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If you've indulged over the holiday season or cut down on your activity during the winter months, you may have packed on a few extra pounds. Wouldn't you like to shed that winter weight gain before the warm weather returns?

Rather than choosing the latest diet of the week, you could, instead, implement some sound strategies that have been proven to be effective in losing weight and keeping it off.

Here are some tips to help you say *good bye* to those extra pounds forever:

Exercise

Staying indoors more during the winter doesn't mean you need to be less active! Follow these exercise techniques to bring you a variety of activities to tone up and slim down.

- 1. Begin slowly.** Don't overdo it when you begin to exercise you'll only strain muscles!
 - Invest in a good pair of walking shoes and begin by walking for fifteen minutes per day.
 - When you feel your body adjusting to the fifteen minutes, walk longer.
 - Do this with any exercise, inside or out, to build a healthy, strong, and slimmer body.
- 2. Enjoy variety.** Doing the same exercise over and over again is a good way to fail before you begin. Include an assortment of exercises in your plan. Make it fun!
 - For example, combine yoga with strength training. If you don't have strength training equipment, use canned foods or other items as your weights.
 - Any activity that gets you moving is an exercise. Play actively with your pets or children. Put on some music and dance while you cook or clean house.

- Instead of sitting on the couch, ride an exercise bike while you watch TV.
 - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- 3. Enlist a friend.** The easiest way to keep up with your exercise routine is to have someone by your side who also wants to lose weight. Remind each other how important your weight loss goals are.
 - 4. Set goals and keep track of them.** Get a diary or notebook and write down your goals. Keep track of how much weight you're losing and what types of exercises you're doing.

How to Eat Well Year-Round

Eating nutritiously year-round is the best way to keep off those extra winter pounds. It will also help you lose excess weight, give your body the nutrients it craves, and make you feel good!

Here are some simple healthy eating tips:

- 1. Try to stick to a 1,500 to 2,000 a day calorie diet.** Yes, calories do count. If you're unsure what your caloric intake should be (as it can vary from age, sex, and even height), enlist your doctor's help or ask a nutritionist.
- 2. Eat a well-balanced variety of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.** You don't need to become a vegetarian, but including as many fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet as possible will bring you a plethora of benefits.
 - Substitute fruits and vegetables for unhealthy snacks and calorie-laden desserts.
 - Can't find fresh fruits during the winter months? Frozen fruits with no added sugar are a good backup choice.
- 3. Keep your portions at acceptable levels.** Don't pile on that food! Just because fast-food restaurants are supersizing everything, it doesn't mean you should too.
- 4. Eat good carbs.** Many fruits, veggies, legumes, and grains are full of the good carbohydrates your body needs. They're also high in vitamins, fibers, and minerals and free of cholesterol.

5. Drink water. Every cell in your body needs water to function properly. Drinking lots of water will not only keep you well hydrated, but it also can help you lose weight. For example, a glass of water before a meal can help you control overeating.

Shedding that winter weight is a reachable goal if you follow these tips. However, don't feel like you have to make each of these changes tomorrow. Sometimes when people make too many drastic changes at once they have a harder time sticking with their plan.

Work on making one or two of these changes each week to get used to them. Before you know it, these weight loss strategies will be second nature to you and you'll avoid those winter pounds altogether!