

Don't Be Tempted By Fad Diets

The grapefruit diet. The no-carbs diet. The cabbage soup diet. These and other fad diets come and go. Here's what they have in common: none of them work in the long run!

Fad diets don't work because they don't address the behaviors that lead to weight gain. Skipping meals, or eliminating major food groups, wreaks havoc on your metabolism, causes muscle loss and can strip your body of important nutrients and energy. Starving yourself causes your body to go into a fat-storing starvation mode, making it harder to burn calories and lose weight. You may lose a few pounds, then gain the weight back—now you've lost muscle and replaced it with fat.

Instead of going on a fad diet, this year choose to become healthier, happier and fitter. Focus on changing unhealthy behaviors. Start with small steps and stick with them. In the next 11 weeks, you'll learn some proven strategies for losing weight and keeping it off.

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Get Your Zzzzzs

Getting enough sleep—you should aim for 8 hours a night—is just as important as eating healthy and exercising when it comes to weight management. Poor sleep is one of the strongest risk factors for obesity and contributes to heart disease and mood disorders.

Here's how losing sleep can be a factor in weight gain. Insufficient sleep can decrease the hormone leptin (regulates hunger by telling us when we're satiated) and increase the hormone ghrelin (triggers our appetite). It also reduces energy expenditure (the way we burn off the calories we eat). So strive for better hormone balance with good sleeping habits.

5 Steps to a Better Night's Rest:

1. Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol close to bedtime.
2. Stick to the same sleep and wake times.
3. Exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least 3 hours before bedtime.
4. Wind down with a relaxing bedtime routine (e.g., take a bath or read a book).
5. Create a bedroom that encourages sleep: make it dark, quiet and cool.

Drinking Water For Weight Loss

Drinking water before a meal can curb your hunger.

One study showed that drinking 16 ounces of water about 30 minutes before a meal helped people eat fewer calories and lose more weight. So drink a glass of water when you feel hungry and see if that lessens your hunger.

Drinking water can boost your metabolism for up to one-and-a-half hours, helping you burn off more calories.

Drinking water instead of sugary beverages like sodas, juices, and energy and sports drinks helps you lose weight. Sugary drinks are basically liquid candy and contribute to obesity. Good hydration begins with fluids that have little or no sugar. Plain water, decaffeinated tea or coffee, and sparkling water with a splash of juice or infused waters make better choices.

Consider, too, these additional benefits for your health: drinking lots of water helps your muscles work better, helps your kidneys flush out toxins and prevents constipation. Get into the habit of keeping a bottle of water at your desk, in your car or in your bag.

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10 Weight Loss Tips for Eating Out

1. Decline any bread (or chips and salsa) that may be offered.
2. Ask your waiter about the healthiest options on the menu.
3. Consider ordering two healthy appetizers instead of an entrée that might leave you feeling stuffed.
4. Order roasted or grilled meats and fish. Fried and/or breaded meats are higher in fat and calories.
5. Choose healthy appetizers and side dishes, such as salads, vegetables or fruit, instead of fried ones, which also often include unhealthy dips.
6. Share a meal, a dessert, even a drink. You'll consume half the calories and still feel satisfied. You'll also save money.
7. Ask for a takeout box when your food is served. Put half of your food in it right away to take home so you're not tempted to finish your plate.
8. Drink water instead of soda, milkshakes, fruit drinks or sweetened tea. Some other healthy choices are unsweetened tea and sparkling water.
9. Choose brown rice over white rice. Brown rice is a whole plant food in its most natural form. White rice is a processed carb (as are white bread and white pastas).
10. Beware of unhealthy salad dressings. Oil-based salad dressings, for example, add lots of calories to a salad.

5 Tips For Getting Active

While it's important to pay attention to the food you eat, don't forget to exercise too. If you're trying to reduce your weight, after all, success comes down to that old formula—burn more calories than you consume. **Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity.**

1. Exercise with a friend (dogs count). Studies show you're less likely to skip a workout if you have someone counting on you.
2. Try something new, like a yoga class or dancing. Make it a moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as gardening, walking or swimming.
3. Include strength training at least twice a week. Resistance bands are a comfortable and affordable at-home option. Muscle burns four times as many calories as fat does.
4. Find ways to be more active in what you do every day. Take the stairs whenever possible, like at a mall or an airport. Use the bathroom on a different floor at work.
5. Plan specific actions. You'll be more likely to succeed if you set a specific action plan—for instance, "I will walk for 30 minutes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday."

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Cut Out the Fried Foods

Most people love fried foods. However, frying adds calories and often unhealthy fats. When foods are fried in oil, they absorb some of the oil's fat. That's partly why eating fried foods increases your risk of obesity, stroke, heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Instead of frying your foods, try one of these healthier cooking options, which require little or no added oil:

- **Broil/Grill/Roast:** Place meat or poultry on a rack placed inside a pan so that the fat drips away.
- **Bake:** Use covered, oven-safe cookware with a little liquid.
- **Steam:** Cook vegetables in a basket over simmering water. Your veggies will retain more flavors, and steaming preserves certain nutrients lost when cooking other ways.
- **Poach:** Cook chicken or fish by immersing it in simmering liquid.
- **Sauté:** Using a pan made with a nonstick surface, sauté meats or vegetables with a small amount of broth or wine.

Should you choose to fry your food, use as little oil as possible. Try an oil sprayer/mister, which lets you cover the entire pan with just a teaspoon of oil. Also, eat fried foods in small amounts, pairing them with healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.



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Tips For Staying on Course

- **Keep a Journal:** You are more likely to lose weight if you weigh yourself regularly and keep track of your progress in a diary.
- **Advertise Your Goal:** Share the positive changes. Friends and family can encourage you through moments of weakness.
- **Practice Visualization:** Visualize your body as it will look when you've achieved your goal. Keep that image in your mind when you are tempted to eat unhealthy food or skip exercising.
- **Recruit Your Support System:** Discover workout buddies in friends and work colleagues. Or join a support group online.
- **Think Small:** If you're stuck, start simple: buy a food diary; eat a little fruit here, some veggies there; take a quick 10-minute walk.
- **Make It Fun:** If you focus too intensely on losing weight, you'll make achieving your goal harder. Distract yourself with activities you enjoy, such as music, sports and visiting friends.
- **Accentuate the Positive:** Negative thinking makes it harder to reach your weight loss goals and feeds upon itself. Instead, think positively about what you have accomplished so far.

Changing eating and exercise habits is hard and takes time. Fortunately, the body type you inherited, or the environment you grew up in, is not your destiny. You have the power to override those with the food and lifestyle choices you make every day.



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Tips for Losing Weight at Home

Be mindful while eating. Savor the meal. Don't bolt it down. Have conversations with others while you dine. Eat at the dining table rather than in front of the TV. Chew slowly. Being mindful slows you down, leading to feeling full sooner and eating fewer calories.

Use smaller plates for dinner. Did you know dinner plates have gotten 33% bigger over the last few decades? Turn back the clock and use a salad plate for your main course. Portions will be smaller but you will still be satisfied. Try using smaller bowls and cups too.

Put away leftovers before you eat. After you serve yourself, immediately pack the leftovers in a container and store them in the fridge. That way you won't go back for seconds—and you've got a healthy lunch for tomorrow.

Buy snacks in single-serving sizes. When you eat a small bag of chips or a small packaged nut mix, you can't continue to go back for more. Never eat any snack food out of the box, carton or bag it came in.

Keep healthy foods around for snacks and display them prominently. This will allow you to easily eat something healthy when hunger strikes. Examples of healthy snacks include whole fruits, nuts in single-serving bags, baby carrots, yogurt and hardboiled eggs.

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Substitute For Better Health

You can lose weight by substituting healthier versions of the foods you like. Here are a few examples of alternatives to popular foods.

Popular Choices	Healthy Substitutions
Pizza	Use reduced-fat cheese
Ice cream	Choose a low-fat variety
Two-percent or whole milk	One-percent or fat-free milk
Store-bought salad dressings	Homemade dressings
White bread	Whole wheat bread
Salt, butter and oil for flavor	Spice it up with rosemary, coriander, garlic, cilantro, basil, bay leaves and cinnamon
Cream cheese or butter	Peanut butter or almond butter
Regular (white) pasta noodles	Whole wheat pasta
Meats for protein	Beans for protein
Cream in some recipes	Silken tofu
Mayonnaise on a sandwich	Mustard
White rice	Brown rice
Potato chips	Baked apple slices
Sugar in homemade treats	Splenda or Stevia

More Fruits and Vegetables, Less Meat

To lose weight and be healthy, eat mostly fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat protein and dairy. When dining, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with protein and another quarter with grains.

Increase Fruits and Vegetables: Fruits and vegetables contain few calories and have a lot of fiber, which is why you lose weight when you eat lots of them. They also make you healthier, because a diet featuring vegetables and fruits decreases the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, dementia and certain cancers.

Cut Back on Meat: Animal products tend to be high in fat, which can contribute to weight gain. Therefore, you should limit foods such as fatty beef, pork, poultry with skin, butter and cheese.

Gradually add more whole plant foods to your diet. You can begin with fruits and vegetables you already like and build from there. At the same time, decrease the amounts of animal products, high-fat foods and processed foods you eat.



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Dealing With a Weight Loss Plateau

When you start a weight loss program, it's common to lose pounds quickly in the beginning but then you may get to a point where you stop losing weight. This happens for several reasons.

First, your body loses water before it starts losing fat, which is harder to lose. Second, you may develop a lower metabolism after the first few weeks. This can be caused by a loss of muscle, which leads to a decrease in the calories you burn. Lastly, there could have been a lapse in your healthy eating and exercise habits.

Take a close look at how well you are doing with your new weight loss routine by asking yourself these questions:

- Am I still choosing the right foods?
- Have I resumed eating bigger portions?
- Have I cut back on my workouts?
- Do I need to increase my exercise intensity and frequency?
- Am I managing stress in healthy ways, without using food as a way to cope?
- Has social eating slowed my progress?
- Is there some other reason why I've stopped losing weight?

Once you identify the reasons for your weight loss plateau, figure out ways you can get back on track. Then take the appropriate action! Before long, you'll be losing weight again.

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Tips for Losing Weight on the Job

No matter what your job, you have the opportunity to keep up with good habits and lose weight while you are at work.

- Make your own snacks, such as individually-packaged portions of soy chips, almonds and dried fruit. Try fresh, whole fruit too.
- Plan a healthy lunch. This could be last night's leftovers, salad or side dishes. You could also make a great lunch by combining:
 - fiber-rich whole grains (whole-wheat breads and tortillas, couscous, bulgur or quinoa)
 - healthy fats (olive oil, fish, avocado or walnuts)
 - quality proteins (beans, lentils, peanut or almond butter, fish or minimally processed poultry)
 - veggies or a side of fruit
 - a healthy sandwich, salad, wrap or bowl: be creative!
- Set up your work station so you can sit and stand. Stand up whenever you can—standing burns more calories than sitting.
- Get out of your workplace with colleagues and hold a meeting while on a short walk.
- Take the stairs every chance you get. Use a trip to the department files or mailbox as a chance to get up and stretch.

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