

Chapter 1

SO, YOU WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT...

©2008 Mark A. Carlson, MD

Presumably you are reading this book because you would like to lose weight. That's reasonable enough. The desire to shed pounds puts you in the same boat as about 100 million people in the United States, not to mention many more around the world. Weight reduction is a great passion in Western society. Skinny, skinny, we all want to be skinny. Just like movie stars.

This preoccupation with our waistlines actually is a good thing, from a public health perspective. As a physician, I am concerned with the effect of lifestyle on our health. How we live often affects how healthy we are. For example, excessive smoking and drinking can cause all sorts of diseases which can shorten your lifespan—despite what the tobacco and alcohol industry would have you to believe.

A key word above is *excessive*. Similar to smoking and drinking, excessive eating can kill you and make you quite sick along the way. There is plenty of evidence which indicates that obesity is a factor in many killer diseases, including cancer, diabetes, and hypertension. In fact, some health authorities have labeled obesity as the new number one killer in Western society.

But we don't have to get technical to appreciate the real reason that most of us want to lose weight: to improve our physical appearance. I would be clueless if I did not acknowledge that. For most people, prevention of disease and/or prolongation of life is *not* the main reason why they want to lose weight...but I'm OK with this.

As long as overweight people want to lose the extra pounds, then the reason why isn't important. The important thing for me is that a slimmer society will have less cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and so on...a win-win situation. The people would be happy because they like their thin appearance; their doctors would be happy because there would be less obesity-associated disease.

Unfortunately, such a win-win situation is not easy to obtain. There currently are more overweight people in the world than ever before. About half of the people in the United States are overweight. This has occurred despite (or perhaps, because of) the proliferation of diet and weight loss books. Yet here, before you, is a new diet book. How will this one be different?

First and foremost, this book will be based on sound and accepted nutritional science. You will find no nutritional quackery in these pages. Although there still are plenty of unknowns in dieting, there is enough information to make some educated recommendations. And there also is enough information to debunk most of the popular diet plans—which I will do as this book progresses.

But more important than describing the knowns and the unknowns in the dieting world, I will introduce a simple tool for weight loss: the Daily Diet Score. This tool is a self-scoring system. It is based on dieting methods that have been proven to work. In other words, the Daily Diet Score gathers the effective dieting techniques and wraps them up into one tidy number...the Score. You will be able to determine your own Daily Diet Score in less than a minute. Your Score will tell you how you have been doing, and what you need to do to reach your goal.

Will bizarre or silly recipes be a component of this diet plan? Well...no. Recipes are not an essential part of *The Daily Diet Score*. Since I like good food, however, some select recipes will be provided, just to make me happy. More on this later. But this brings up an important point: *You do not need any special recipes to lose weight.*

Now, people who feel compelled to write in italics annoy me. If you can get over the annoyance, though, then allow me to restate this important point: a weight reduction plan does not need to tell you *what kind* of food to eat. The key to weight control is *how much* food you eat, not what kind.

Does this mean that you'll need to weigh out your broccoli on a postage scale?

No...unless you really want to, but that type of precision won't be necessary. *The Daily Diet Score* is not a cookbook. I would not qualify as anything near a cook, anyway. So at the risk of being repetitious, here it is again: *what kind* of food you eat is not nearly as important as *how much* of that food you eat.

Weight loss is all about regulating your caloric intake and output. In other words: to lose weight, one must eat less and exercise more. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the mighty secret of weight reduction.

*Eat less and exercise more.* That's it? Giving this piece of advice is like telling a young stockbroker on his way to Wall Street to "buy low and sell high." Here you are, reading the latest diet book in order to find out the secret to rapid, painless, and permanent weight loss, and some quack is telling you to "eat less and exercise more." How disappointing...

But it's true. And if you stick with me, I will explain why this is so, and how the Daily Diet Score can help you do this. This dietary tool, though not necessarily ground-breaking or pain-free, is the simplest method and your best bet to lose the extra pounds—and keep them off.

Truth is, there is no pain-free method of weight loss. While there may eventually be such a method, the progress to this goal will be slow and in tiny steps. Since there is no magical weight-loss bullet coming anytime soon, I have created the Daily Diet Score, a system grounded in nutritional science. But you do not have to be a scientist to use it—the Daily Diet Score is for anyone who wants to lose weight, regardless of background or education level.

After reading this book, I would like you to be able to say: "That was simple, I understand how the Daily Diet Score works, and I am going to give it a try." But the actual act of losing the weight will remain up to you. This will require your ongoing effort.

Reading a book, any book (including this one), only can provide you with ideas, inspiration, and knowledge. The real work will be up to you. And work it will be—any book or program that claims that weight loss can be achieved *and* maintained without pain or effort is spewing misinformation.

For the most part, you control the amount of food that you eat, and you control how much exercise you get. You are in the driver's seat on these issues. The Daily Diet Score will be your guide to controlling these factors.

Do not surrender this control. Do not shy away from the challenge of weight reduction and maintenance. Remember that you have to be in this for the long haul...there is no easy way out. Weight reduction is a worthwhile endeavor because it will improve your health *and* prolong your life, among other things...

So stay positive and be persistent. Now read on and do not fret, because my message will be simple and brief.