WHAT HAPPENS.

YOUR FUTURE SELF WILL THANK YOU FOR THE EFFORT YOU PUT IN TODAY.

SOURCES:

INGELS, J. S., MISRA, R., STEWART, J., LUCKE-WOLD, B., & SHAWLEY-BRZOSKA, S. (2017). THE EFFECT OF ADHERENCE TO DIETARY TRACKING ON WEIGHT LOSS: USING HLM TO MODEL WEIGHT LOSS OVER TIME. JOURNAL OF DIABETES RESEARCH, 2017.