

WEIGHT WATCH 2004

Sticking with it

7 lbs
TO GOAL

YOU'RE AN ANIMAL!
WALK TODAY!
NO SUGAR
THINK BIKINI
READ MY LIPS—NO MORE HIPS

FAT

By minding her C's and F, Meredith nears her goal and looks ahead to staying fit — and thin

Editor's note: This is the fourth in a series of articles following reporter Meredith Grenier as she tries to get into shape for her daughter's wedding. On May 17, we'll unveil the new Meredith as she reports back from the ceremony.

By Meredith Grenier
DAILY BREEZE

With 34 pounds lost in 16 weeks, I'm convinced more than ever that aerobic exercise, weight training and good nutrition are the simple keys to becoming trim and fit.

Simple, that is, if your head is in the right place, which clearly mine hadn't been for decades. Waiting to become slain by the get-in-shape spirit was sort of like waiting for lightning to strike. I finally had to be proactive and make it happen.

Dec. 18 was the beginning of my new life sans the three C's — chocolate, chardonnay and carbs — along with the F-word: fat. It hasn't been easy, but it hasn't been all that difficult either. The whole secret is just sticking with it — one day at a time.

The bottom line is if I can call upon some long-buried reserve to morph into an exercise animal and fit into a size 8 petite melt-down of my former size 14, so can you. This I know because until four months ago I'd spent much of my life as an overfed, under-exercised wimp. Furthermore, I used my elevated age (I might tell you my weight but never my age) as a major cop-out. Today, however, with people in their 70s and 80s running marathons, scuba diving and mountain climbing, getting

old is simply out of style — at any age.

Since I began this public fat defoliation, my hope has been to inspire others. Now the end is in sight. My goal is to lose 6 more pounds by our daughter's May 1 wedding to make the total loss an even 40, the size of a small pony.

However, the bigger picture — keeping the weight off for life — still looms large. So it was heartening this week to hear about a recent study that found that once weight is lost, it can be kept off long term. This contradicts an earlier study by the National Institutes of Health.

The new research found that 87 percent of Weight Watchers participants who were at goal for six weeks still had the weight off after two years. And 69 percent made it to the five-year mark.

Another just-released study virtually shouts the benefits of exercise. It shows that breast cancer patients reduced their chances of dying from the disease by one-quarter to one-half, depending on how active they were.

The findings, presented April 29 by the American Association for

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ROBERT COOK/DAILY BREEZE
Meredith Grenier, left, and image consultant Denise McCommins look at options for a mother-of-the-bride dress at Macy's in Torrance.

Progress Report:

Goal: To shrink from a Size 14 to a Size 8 and lose 30-plus pounds by May 1.

Days remaining: 18 (at press time).

Weight loss so far: 34 pounds in 16 weeks.

Philosophy on sticking with it: Just do it — one day at a time.

Husband's reaction: "Wow."

New nickname (given by trainer): "Tiny."

Colleagues' most frequent phrase: "Better stop now. You're going to get too thin."



Steve Baldwin

Kids getting extra salt and fat with that fast food

Kids are wonderful. Full of joy, enthusiasm, and promise, children represent all that is good in the world. Because I work in schools, I often have the opportunity to interact with young, eager minds, so full of potential, so eager to learn ... and so willing to fill their bodies with junk food.

Listen up parents: According to the students I've talked to, high-fat, salt-laden fast food makes up the majority of what your kids eat on a daily basis.

How do I know what kids typically eat? I ask them.

During a visit to a sixth-grade classroom, I asked, "What foods do you most often eat?"

In my informal poll, the No. 1 item mentioned was chili cheese dogs, followed closely by burgers, tacos, double-decker tacos, burritos, French fries and chili fries, candy, chips, Flamin' Hot Cheetos, pizza and soda.

The most common places to eat were Rally's, Jack in the Box, McDonald's and Taco Bell.

Just two of the approximately 30 students indicated that they had eaten a piece of fresh fruit in the last week. One girl in the class had recently eaten a green lettuce salad, which was the only vegetable mentioned. About half the class had some milk that day.

Nutritionists often use "5-a-day" to indicate the number of fruits and vegetables they recommend be consumed daily for better health. According to students in this class, "5-a-day" could be applied to the number of artery-clogging fast food items they wolf down.

On an individual basis, a diet based on burgers, fries and soda may or may not constitute an immediate health problem. But when you look at our population as a whole, the numbers are staggering.

Consider Assembly District 51, which includes Hawthorne, Lawndale, Inglewood, Gardena and parts of Los Angeles: 32 percent of children in the district are overweight, and almost 53 percent are unfit, according to a report from the California Center for Public Health Advocacy.

In District 53 — El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, Marina del Rey, Redondo Beach, Torrance and Venice Beach — 23 percent of children are overweight, and 37 percent are unfit.

You can search for similar data for any Assembly District in California at www.publichealthadvocacy.org. Nationally, about 1 in 5 children is overweight.

But that's just the tip of the chili dog. Overweight children often become overweight adults, who are at greater risk for diseases such as diabetes, coronary artery disease and some cancers.

A recent study correlated being overweight with increased risk of cataracts.

Cases of what used to be called "adult onset" diabetes — which is strongly related to weight — are being diagnosed in children at a terrifying rate. In some communities, nearly half of newly diagnosed diabetic children have the "adult" type of disease.

What is the answer? Opinions vary, but many agree that it all begins at home.

Here are three simple steps you can take to make your home more health-friendly for your kids. Choose one habit to improve upon, and work on it this week:

■ Limit "screen time" to two hours or less every day. Kids who watch less television are at reduced risk of becoming over-

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