

Ex-Wrestlers Continue to Cut Weight

By Doug Conkwright, M.D.

It was at this winter's Virginia State Tournament when this subject matter came to my mind. This was my 50th state tournament as the attending physician. Each year, I am approached by middle-aged men who knew me for their past years, when they wrestled for their club teams at the middle school, high school, or college level. Needless to say, I rarely recognize them as people do change over years.

The greatest change is not their thinning hair or wrinkles, but their excessive weight gain. At least 8 out of 10 ex-wrestlers are overweight or obese. This is well within the national average of 68% overweight adults; furthermore, our children are weighing heavier as well. It is ironic that

these former wrestlers, who were once fit and trim athletes, have gained so much weight.

The probable explanation lies in the fact that strict diet and weight control are prominent factors of this combative sport. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that ex-wrestlers become fed up with diet and weight control. In other words, wrestlers in their later years cannot stop eating!

There is an endless amount of information found in books, in magazines, and on television on how to lose weight. In fact, numerous short-term diets including low-fat, high carbohydrates, high protein, high fat, low low carbohydrates etc, pollute the media.

Now, there are those ridiculous pills that

will melt off fat during sleep. Furthermore, exercise equipment has even developed into an extremely complicated apparatus. Whatever happened with simple structures, as the stationary bike, stair master, or treadmill? Do not waste your time and money on these fancy gadgets and certainly do not consume the pill!

Weight loss is accomplished by eating fewer calories than you are able to burn; therefore, knowing the daily caloric intake for each day will help you decide how to eat healthier. Here are a few practical hints to help you keep weight off or get rid of it.

Multiply your present weight by 12. The resultant figure is how much you can eat to maintain your present weight. If you are sedentary, you can find all types of books that will outline caloric contents of all food and drinks. Start by deducting 500 calories a day. When your weight levels off, deduct another 500 calories. Try to get to 1600 to 1800 calories a day, which is all you need to survive in good health.

The body mass index (BMI) has become a universal reference scale for proper weight management. (Refer to Chart One for the formula)

To determine your BMI, measure the fat fold behind your upper arm or on one of your triceps. For your information, a new deck of cards is 15% body fat and two decks are 30% body fat. On that note, body fat is not presently a factor in this formula, yet it will be one soon. Ideally, an athletic man should have 7% body fat and an athletic woman or an extremely skinny woman should have 12 percent body fat. The goal for BMI is to be at 25.

All of us know that exercise, besides the usual moving around, will help melt away excess weight. (Refer to Chart Two and you will get some idea of how many calories you can burn while doing everyday activities) You can figure out the calories which you consume with activities, then deduct from your caloric intake. The added bonus of working out each day, for at least 30 to 45 minutes during your chosen activity, will allow some room for more calories in your diet. Exercise is more beneficial to your overall health even if you do not lose much weight.

Most ex-wrestlers I know do not mind

Chart Two

Calories spent each minute for various activities

Resting, Standing, and Walking

calories per minute

- a) resting in bed = 1.2
- b) sitting = 1.4
- c) sitting, reading = 1.4
- d) sitting, eating = 1.6
- e) sitting, playing cards = 1.7
- f) standing = 1.6
- g) standing, light activity = 2.8
- h) kneeling = 1.4
- i) squatting = 2.2
- j) walking, indoors = 3.4
- k) walking, outdoors = 6.1
- l) walking, downstairs = 7.6
- m) walking, upstairs = 20.0
- n) standing, showering = 3.7

Working Around the Home

calories per minute

- a) washing clothes = 2.9
- b) hanging laundry = 4.7
- c) bringing in laundry = 3.2
- d) machine sewing = 1.5
- e) ironing clothes = 4.2
- f) making beds = 5.3
- g) mopping floors = 5.3
- h) sweeping floors = 1.7
- i) scrubbing floors = 6.0
- j) shaking carpets = 6.4
- k) peeling vegetables = 2.9
- i) stirring, mixing foods = 3.0

Do It Yourself

calories per minute

- a) sawing wood = 6.9
- b) planning wood = 8.6
- c) carrying tools = 3.6
- d) shoveling = 7.1
- e) pushing wheelbarrow = 5.2
- f) chopping wood = 4.9
- g) stacking wood = 6.1
- h) drilling = 7.0

Sports and Hobbies

calories per minute

- a) jogging = up to 17.0
- b) basketball = 8.6
- c) ping pong = 4.8
- d) swimming = 12.1
- e) golfing = 5.5
- f) tennis = 7.0
- g) bowling = 8.1
- h) badminton = 2.8
- i) rowing = 8.0
- j) sailing = 2.6
- k) playing pool = 3.0
- l) dancing = 4.0
- m) horseback riding = 3.0
- n) cycling = 8.0

Chart One

Body Mass Index
Weight x 704
height (inches)²

Below 25 = normal
25 to 30 = overweight
31 to 39 = obese
40 plus = morbid obese

Measure body fat by pinching skin over the back of the upper arm. A deck of cards is 15% body fat. One half of a deck is 7.5%

15% add zero to the BMI
11 to 14% deduct 1
7 to 10% deduct 2
16 to 20% add 1
21 to 30% add 2

drinking a few beers every once in a while. Unfortunately alcoholic beverages contain calories, so if you drink, then you must consider the caloric content of the particular beverage. Even soft drinks in the 12 oz. range contain at least 150 to 170 calories. (Refer to Chart Three to get a general idea of how many calories you have consumed). My advice is to burn off these

calories with exercise. Furthermore, it is unhealthy to drink and not consume food. In other words, if you choose to drink, eat some food with it, as just drinking is a dangerous way to lose weight.

In Summary

The day you stop wrestling, begin participating in another athletic or recreational activity. Obtain a calorie counting book, figure out your BMI, as well as the amount of calories you need to consume to lose weight. Drink in moderation. Eat a balanced breakfast. Consume a light lunch and remember to eat a balanced dinner at the end of your day. Exercise if possible in the early morning, and then eat because you burn more calories if you eat while your self contained furnaces are lit. If you are one of the unfortunate who has an inherited fat gene (melanocortin 4 receptor, also known as, MC4R) you may never lose much weight. Good luck and keep that extra weight off your body!

Editor's Note

Dr. Conkwright has been in family practice for fifty-one years and he is a retired Associate Professor from Eastern Virginia Medical School and the Medical College of Virginia. Dr.

Chart Three

Calorie Count in Alcoholic Drinks

12 oz. beer
5% alcohol
14.9 grams carbohydrates
170 calories

4 oz. wine
12% alcohol
11.5 grams carbohydrates
85 calories

1 oz. whiskey
40% alcohol
9.5 grams carbohydrates
110 calories

12 oz. light beer
4.5% alcohol
12.5 grams carbohydrates
110 calories

Conkwright is a member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame for his contributions to wrestling and its medical problems.

West Valley Tournament, Saratoga, CA - Ryan Silvera (Mt. San Antonio College) stretches out Jacob Bingham (Santa Rosa JC) in the Championship Semi Finals. Photo by John Sachs.

