

Losing weight made easier by adopting healthy lifestyle

by Denise Sautters

What are you doing to stay healthy this year?

We recently asked readers this question, and they responded simply by saying they are eating better and exercising.

"My life is very busy, but I need to exercise," said Lisa Bray of North Canton, Ohio. "It makes me feel better."

Bray seriously added exercise to her regular schedule last year, and although she tries to get some in every day, she said she is not fanatical about it.

A HEALTHIER YOU - Top, Lisa Bray uses weights and an exercise ball during her workout at home as part of her daily fitness routine. Then, Bray takes a walk on her treadmill during her daily workout at home. CNS Photo by Ray Stewart.

"If I miss a day, I don't get discouraged. I just fit it in the next day." As for eating right, the legal assistant said she tries.

"I try to eat right, but, trust me, I like my sweets," she said. But, she added, she eats probably six or so times a day, so when she sits down to a meal, she doesn't overindulge.

"My downfall is portion size at dinner," she said. "I eat fruit or veggies in between meals, so I end up eating about every two hours."

"I watch what I eat, plus my daughter swims in high school and she is always trying to get my husband and I to eat the good foods. Most of the time we do."

Steven T. Ling of Jackson Township, Ohio, has specific ideas about how to stay healthy - watch portion size; eliminate sugar, hydrogenated oils, and enriched breads; exercise daily; watch and maintain your blood pressure; and get enough sleep.

Ling knows because he learned the hard way how to be healthy.

"I used to be a fat, overweight, inactive kid who got picked on," he said. "In the fourth grade, I weighed between 140 and 150 pounds, and that is heavy for someone not even 5 feet tall."

The other kids noticed and started calling him hurtful names such as jumbo, garbage disposal and fat boy.

"I never told my parents," he said. "I just let it roll off, but I don't think that was the best way to handle the situation."

By the time he was in his mid-20s, Ling said "enough."

"There was no defining moment for me, I just decided to start eating differently. Now I eat oatmeal, yogurt

and other healthy things. I got rid of the fast food in my diet and started eating right.

"I also started working out," he said, noting he goes to the gym every morning before going to work and on weekends. "I'm not Arnold (Schwarzenegger), at least not yet, but I think I look pretty good for someone approaching 40."

FITNESS LIFESTYLE

Eating the right foods in the right portion sizes and exercising can help people live a longer, healthier life, notes the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

It is never too late to start eating and exercising right. Here are some helpful tips from the agency's Web site www.ahrq.gov

- Eat a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruits, meat, poultry, eggs, fish, dried beans, dairy products and grains.

- Limit calories and saturated fat. Foods high in saturated fats are high in calories, so they can cause weight gain. They also increase your cholesterol levels. Try to limit high-fat dairy products such as ice cream, butter, cheese, cream and whole milk; meats high in fat, such as bacon or chicken with the skin on; and palm and coconut oils and lard.

- Pay attention to portion sizes. Don't choose "super" or other oversize portions. Be aware of how much you eat.

- If you have not been active, start slowly.

- Choose something that fits into your daily life, such as walking.

- Choose an activity you like, or try a new one. Activities such as dancing, swimming or biking can be fun.

- Ask a friend to exercise with you, or join a group.

- Make time in your day for physical activity.

- If the weather is bad, try an exercise show on TV, watch an exercise tape, walk in the mall or work around the house.