

A WEIGHT LOSS PLAN THAT WORKS: 10 Tips to Keep You on Track

1. Drink at least 64 ounces of water/day. You can cut calories by substituting water for other calorie-containing beverages. Drinking more water will improve your body's ability to process the food that you eat, and it will help to keep your core temperature down during workouts, which reduces your perceived exertion and can keep you from mistaking thirst for hunger. The ideal is to drink enough water until your urine is pale yellow to clear.

2. Eat a healthy breakfast every day. When you wake up in the morning, you have most likely gone 8 hours or more without eating. Your body needs fuel. Skipping breakfast can cause as much as a 40% drop in your basal metabolic rate. Even a workout may not make up for this drop in metabolism. What's a healthy breakfast? Try eating at least 2 or 3 different foods. Include foods that are good sources of complex carbohydrates and protein. An example includes: whole grain cereal with skim milk and sliced fruit.

3. Eat at least 3 fruit servings/day (whole fruit, not juice). Eating a piece of fruit is more satisfying than drinking juice, contains fiber and takes longer to consume. Fiber can decrease the amount of calories your body absorbs. It can also help with satiety.

4. Eat at least 4 vegetable servings/day (1 cup raw, 1/2 cup cooked = 1 serving). Vegetables are very low in calories. Non-starchy vegetables contain only 25 calories/serving. About a 1/2 of a cup of starchy vegetables contain about 80 calories/serving. Both are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytonutrients.

5. Avoid eating until you are "over-stuffed". If we just paid attention to our hunger and satiety cues, there wouldn't be a need to count calories. Don't allow yourself to get too hungry. Choose healthy foods and eat slowly to the point you are comfortable/full, rather than guilt-ridden and unable to move.

6. Avoid eating foods that contain partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated fats as much as possible. This includes virtually all deep-fried foods. These fats have been altered and are used for consistency, preservation and economy reasons. They may cause negative reactions in the body such as undesirable cholesterol levels and gastro-intestinal cancers. Most foods that contain these types of fats are usually highly processed, low in fiber, high in calories and low in nutrition. You need to read the ingredient labels to determine if a food contains hydrogenated fats. Following this tip will drastically improve your ability to make healthier, less processed lower calorie food choices, thus reducing caloric intake.

7. Eat desserts, sweets and unhealthy snack foods less than once/day and limit the serving to 200 calories or less. There's nothing wrong with having the stuff that just tastes good once in awhile, but most of us do this several times a day with no contemplation. By indulging in tempting foods less often, we can reduce our cravings and cut calorie intake (required for weight loss). If you think about it and still want the tempting food, then at least eat a reasonable portion.

8. Avoid snacking after dinner. How much time passes between the time you eat dinner and the time you go to bed? Do you really need that extra snack to get through the night? Most snacking after dinner is in the form of absent-minded eating in front of the television. By skipping night snacking, you can cut calories, go to bed feeling like you managed your eating well and increase the chance that you will wake up hungry and want to eat breakfast.

9. Avoid drinking alcohol as much as possible. Alcohol at 7 calories/gram (just slightly less than fat) adds calories, enhances the taste of food and increases the chances that you may eat more or make poorer choices. Many people negate the calorie deficit that they have been working on all week in just one

night of drinking. You don't have to swear off drinking to get results, but think twice before you do. If you must drink, do it in moderation.

10. Exercise more than you were before you started trying to lose weight. Don't think that the same amount of exercise will get better results just because you are dieting. You can lose weight by cutting calories and increasing activity. If those 10 miles becomes 12 or 15 or 18 a week your results will come more quickly with enhanced fitness.

* Keep track of your progress:

1. Write down your goals.
2. Create a plan (with the help of a Spinning instructor or personal trainer if necessary).
3. Track how well you are sticking to your plan. If your plan is unreasonable, scale it back. If you are not getting results - bump up the variety, frequency, intensity and/or duration of workouts.

* Measure your progress.

Don't just track your weight. Have measurements taken or go through a body composition test. Test your fitness. This can be technical such as going through a VO₂max test in an exercise physiology lab, or simply timing how long it takes you to walk a mile. Typically when you start an exercise or weight loss program, your fitness will improve first. Weight loss and inch loss will come second. A reduction in calories combined with a well-rounded exercise program can create a dramatic difference in tape measurements, muscle tone and appearance without huge losses in weight.

For more information,
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