Diets don’t work in the long term. Lifestyle change is the key to losing weight and keeping it off!

Magazines and weight management programs often mention keeping a diary, or “log,” of what you eat and how much you exercise. When you think about keeping a log, perhaps you say to yourself:

- Writing down everything I eat, when I eat it, seems just too time-consuming to me.
- I don’t have time to look up the calories and fat grams in everything I eat.
- I don’t even have time to exercise, let alone write it down in a log.

Think about this, though: Research shows that many people who are successful at losing weight and keeping it off DO keep food and activity logs!

Why does keeping a log help? Eating and engaging in physical activity are lifestyle “habits.” Habits are things you have done so many times, you can do them without really paying attention to them. To change a habit, you need to be able to recognize it. By writing down what you eat and what you do, you are enabling yourself to take a good look at these things, to identify “bad” habits, and to choose things that you can work to change.
And while it’s true that keeping a log of what you eat and do requires some time – keep in mind that it is time spent on you! You are important, and by investing time in keeping a log you are taking time to educate yourself and to make changes that will benefit you for the rest of your life.

It’s possible that you won’t get comfortable enough with logging to make it a new daily habit – but by logging regularly you will be able to recognize good new habits you are developing. You will also be able to see where adjustments may be needed to keep you on track toward reaching your goals. You may choose to keep a log every day for a month or two to get started. Then you may choose to check on yourself regularly by logging two days a week or four days a month.

Choose your logging tools! Paper and pencil work fine. You might want to buy a small, inexpensive notebook that you can keep close at hand. UPMC Health Plan also offers online tools that you can use. Log in to MyHealth OnLine at upmchealthplan.com and click on the MyTools section to find the MyHealth Trackers. These enable you to log your weight, food intake, and activity 24/7.