

Is there a Correlation between Your Weight, What You Eat and How Much You Are in Debt?

According to a recent study by Professor Eva Munster at the University of Mainz in Germany there definitely is a correlation between how overweight we are and our bank net worth, (our assets less our debts). Professor Munster studied over 9000 individuals and found that their financial health was not only reflected in their savings accounts but also in their waistlines. The study in fact indicates that people who carry large amounts of debt are approximately twice as likely to be more overweight than the general public and more than 2.5 times as likely to be obese.

The study's definition of over-indebtedness was given as individuals who found it impossible to pay off debts in a reasonable period of time.

The theory is that a healthy diet costs more and the social and psychological stresses of being heavily in debt cause us to eat more. Of course when we are stressed we turn to comfort foods which are usually higher in calories and have less nutritional value such as potato chips and ice cream. In many cases, stress causes us to be less willing to exercise which helps compound the issue of eating more calories.

So how do we improve our finances and our waistlines at the same time? I for one am a firm believer in realizing we cannot change what we do not know or recognize as our present situation. Step one then is to make a list of what we are eating, where we are eating, when are we eating and what are we paying for it. Also look at how you are paying for it. Are you paying cash or putting it on your credit card? Make a list of all the food you throw out as well. This will help you gage the quantities to purchase in the future. Are you paying for a club membership somewhere and not using it? Is the monthly expense an automatic charge on your credit card? Are you using all the benefits associated with your membership or will a lower membership level work just as well for you? I would suggest doing this for about a month since our habits can vary one week to the next. By doing this for four weeks you will have a better idea on what your eating and spending habits are.

Once you have established your current patterns of eating, spending and exercising, set one or two reachable goals for yourself for the first week. Make the goals specific and measurable. Some examples would be, canceling the club membership and deciding to walk everyday for exercise, taking your weekly food allowance out of the bank and only paying cash on all your food purchases, making lunch everyday for work instead of purchasing it, recording in a little pocket book your actual cash food expenditures each day or drinking tap water instead of bottled water. A simple chart can be posted on your fridge where you tick off your successes each day so you have a sense of accomplishment and reinforcement that you can do this. You can also recruit a buddy to help keep you on track.

Once you have your successes for week one, keep them up and set yourself another goal such as menu planning. Make a grocery list and stick to it for the week. Check your flyers and see which meats, fish and poultry are on sale that week and plan around those cuts. Remember to go shopping on a full stomach so you aren't tempted to purchase items not on your list. Remember the food you threw out? Did that have to do with the type of food you purchased? Learn to gauge which foods need to be eaten right away and which ones will last for a few days or the week.

Once you are in the routine of tracking your successes, making a menu plan and sticking to your list, set a new goal for your meal planning and financial savings. One would be coupon clipping, or try using your miles or grocery store points instead of cash to purchase food items. Points build up faster if you frequent the same establishment but remember to check and see if this makes the most sense in terms of time and money. There is no point in driving to a store for the savings on one item unless it is on the way home, conveniently next door or you are buying in bulk and it is a non-perishable. If you do buy a perishable item in bulk and prepare it, consider whether or not it can be frozen for future meals. This way you aren't throwing out food, you are conserving energy and your time and you have something on hand in case of an emergency.

Consider using your barbeque to its fullest capacity by grilling your potatoes and vegetables at the same time as your meat, fish or poultry, thus saving the electricity or gas used to run your stove.

Consider eating less expensive meats and cooking them longer with your vegetables in a slow cooker. The meal will be ready when you get home and you will be less tempted to snack until dinner. You can even play with your portion sizes. Eat four ounces of meat instead of six and increase your vegetable intake.

Try meat alternatives such as Tofu, beans and lentils. Ask your vegetarian friends to come over and help you cook their favorite recipe.

The only way any of this will happen is if you really want to make a change in your life and your finances. Just like there are hundreds of ways to go from one end of the room to the other, there are hundreds of ways to reduce your debt and your waistline. The key is how badly do you want the desired outcome and how committed are you to take action. Once the decision is made to do something, you will be amazed at what shows up on your doorstep.