

Mayo Clinic diet book promotes healthy weight loss

Fri Jan 1, 2010 11:03am

By [Patricia Reaney](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - Confused by the myriad of diet books that promise to help you melt away those excess pounds to produce the body of a supermodel?

Scientists at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota have produced a weight-loss program based on clinical research and experience that they say will help people lose weight and keep it off permanently.

Dr. Donald Hensrud, a diet expert at the clinic and a co-author of "The Mayo Clinic Diet" spoke to Reuters about why the program is so effective, the research it is based on and what makes it different from all the other diet books.

Q: Why has the Mayo Clinic decided to publish a diet book?

A: For a number of reasons. The first and most obvious one is that weight and obesity has become more of a problem in this country and around the world over the past decades. So, there is a need.

Secondly, many other people have been promoting so-called Mayo Clinic diets over the years but there has never been a Mayo Clinic diet book before.

Thirdly, we think the timing is good right now. There is a lot of scientific evidence for the things we have put in the book based on research and evidence that we have accumulated here ... We think we have a program that is effective, healthy, enjoyable and sustainable long-term.

Q: What is it about your diet that sets it apart from the numerous other diet books?

A: There are some unique features about the Mayo Clinic diet. It is more than a diet. It is a lifestyle change program. It is divided up into two phases. The 'lose it' phase lasts two weeks and we think this is the healthiest way to lose weight quickly ... That transitions into the 'live it' phase. Once people see what they are capable of doing they change those habits into a long-term lifestyle change. Another unique feature is the Mayo Clinic healthy weight eating pyramid based on energy density.

Q: Why do people have such a hard time losing weight?

A: It starts with the approach and we try to address that. This is one of the biggest paradoxes I know -- eat right, exercise more. It sounds so simple but yet it is such

a complex statement ... The mind set that goes along with this is negative and restrictive and therefore it is going to be temporary and it is not enjoyable. So what we do is to try to help people have realistic goals and to change their attitudes so this doesn't have to be deprivation.

Q: How big a component is exercise in your program?

A: It is a big component, as it should be. That seemingly simple equation gets down to calories in versus calories burned. And energy expenditure, exercise, is very important ... Exercise is the most important way to burn calories.

Q: Is the program applicable for children and adults?

A: In the 'lose it' phase it is based on sudden changes and habits but there isn't anything in there that is unhealthy or unsafe -- eating breakfast, eating more vegetables and fruit. ... What we are trying to do is take all the knowledge and the clinical experience and put it all together in one package that people can use to come up with a program for them that is effective, safe, healthy, enjoyable and sustainable.

Q: Is the book effective for someone who wants to lose 20 pounds or 200 pounds?

A: Yes. It is. The principles of it apply to everyone. Admittedly, and this is in the medical literature, the greater the starting weight, people can lose more weight initially but it is a longer way to go. So, the greater the starting weight the more challenging it is to lose it and keep it off.

Q: What advice would you give to people who want to lose weight but don't know how to get started, who find it just so daunting?

A: That is exactly what we are trying to do with the book. I'd say pick up the book and read the first few chapters.