

York University Staff Association Health and Wellness

News and Views

Dieting do's and don'ts

Trying to slim down and feeling frustrated?

If you are really trying but the number on the scale just isn't budging, you may be doing more harm than good despite your best intentions. Here are some dieting do's and don'ts to help save your weight-loss efforts.

Don't starve yourself.

Starving yourself works initially. However you are just setting yourself up for failure. When you lose weight by not eating up to 50% of that weight loss comes from muscle tissue, not from fat. Each pound of muscle on your body burns 50 calories a day at rest. Well every pound of muscle that you lose on a starvation diet slows your metabolism down, causing you to burn 50 less calories a day.

Don't Eat Fake Foods

The majority of health problems we face today are really due to the national habit of eating over-processed, pre-packaged, foods on a daily, basis. I have to admit that prepackaged weight loss products like energy bars and weight loss shakes are convenient, but they are probably not helping you to lose weight in the long run. Some of the pitfalls when it comes to meal replacements are:

- Meal replacements can be very expensive.
- If you eat a meal replacements in addition to all of the other food you eat you will end up consuming too many calories
- Meal replacements are generally loaded with carbohydrates in the form of simple carbohydrates which have more of a tendency to produce fat cells than the complex carbohydrates found in nature.
- Eating meal replacements can get very monotonous.

- Most people eventually feel deprived and have food cravings, and as a result start binge eating.

There are lots of healthier, more filling options with the same or fewer calories than the average meal replacement. That being stated, the largest issue with most meal replacements and supplements is they do not work for the long term. Most end in a roller coaster ride. People eventually go off the diet and go back to their old habits, eating regular foods and often put on even more weight. After all you can only eat meal replacements for so long. In my opinion, we are always better off finding nutrients naturally.



You always order salad

Contrary to popular belief, always heading for the salad bar may not be your best option. Salads often do not contain enough carbohydrates to help control hunger. As a rule, the only salad you want to eat is the one you make yourself. Not all, but many salads that you buy when eating out are laced with high-fat dressings and high-sugar sauces. A Caesar salad can easily contain 50-60 grams of fat (the same as **two** Big Macs). In fact, women get about half their daily calories from salad dressing. Substitute olive oil and vinegar for a healthier alternative.

A good salad starts with a base of mixed greens. I love the pre-mixed bags/containers at the grocery store for their variety and convenience. For every salad I make, I like to pick three or four of the add-ins from this list

Apples, Pears, or strawberries. – Fruit adds a little sweetness to a salad.

Chickpeas - Tender and nutty, I find that chickpeas also make salads more filling.

Nuts - Walnuts, pine nuts, almonds, or pecans – Add both protein and that extra crunch.

Avocado – a source of good fat. Avocado is terrific with bitter greens.

Hardboiled Eggs - A little protein goes a long way to making salads more satisfying.

Cheese – I prefer feta or goat's cheese or even a sprinkle of parmesan. Adding cheese provides both protein and calcium to a salad.

Leftovers - My favorite add-in! A bit of last night's chicken or steak, or even any leftover roasted vegetables. Mmmm.

You Don't Like to Cook.

Restaurant meals are usually packed with added calories, so dust off your apron and get in the kitchen. If you must eat out, consider splitting a meal with your date or asking the waiter to serve you half of your meal and have the other half boxed up to go.

You don't get enough shut eye.

Turn off the television or computer an hour earlier and go to bed. Studies suggest that a lack of sleep may make weight loss and weight control more of a challenge by altering our metabolism, as well as our eating and activity patterns. Regularly scrimping on sleep may also put you at higher risk for developing mood disorders like depression and diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. When you have sleep deprivation and are running on low energy you automatically go for a bag of chips a chocolate bar or any other comfort food. You may be able to fight off sleepiness. However, the ultimate result? Unwanted pounds as a result of poor food choices coupled with lack of exercise.

You never take time for a snack

Eating smaller, more frequent meals, snacks can be particularly helpful. Small snacks eaten about every 2-3 hours tend to translate into more stable blood sugars throughout the day. When you graze instead of gorge, you avoid extreme hunger and tend not to overeat at any one meal. To snack and lose weight, it's important to choose snacks that are full of nutrients and that are satisfying.



You don't drink enough water.

Substituting water for sugary drinks like pop and juice can make a major dent in your daily calorie count. Experts say that hunger is sometimes misinterpreted as cravings for food. It could be a sign of dehydration. So instead of consuming food, drink water when a craving first hits. This will make sure you're not confusing hunger for thirst and will also help you cut down on the amount of food you eat, helping you with your weight loss. If you don't like water, try adding lemon or lime to an ice cold glass of water. Here is an easy recipe to make water more appealing without adding unwanted chemicals, sodium, sugar or calories.

Ingredients:

6 cups chilled spring water
12 thin slices of cucumber
4 thin lemon slices
4 sprigs of fresh mint (slightly crushed)
2 sprigs fresh rosemary

Directions: Combine ingredients in a pitcher, cover, and chill for 2 to 8 hours. Add ice cubes just before serving.

In a world full of temptation, it can be tough to maintain a healthy weight. However dieting as we know it is not the way to do it. There are no quick fixes. For long term weight loss a commitment to a healthy life style is required.