

# The 30 Pound Club

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## Media

Paula and I have been noticing lately that our media choices have a big impact on our weight. She says that the more gripping the book is, the more she's gripped by our big reading chair—and thus the less she moves and the fewer calories she burns. She insists a really good book shows on the scale, so she's trying to buy less interesting books. The only magazines we get are gardening for her and business for me; both eventually lead to additional activity, so I'd call that about even.

I agree with her premise about reading, but I think the same thing applies to the Internet and social-networking websites. It's really interesting that you can find people you haven't seen since high school or college, but there are many games as well. You can take care of farms, become a Mafia Don, and run a café among other things—all while sitting in front of your computer and burning no calories except your basal metabolic rate. And then there's fantasy baseball or football. Instead of actually playing the games, you can manage your own team including drafting and trading players. These activities are great for stimulating the mind, but they do little for the body. Better to actually meet your friends live and play a little catch. Or instead of chatting on Facebook, get together with your friends and go for a walk.

On the other hand, we've discovered that good music makes us dance, and not just at our dance lessons, either. Spontaneous dancing breaks out all over the house—kitchen, laundry room, you name it. It's surprising what you can do while you dance. Brush your teeth, sauté mushrooms, fold towels, or put away the groceries; they're all more fun if you cha-cha. And our TV time has decreased considerably now that we spend a couple evenings a week going to dance classes and parties at the studio. Sitting versus dancing—that's an easy call.

If you have any type of iPhone or similar device, you can find apps for just about any type of workout you'd like to perform. I've seen some with spinning routines, interval running, boot-camp workouts, and more. Some are free while others cost just a dollar or two. There's no getting bored if you regularly change workouts, and when it's this cheap and easy, you have no reason not to experiment. The advantage is that it's organized for you. Put on workout clothes, start the app, and start burning calories instead of just sitting.

Probably one of the best-known media sensations is the WiiFit and other interactive gaming systems such as Dance Dance Revolution and Xtreme Fit that plug into the TV. You can build muscle, do aerobics, practice yoga, and more. One of the best features is that you can play games—that means you can get more than one person moving. While it may seem strange to be in your living room instead of outdoors, every calorie you use is one less you have to cut, and that's a plus. Besides, the playing field is level—Grandma can kick a 12-year-old's behind.

You can get the kids involved, too. When 7-year-old Bryce was visiting our son and his wife, he told Matthew he was going to run a mile, so Matthew plugged in the game for him. When Matthew came back in the room later, Bryce was lying on the floor hitting the mat with his hands to simulate running. Oh, well—at least he was moving something!

Recent research has shown that with labor-saving devices we burn fewer calories than we did just a few years ago. Taking the elevator versus taking the stairs. Using a dishwasher instead of washing the dishes by hand. Cruising through the drive-thru window instead of walking into the restaurant. It can add up to 100 calories or more per day we don't expend. Now we're decreasing the calories burned even more by the media and activities we choose. There has been no research done yet, but it's probably another 100 calories per day. That means you start every day needing to eat 200 calories less than if you did something more active. That can be an entire meal depending on what you eat.

So there you have it—how your media choices affect your health and your weight. Here's my recommendation as a health consultant: choose a biography instead of suspense, plant a garden instead of playing farmer on the Internet, turn off the computer and meet your friends live, or fill up your iPod and get moving! Every calorie counts on the path to abandoning those 30 pounds.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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