

Technology to a leaner you!

By Suze Hargraves

I love my iPod. It's amazing how functional all those applications are that can be downloaded for free. Geek heaven. I've got a few favorites at the moment but right now, I've got one that's really been working overtime for me. The application is called "Lose It!" No, it doesn't tell you dumb places to leave your keys. What it does is help you track your calorie intake and your exercise output. This tool has helped me find those places where sneaky calories were creeping in. If you don't have an iPod, you can go online to www.webmd.com/diet/food-fitness-planner-calculator and set yourself up there with the same type of application. The WebMd version is also free. There's also still the ol' paper and pencil method!

Let me give you some insight into why this sort of tool is useful. I used to think I was doing okay with calorie consumption. I just couldn't understand why I wasn't losing weight. Without knowing it I had "grazed" my way to obesity! I started keeping a food journal. It was just a little notebook in my purse accompanied by The Calorie King Calorie, Fat and Carbohydrate book. I just ate what I normally ate and took notes. After the first week, I was shocked by a number of areas:

1. The number of times I had to reach for my little book — snacking was a lifestyle!
2. How quickly the calories were adding up. I was staring down the barrel of almost 3,000 calories a day! Yikes!
3. The amount I either consumed or drank that I didn't even think about normally!

With the first week under my belt I was able to see eating patterns that were really hurting my weight loss goals. I set a reasonable calorie goal for a day and began planning my consumption better — no more random grazing! I used my book to help me make healthier choices everywhere including fast food, favorite restaurants and at home.

Using Apple's Lose It! application has made counting my calories even easier. Tap-tap-tap and I get to see if I'm on track or way off base on a daily/weekly/monthly basis. I also get to enter my day's exercise which calculates calories burned against calories consumed! WebMd's program works in an almost identical manner. If you want to use the online version I recommend that you still keep a paper notebook so you don't forget what items add up to extra calories.

I do have one custom food that simply says, "Bad Day." I credit it with 2,000 calories. It's my entry when I know I've just gone way over my calories and for one single day I just don't care. Sometimes you need to let yourself have a bad diet day. You don't need to beat yourself up over them. Move on to the next day and get back on track.

Talk to your health care provider or a nutritionist before starting any sort of diet regime. They will help you set reasonable goals and make healthy choices no matter where you are eating.

Whether you use your iPod, WebMd or another tracking program, keeping tabs on calorie input and output is a smart way to make technology work for you.

Hey, how many calories do you think typing uses ...