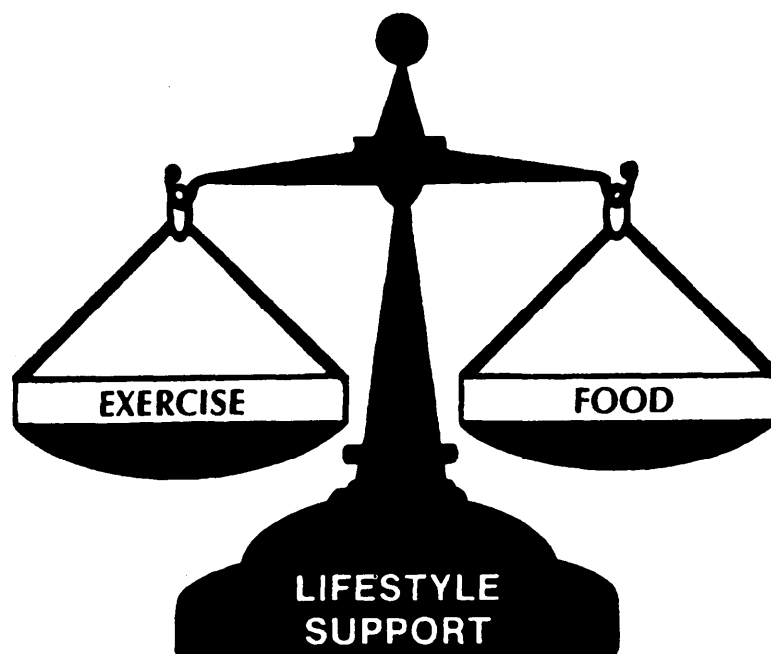


AFP 166-27  
16 OCTOBER 1991

**Nutritional Medicine Service**



**Improving Eating Habits**

USE OF THIS PAMPHLET MAY BE IMPROVED BY DIET COUNSELING, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS. IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY RECEIVED COUNSELING, OR IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL NUTRITIONAL MEDICINE SERVICE.

This diet instruction has been given to you  
by \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Name of health care provider)

at \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Name of medical facility)

on \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Date)

If questions arise, direct them to the health care provider  
at \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Telephone number)

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
Headquarters US Air Force  
Washington DC 20330-5000

AF PAMPHLET 166-27

16 October 1991

**Nutritional Medicine Service**

**IMPROVING EATING HABITS**

This pamphlet provides information on ways to modify your behavior to help you follow the diet prescribed by a health care provider and to improve your general eating habits. The use of the name of any specific manufacturer, commercial product, commodity, or service in this publication does not imply endorsement by the Air Force.

**1. Introduction.** As the title indicates, this pamphlet is about improving eating habits. While the pamphlet stresses specific steps useful to people who are trying to lose weight, many of the principles can be applied to other types of diets. As you read through this pamphlet, apply the material that relates to your situation. For example, some of the principles that still apply if you are slender but are trying to lower sodium intake include setting realistic goals and using self-monitoring methods to become aware of problem eating habits. Awareness of patterns is important to make changes in any eating habits. In addition, a well-balanced meal plan that meets your dietary needs is important.

If you have already been instructed on a special diet, this pamphlet may be useful in helping you come up with strategies for change. If you need help, ask your dietitian or authorized diet therapy specialist how to deal with specific problems on your next followup visit.

**This publication contains copyright material.**

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**2. Principles.** When we look at improving eating habits, we have to start with behavior. Behavior is a combination of a person's attitudes, actions, and habits. All eating behaviors are **learned**. Unhealthy habits can be **changed** and replaced with healthy eating habits. This is important because healthy eating behaviors increase the likelihood of successful weight loss and maintenance. Healthy eating habits can also help you reduce your risk for heart disease, uncontrolled blood pressure, or cancer.

At this point, you may be saying to yourself, "I know I need to improve my eating habits but how do I start?" Well, that's easy, you start with step one, and work your way through each step as indicated below.

- a. Step One: **Set Realistic Goals.**
- b. Step Two: **Monitor Your Habits and Progress.**
- c. Step Three: **Follow a Balanced Diet.**
- d. Step Four: **Control Cues to Overeating.**
- e. Step Five: **Learn to Deal With Stress.**
- f. Step Six: **Increase Your Physical Activity (With Your Doctor's Permission).**
- g. Step Seven: **Celebrate Your Success at Maintaining Weight Loss.**
- h. Step Eight: **Remember the Cardinal Rules.**

These steps will set in motion the kinds of permanent lifestyle and attitude changes that will keep you from having to fight the same battle again... and again... and again.

### **3. Steps for Improving Eating Habits:**

a. Step One: **Set Realistic Goals.** Before you start a diet, you need to know where you're headed; you need to set a *weight loss goal*. As a general rule, you should lose no more than 1 to 2 pounds a week. If you set unrealistic, rigid goals, you will be setting yourself up for failure. Instead take the number of pounds you want to lose and then figure out the number of weeks it would take you to reach that goal if you lose 1 pound each week. Next, do the same for losing 2 pounds a week. The date you reach your goal weight should fall somewhere between these two dates. If you have a lot of weight to lose, it is important to set both intermediate and long-range goals so that you can experience success along the way. Accept the fact that you will occasionally backslide and, instead of dwelling on your failures, get back on track toward your goal. Goals are the essential element of any successful program. Unless you have some-

thing to shoot for and a sense of direction, you are unlikely to get anywhere with your dieting attempts.

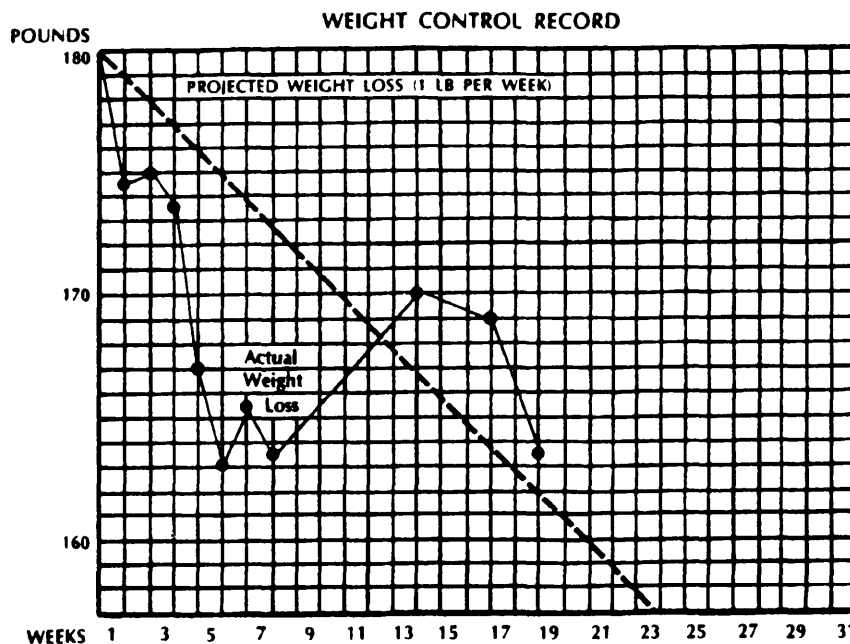
Intermediate Weight Goal _____	Target Date _____
Long-Range Weight Goal _____	Target Date _____

b. **Step Two: Monitor Your Habits and Progress.** Dieting is only one part of a successful weight loss plan. Another vital component is your behavior. For permanent weight loss, your lifestyle must change. You have to alter your basic attitudes about eating--in other words, become a thinner person in your thinking. One key ingredient in this process is awareness. To change behaviors that lead to trouble and to replace them with better ones, you must be aware of how and why you behave the way you do. Maintaining a food diary is one way to help you gain a better understanding or awareness of your eating habits. By recording what you eat (amount and calories), the time, the location, what you are doing, and how you feel for at least a 2-week period, you will start to see patterns. These patterns will give you clues about the conditions under which you eat too much or choose high calorie foods.

TIME OF DAY	TOTAL TIME	FOOD	AMOUNT	CALORIES	LOCATION	MOOD	ACTIVITY	WITH WHOM
0750	15 Minutes	Eggs	2	150	Kitchen	Tired	Standing	Self
		Bacon	4 strips	180				
		Toast	3 slices	210				
		Butter	4 teaspoons	180				
		Whole Milk	1 cup	160				

Another way to monitor yourself is to construct a graph of your progress by plotting your weight from week to week. Your goal rate of weight loss may be 1 to 2 pounds per week; however your actual weight loss may not follow this exact pattern. Differences in individual body types, how your body adjusts to the weight loss, fluid retention, and a variety of other factors will affect the actual weight loss you measure from week to week.

Plateaus are common in a weight loss program and should be expected. This is your body's way of adjusting to a lower body weight. The graph below demonstrates the zigzag process of weight loss.









Use the graph to help you keep your weight loss in perspective. A "goal" line of a 1- pound loss per week was added to the graph. As long as your weight loss line remains below this line, you are making progress. To fill in the graph, weigh yourself once a week on the same scale, at the same time of day, in the same amount of clothes (or no clothes), and record your weight on the graph. Display the graph so that you (and others who may be helping you) will see it every day. It's a good idea to tape it to the refrigerator door. Self-monitoring, in itself, can provide enough motivation to help you achieve weight loss.

c. Step Three: Follow a Balanced Diet:

(1) *Balanced Diet Plan.* One of the most important factors in a successful reducing program is a balanced diet. In planning your diet program, the *Guide to Good Eating* provides guidelines for planning your food intake that will help make sure that you get ample amounts of nu-

rients necessary for your good health. This guide supplies about 1200 calories per day, using the portion sizes indicated for the adult. Additional servings of the foods listed in the guide or foods not listed, such as oils, fats, and desserts, may be included as long as the total calories are below your determined maintenance calorie level and you continue to lose weight at a satisfactory rate.

Serving Size	Minimum Recommended Number of Servings*	Comments				
		1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
<b>Milk Group</b>  1 cup Milk 1 cup Yogurt 1 oz Cheese 1/2 cup Cottage cheese† 1/2 cup Ice cream, ice milk, frozen yogurt†	3 4 2 4 4	†Good sources of calcium such as milk, yogurt, and cheese are recommended daily. Cottage cheese, ice cream, ice milk, and frozen yogurt have about 1/4 to 1/3 the amount of calcium per serving as milk, yogurt, and cheese.				
<b>Meat Group</b>  2-3 oz Cooked lean meat, fish, poultry 1 Egg 1/2 cup Cooked, dried peas, dried beans 2 tbsp Peanut butter 1/4 cup Nuts, seeds‡	2 2 2 3 2	‡Eggs, dried beans, and peanut butter have about 1/2 the amount of protein per serving as meat.				
<b>Fruit-Vegetable Group</b>  1/2 cup Juice 1/2 cup Vegetable, fruit 1 medium Apple, banana, orange 1/2 Grapefruit 1/4 Cantaloupe 1/4 cup Dried fruit	4 4 4 4 4	Dark green, leafy or orange vegetables and fruit are recommended 3 or 4 times a week for vitamin A. Good sources of vitamin C such as oranges, strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, and green peppers are recommended daily.				
<b>Grain Group</b>  1 slice Bread 1/2 English muffin, hamburger bun 1 oz Ready-to-eat cereal 1/2 cup Pasta, rice, grits, cooked cereal 1 Tortilla, roll, muffin	4 4 4 4 4	Whole grain, fortified, or enriched grain products are recommended.				
<b>Combination Foods</b>  1 cup Soup 1 cup Macaroni and cheese lasagna, stew, chili, casserole 1/8-1/5 Pizza 1 Sandwich, taco	These count as servings (or partial servings) from the food groups from which they are made.	Combination Foods supply the same nutrients as the foods they contain.				
<b>"Others" Category</b>  1 oz Potato chips, pretzels 2 Cookies 1/16-9 Layer cake 1 tsp Sugar, jelly 12 oz Soft drink, beer 1 tsp Margarine, butter 1 tbsp Salad dressing, mayonnaise	There is no recommended number of servings for foods in the Others category.	"Others" don't take the place of foods from the Four Food Groups in supplying nutrients. And they are often high in fat or calories.				

\*These servings provide the nutrients your body needs. They also supply about 1200 Calories. However, most people need more than 1200 Calories if you do add more servings.

Guide to Good Eating, Courtesy of National Dairy Council®

(2) *Sample Menu Pattern.* See the sample 1200-calorie menu pattern that follows.

<b>Menu Pattern</b>		
<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>
1 serving bread	3 oz meat	3 oz meat
1 serving fruit	2 servings bread	1 serving bread
1 serving whole milk*	1 serving vegetable	1 serving vegetable
	1 serving whole milk*	1 serving fruit

<b>Sample Menu</b>		
<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>
1/2 c Cornflakes	Sandwich:	3 oz Baked Chicken
4 oz Orange Juice	3 oz Roast Beef	1/2 c Steamed Rice
8 oz Whole Milk*	Lettuce	1/2 c Broccoli
Coffee	2 slices Whole Wheat Bread	2 Peach Halves
	Carrots and Celery Sticks	Iced Tea
	8 oz Whole Milk*	

d. **Step Four: Control Cues To Overeating:**

(1) *External Cues.* External cues are environmental events or things that increase your desire to eat. Examples of external cues include:

- (a) **Visual**
  - seeing food
  - commercials or magazine advertisements
  - showing food
- (b) **Smell**
  - smelling food while it's cooking
  - passing by a bakery
  - popcorn in a movie theater
- (c) **Social**
  - seeing others eat
  - being offered food
  - being at a party where food is the focus
- (d) **Time**
  - lunchtime, dinnertime
  - time lapse between meals
  - snacking at specific times (i.e., at coffeebreak, during 10 o'clock news, or while reading newspaper)

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\*Use of low-fat (2 percent) milk is preferred to reduce cholesterol and saturated fat. You may add 1 teaspoon of corn oil margarine for each serving of low-fat milk substituted.



By being aware of the *external cues* that cause you to eat, you will be better prepared to control your behavior when such a situation occurs.

(2) *Internal Cues*. Internal cues are bodily events that contribute to overeating. Things such as TASTE, SALIVATION, HUNGER, AND APPETITE may trigger your desire to eat. But before you eat, ask yourself, "Why do I want to eat? Am I really hungry?" Learn to distinguish between appetite, which is the **desire** to eat, and hunger, which is a physiological **need** to eat. Are you eating to give your body needed nourishment or simply to satisfy boredom, tension, or depression? Learn to control your **appetite**. Engage in activities that take your mind off food: get out of the house, do something active, such as bicycling or walking the dog. By distracting your attention, you will lessen the desire to eat. Use **imagery** to fill your mind with a vivid picture of what you want to weigh and look like. Concentrate on this positive image of a thinner, more energetic you, and your desire for unhealthy foods will lessen. See yourself in a bathing suit on the beach at your ideal body weight. See yourself dressed in a smart suit or an outfit a size or two smaller than the one you're now wearing. Use these positive examples of imagery to replace the urge to eat once it hits you. But what if you are truly **hungry**? Hunger can be an unpleasant sensation but you *can* endure it. Try drinking a large glass of water or noncaloric beverage to lessen the hunger sensation. When you do eat, make it a **pure** experience. Do not engage in any other activities that may help reinforce eating. For instance, don't read, watch television, or daydream while you eat. Just eat and don't do anything else at the same time. Choose a specific place to eat and try to eat at this place each day. Slow down your eating. The extra time will allow you to feel the sensation of fullness before you have already eaten too much. Put your fork down between each bite to slow down the pace of eating. Chew your food. Take small portions and chew each bite thoroughly before swallowing. Most importantly, stop eating when you no longer feel hungry. Practice leaving a small amount of food on your plate to overcome the habit of automatically eating whatever is in front of you.

(3) *External Troublemakers*. Be aware of certain events or high risk situations that set the stage for overeating. Consider office parties, happy hours, holiday gatherings, and dining out with friends in restaurants as danger zones. You need not completely avoid these occasions, just be aware of these potential troublemakers and plan your behavior in advance, perhaps using positive imagery, to reduce the risk of engaging in unhealthy eating behavior.

(4) *Internal Troublemakers*. Certain thoughts, feelings, and sensations may increase the likelihood that you'll overeat. Consider these ir-

rational thought processes and the effect they have on your eating behavior:

- (a) *I'm paying for it, so I might as well finish it.*
    - 1. If you're on an expense account, you're kidding yourself.
    - 2. You could leave part of your portion behind.
    - 3. Take what you can't eat home in a "doggie" bag and eat it tomorrow.
    - 4. Share your entree with someone else.
  - (b) *Just this once won't hurt.*
    - 1. This is true if just this once is a rare happening.
    - 2. A lot of just this onces *can* do you in.
  - (c) *Poor me, I'm away from home and deserve a treat.*
    - 1. Are frequent fattening treats worth the price?
    - 2. Try working out at a gym or running to fill up some of those lonely hours on the road.
  - (d) *I should not waste this food.*
    - 1. Your choice: waist or waste.
    - 2. Starving children do not benefit from the food you eat.
  - (e) *I've already blown it today. I'll start again next week.*
    - 1. One meal never made anyone fat.
    - 2. Poor attitude. Waiting around could mean wasting around.
  - (f) *I'm lonely (bored, depressed, tired, frustrated, anxious, etc.), this food will make me feel better.*
    - 1. You may feel good during the few minutes while you are eating, but remember: "once on the lips, forever on the hips."
    - 2. The feelings of hopelessness and depression following a binge far outweigh the emotions that may have led to overeating. Learn to control stress and emotions without eating. Identify the emotions that may trigger overeating and find a strategy to help you control these emotions.
- e. Step Five: Learn to Deal With Stress. If you are a typical overeater, stress sends you directly to the kitchen, the doughnut shop, or the vending machine in search of a bite to eat. Don't rely on food to help set things right. Instead try these relaxation techniques and see if they don't help you stay on your diet.
- (1) *Relax your muscles.* Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down on your bed. Tighten all the muscles in your face. Frown. Press your lips together. Squeeze your eyes shut. Tense your body; clench your fists; draw your shoulders up around your ears. Stiffen your buttocks and your abdomen; brace your legs. Hold the physical tension while you count slowly to 20. Then let it all go! Feel the tension flow out of your body. Beginning at your feet and progress to the top of your head, relax all your muscles one by one. Maintain the relaxation for 5 minutes.

(2) *Use power talking.* Write out and tape-record scripts to use in your power talking. Select words and statements that elicit positive mental imagery. Use "trigger words" that will elicit the emotional response that you want when you want it. If possible, tape-record your scripts and listen to them daily.

(3) *Think positive thoughts.* Bombard your mind with positive affirmations. Remember, there is a powerful magic in believing. If you believe in yourself, you can do amazing things. Make a conscious effort to make sure your words, thoughts, and actions are positive, and practice expressing these positive affirmations every chance you get.

(4) *Visualize a scene.* Completely relax your body. For 5 minutes, "see" a beautiful serene place where you are all alone, perhaps stretched out on a beautiful, warm, sandy beach. Feel the sun on your face. Feel the gentle breeze dance across your body. Watch the wisps of soft clouds float across the sky.

As you lie there, the tension runs right out of your body into the sand, and you feel slimmer, lighter, and happier. You feel relaxed and at peace.

Allow yourself to travel to this special place frequently in order to release the anxiety that builds up throughout the day. With continued practice, you will find this escape to be vital in helping you take charge of your life.

(5) *Engage in relaxing activities.* Take a warm bath, play soft music, and light a few candles. Draw or paint with relaxing music in the background. Take a leisurely walk and listen to the sounds of nature.

(6) *Meditate.* Learn meditation, an ancient technique that actually lowers blood pressure, oxygen consumption, and heart rate by blocking the effects of the hormones made by the body under stress. Meditation helps you calm down and handle life's problems. Your local library has books that detail the art of meditation.

f. **Step Six: Increase Your Physical Activity (With Your Doctor's Permission).** Research shows that individuals who combine exercise with dieting are more likely to continue to lose and maintain their weight loss than individuals who rely solely on diet. Exercise will burn off calories; dampen your appetite; speed up your metabolic rate; give your body better tone, strength, and endurance; improve your concentration; boost your self-image; and ward off anxiety. For these reasons, exercise should be one of the most important factors in your weight control program. Like eating right and avoiding temptation, exercising regularly is a habit that has to be permanently incorporated into your life. To do this you should:

(1) *Start out slowly and make little changes that add up.* There are countless opportunities to be more active. Climb stairs instead of taking the elevator, park your car a few blocks away and walk to work, go dancing instead of sitting at the movies, etc. Together, small variations in your routine add up to a lifestyle change.

(2) *Engage in exercises you enjoy.* If you like solo exercise, consider jogging, walking, or swimming. Social exercises should consider aerobics, dance classes, tennis, or walking or jogging with friends. By doing something you enjoy, you'll do it more often and experience the benefits.

(a) *Schedule exercise.* So often we hear, I don't have time to exercise. *Make* time! Schedule exercise as a written appointment with yourself--as important as any other written appointment. The minimum: at least every other day, at least 30 minutes each session. When exercise is seen as **essential** for optimal function and health, you keep your appointments and stay on track.

(b) *Vary your workout routine.* Boredom and monotony are prime reasons people don't exercise regularly. To make working out more fun--and more permanent--try bicycling one day, tennis the next, jogging on the weekend, and so on.

g. **Step Seven: Celebrate Your Success at Maintaining Weight Loss.** Weight control is a lifelong process. If you return to your old eating habits after you have reached your weight goal, you will gain back the pounds you worked so hard to lose. By making gradual changes in your behavior and food habits, it becomes easier to make weight control a permanent habit. Once you reach your target weight or intermediate weight goal, reward yourself. But not with food! Recognizing achievements and rewarding yourself for them is an important part of all programs that produce lasting change. As you move toward your weight goal, be sure to build in a series of rewards and celebrations. How will you reward yourself? How about tickets to a movie, a new article of clothing, or a weekend away? Go through your closet and gather up all the clothes too big for you to wear. Bag and tie them for your favorite charity and indulge in new ones that show off the new you. Bear in mind that reaching your goal is not the end of the line. It takes motivation and dedication to stay there.

h. **Step Eight: Remember the Cardinal Rules:**

(1) *Be patient.* Don't expect too much too fast. Remember, it took you longer than a week to put your weight on, so don't expect to lose it in a week. Be prepared for a consistent and steady weight loss.

(2) *Don't set unrealistic goals.* Remember, nothing succeeds like success itself. Arrange your initial program so that your chances of fail-

ure are slim to none. Once you've experienced a number of successes, you'll gain confidence to handle more difficult goals.

(3) *Live from meal to meal.* Make it from breakfast through those few hours until lunch. Then simply concentrate on getting safely through until dinner. Breaking your time into small components makes it easier to resist temptation.

(4) *Beware of quitters' week.* The third week of any diet is usually the most dangerous. By this time the novelty has worn off, and the new regiment has become routine. And most important, you have rid yourself of the water that causes rapid weight loss at the beginning of any low calorie diet. Keep yourself motivated; don't become a diet casualty.

(5) *Forgive yourself.* Probably the most important skill required for keeping weight off is learning to prevent the inevitable slips from snowballing into a full-blown relapse. A slip or mistake--eating an "illegal" food, skipping exercise--is viewed as a lapse. If the lapse leads to negative feeling--guilt, shame, hopelessness--it can gnaw away at a person causing him to slip again. A series of lapses can result in a collapse--a return to old, destructive eating habits. To avoid this slide, intervene early. First, stop gratifying those urges; gratifying urges makes them stronger and more frequent. But if you do stray and go on a binge, forget it. Don't waste time on guilt. These negative feelings may set you up for another slip. Simply go right back on your diet using positive self-talk to forgive yourself and get back on track.

(6) *Don't skip meals.* You may think that by skipping meals you are speeding up weight loss. But almost invariably, those who skip meals make up for it later, eating too much because they became ravenous or they end up wasting their caloric allotment on junk food. You will end up fatigued and discouraged.

(7) *Don't be obsessed by the scales.* Approximately two-thirds of your body weight is water. Your weight constantly fluctuates because of daily body rhythms, hormones, water retention, and the actual contents of your bladder and digestive tract, which can hold many pounds of food and water. Your weight may vary a couple of pounds in a single day. So try to resist the temptation to jump onto the scales every hour or even every day. Instead weigh yourself, undressed, once a week at the same time of day.

(8) *Take charge of yourself.* Ask yourself, when you look in the mirror, "Is anyone forcing me to look like that? Do I have to put up with that body? Do I have the power to change it?" Then acknowledge that **you** are the responsible party. Your body is the result of the dietary decisions you have made. Unless **you** take charge, all the books and diets in the world won't help you.

**4. Patient References.** The following books are available in most bookstores and can provide you with additional information on improving eating habits. (The book prices may change.)

a. Behavior Modification:

*Habits, Not Diets: The Secret to Lifetime Weight Control*; James M. Ferguson, Bull Publishing Co., P.O. Box 208, Palo Alto CA 94302-0208, 1988 (\$12.95).

b. Fitness:

*Getting Physical: How to Stick With Your Exercise Program*, Art Turock, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 501 Franklin Ave., Garden City NY 11530, 1988 (\$7.95).

*The Aerobics Way*, Kenneth Cooper, Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10113, 1989 (\$4.95).

*The Rockport Walking Program*, James M. Rippe and Ann Ward, Prentice Hall Press, 15 Columbus Cir., New York NY 10023, 1989 (\$9.95).

c. Stress:

*The Doctor's Guide to Instant Stress Relief*, Ronald G. Nathan, Ballantine Books, 201 East 50th St., New York NY 10022, 1987 (\$4.95).

*The Joy of Stress: How to Make Stress Work for You*, Peter G. Hanson, Andrews and McMeel, 4900 Main St., Kansas City MO 64112, 1987 (\$8.95). Amusing as well as helpful.

*Stress Without Distress*, Hans Selye, Signet Books, 1633 Broadway, New York NY 10019, 1974 (\$4.95). Classic on topic.

d. General. Community self-help groups can be helpful in addition to the help you can receive from your local nutritional medicine service. These two groups were chosen because of reasonable cost and support of recommended guidelines for obesity, therapy, and safety.

**TOPS** (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) is a nonprofit organization that charges a nominal fee for self-help group therapy and instruction in behavior modification. No official diet is enforced. National address is:

TOPS Club Inc.  
Box 07360  
Milwaukee WI 53207  
Telephone number: 414-482-4620

**Weight Watchers** is a commercial business operation that charges moderate fees for membership and weekly meetings. It has a four-part approach: an eating plan (very similar to the Air Force Plan), an exercise plan (usually walking), behavior therapy, and group support. It has no connection with the "Weight Watchers" frozen food products. National address is:

Weight Watchers International  
Jericho Atrium  
500 North Broadway  
Jericho NY 11753-2196  
Telephone number: 1-800-792-1126

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