

\*diet

**Smile!...**  
The right attitude can help you shed pounds fast!



# A-Z guide to weight loss

By Karyn Repinski

Drop 10 pounds fast with our new diet tips and tricks. You'll be a dress size smaller in no time!

## Attitude

If past attempts at long-term weight loss haven't been successful, strike a new attitude. "The reasons you're dieting are ultimately going to make or break you," says Franca Alphin, R.D., M.P.H., assistant clinical professor in the department of community

and family medicine at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Most dieters are inspired by outside events, like wanting to slim down before their high-school reunion or become bikini-ready for a beach vacation. But the best motivators are those that come from within and require long-term commitment—for example, an improved self-image or having more energy to play with

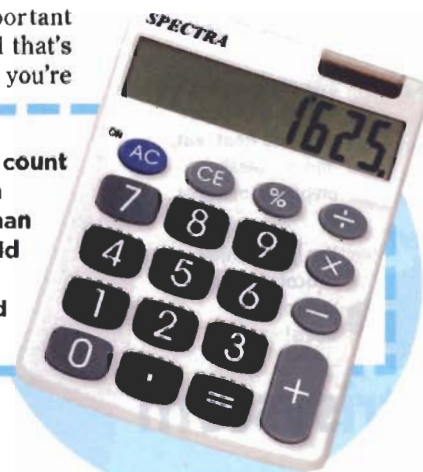
your kids. "External motivation can be powerful, but once you've met the goal and have nothing else to work toward, it can be difficult to keep the weight off and harder still to continue to lose," says Alphin.

## Breakfast

Breakfast has long been called the most important meal of the day, and that's especially true when you're

trying to slim down. One recent study, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology*, found that breakfast skippers were 450 percent more likely to be obese. Another recent study, published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, found that the more people ate in the morning,

**C**alories "The biggest misconception about dieting is that you don't have to count calories," says Carla Wolper, R.D., a nutritionist at the New York Obesity Research Center at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City. "Consuming just 100 a day more than you burn can result in a 10-pound weight gain in a year." How many calories should you have? Multiply your ideal weight by 13 if your level of activity is low to moderate, 18 if you're extremely active. For example, a not-very-active 150-pound woman who wants to drop 25 pounds can consume 1,625 calories per day.



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the less they ate overall for the whole day. Beyond that, what you eat for breakfast seems to play a crucial role in weight control too. According to a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, people who ate cereal had significantly lower body mass index measurements (BMIs) than those who ate meat and eggs or nothing.

## Diet pills

Prescription medications can help beat the battle of the bulge, but the effect is modest—at best, the loss is 10 percent of a person's body weight. And because they're serious medicines (with some potentially significant side effects), drugs like Xenical and Meridia should be considered only for serious weight problems. A good candidate has a BMI of 30 or more, or a BMI that's 27 or higher and at least two obesity-related conditions, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. (To calculate your BMI, log on to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and type "BMI calculator" in the search window.) But be forewarned: An Rx remedy won't do much on its own. "The drug should be used in conjunction with a com-

prehensive program of diet and exercise," says Jeanine Albu, M.D., attending physician at the New York Obesity Research Center at St. Luke's Hospital. "And you should be supervised by a doctor." And there's the rub; studies show that since most people don't adopt healthier diet and exercise habits, they regain weight after stopping the medicine.

There are also a number of prescription medications that can make you gain weight as a side effect. If you're on medication and gaining weight, check with your doctor.

## Energy

Dieting needn't zap your energy. If you feel sluggish, it may be because you're consuming less than 1,200 calories per day, the minimum requirement for women. A drastic reduction in calories not only makes it difficult to get all the nutrients you need, it actually triggers your body to burn calories at a lower-than-usual rate in an effort to preserve itself, explains Alphin. So while you may lose weight rapidly at first, your losses will eventually slow to the point that you'll find yourself practically starving with little weight loss to show for it—talk about discouraging! Another possible explanation for a lack of pep is that

you've cut way back on carbohydrates, which are crucial for fueling your muscles as well as your brain. To maintain stamina, choose meals that combine protein and fat, with high-fiber carbs like whole-wheat breads and pasta, fruit and vegetables. Supplement them with at least two wholesome snacks—think fruit, nuts and whole-grain crackers and cheese—during the day.

## Forgetful slurping

When it comes to liquid calories, many of us seem to have amnesia. Research shows that we don't compensate for the extra calories we drink by consuming less of other foods. One possible reason beverages don't seem to register on our radar and we continue to eat is that they don't give us a strong feeling of fullness, says Richard Mattes, Ph.D., R.D., professor of foods and nutrition at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. It's not just soda, juice and sports drinks that pack a hefty caloric punch; so-called gourmet coffee beverages like lattes and cappuccinos are also to blame. According to a recent study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, those who consume such drinks add more than 200 extra calories to their daily in-

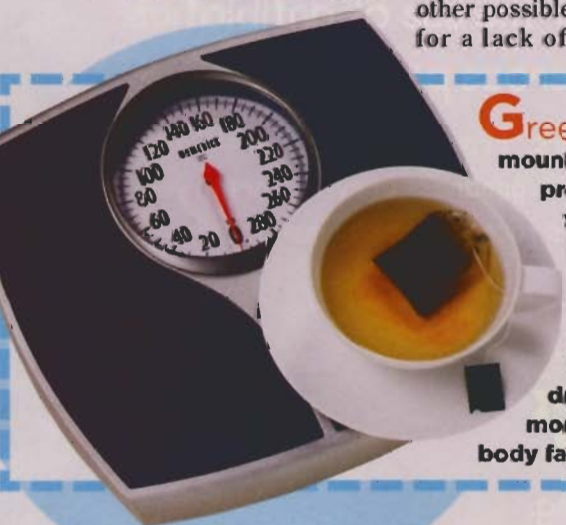
take. To mitigate the damage, switch to skim milk and pass on the whipped cream.

## Hypnosis

"You're getting very...skinny?" It's not hocus-pocus; hypnosis can go a long way toward helping dieters both drop pounds and maintain the loss, says Arreed Barabasz, Ph.D., director of the laboratory of hypnosis research at Washington State University and author of *Hypnotherapeutic Techniques 2E* (Brunner-Routledge). According to a review of six studies published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, patients enrolled in weight-loss programs who also received hypnotherapy dropped an average of 12 pounds over several months, while those who dieted alone lost only 6. A special form of attentiveness and focus, "hypnosis helps you commit to making healthier choices, like eating less and exercising more," says Dr. Barabasz, who has used it to change the way patients perceive the taste of foods. For instance, they can enjoy plain vegetables as much as those dripping in butter. If you're interested in hypnotherapy, get help from a licensed health-care practitioner who uses it adjunctively. For more information, contact the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis at 617-469-1981.

## Indulgence

Sometimes it's good to be bad. "When you put foods on a 'no-no' list, you'll feel threatened, tempted to overindulge, or compelled to get enough before they're taken away," says Cynthia Sass, M.P.H., spokesperson for the Amer-



**Green tea** The evidence continues to mount that drinking green tea helps promote weight loss in a variety of ways, including boosting the rate of metabolism. The latest research, published in *Obesity Research*, found that people who drank green tea at least once per week had less body fat than those who didn't. Tea drinkers with the longest habit—ten or more years—had about 20 percent less body fat than those who didn't sip regularly.

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ican Dietetic Association and author of *Your Diet Is Driving Me Crazy* (Marlowe & Company). Some studies suggest that an all-or-nothing attitude leads to a “blown-it” syndrome, in which you lose all discipline once you’ve eaten foods dubbed “bad” or “forbidden.” Instead of declaring your favorite less-than-healthy foods off-limits, try savoring them in small amounts occasionally. “Many people are quite happy with a little bite if they know they can eat it again,” says Sass.

## Journal

There’s a reason that maintaining a food diary is the right way to diet. Research shows that those who record what they eat every day lose more weight and keep it off. “Writing down what you eat helps you stay in control because it makes you more accountable,” says Wolper. “Once you realize that a piece of candy has 25 calories, you’ll think twice about having eight pieces.”

## Liposuction

Fat-sucking surgery is no shortcut to weight loss. The average number of pounds lost after lipo is only about six. “Liposuction is a procedure that contours areas resistant to diet and exercise, not a quick way to get thin,” says David E. Bank, M.D., a dermatologic surgeon in Mount Kisco, New York. Be-

## Kitchen essentials

To speed your weight-loss results, stock your kitchen with these calorie savers:

● a cheese grater

(you’ll use about half as much

cheese if you

shred it

first) ● a

steamer,

which

allows you

to cook food

without added

fat ● an olive oil sprayer such

as Misto, which evenly distributes about a half

teaspoon of oil per two-second spray,

compared to the two or three teaspoons you

might get when pouring (a savings of up to 100

calories per use) ● a food scale (a few extra

ounces of even healthy fare every day can

doom a diet).



sides not being associated with a dramatic drop in pounds, liposuction, according to a recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, doesn’t reduce the risk factors associated with obesity, including insulin sensitivity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. For that you’ll need to slim down the old-fashioned way—with diet and exercise.

## Muscle

Losing weight is much easier when your body is a fat-blasting machine, and that’s precisely what it becomes when you build muscle through strength training. The premise is simple: The more muscle you have, the more calories your body burns during the day. Even a small increase of three pounds of muscle (the aver-

age amount gained from a 12-week training program) allows you to burn about 100 more calories daily—even on days when you’ve barely lifted a finger, reports Wayne Westcott, Ph.D., fitness research director at Boston’s South Shore YMCA. But that’s not all. Besides the 240 calories burned during a half-hour workout, there’s also an increase in post-exercise metabolism (what Dr. Westcott calls the “afterburn” effect), which accounts for up to another 60 calories lost. In total, that’s about 1,600 calories per week from just three 30-minute iron-pumping sessions. If that’s not enough to convince you to hit the weight room, consider that in a study comparing women who did only stretches with those who worked out with weights,

the latter significantly reduced their daily fat intake without being told to after six weeks. “When people see that kind of progress, they want to enhance it,” explains Dr. Westcott.

## Nighttime

Forget the myth that late-night calories make you fatter. A recent study at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland found no link between after-hours eating and weight gain. As long as the calories are equal, it doesn’t matter whether they’re consumed in the wee hours of the night or at high noon. Unfortunately, much of the eating that goes on in the evening is mindless snacking on high-calorie, high-fat foods like chips, cookies, ice cream and pizza. To squelch your compulsion to munch nonstop in the evening, follow this advice from Dawn Jackson Blatner, R.D., spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association: Try eating balanced meals during the day (many women who struggle with night eating skip meals), restricting portion sizes (for example, enjoy a half-cup of ice cream instead of the whole pint) and setting a time after which you don’t eat.

## Overeating

Can’t resist the urge to nosh more than you should? Have constant trouble reaching and maintaining the weight you want? Con-

**P**lateau Reaching a plateau, when all your dieting efforts stop paying off, is common. To get past that brick wall, which likely results from a shift in metabolism and a retention of fluid, Duke University’s Alphin suggests lowering your salt intake, drinking more water (which reduces

bloating) and eating more fruit—especially cantaloupe, honeydew, oranges and bananas, which are high in water-eliminating potassium. Changing the balance of foods in your diet—say, eating fewer carbs and more protein—can help push you off a plateau. Upping physical activity helps too.



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sider joining a weight-loss group like Weight Watchers or Overeaters Anonymous. Research conducted at Aston University in Birmingham, England, found that group support eases the stress associated with dieting and improves your chances of slimming down.

## Quick pace

Attention, express eaters: Eat more slowly and you'll consume fewer calories. That's the finding of a recent Japanese study of nearly 1,700 women, which confirmed that putting the brakes on the rate at which you eat results in feeling fuller faster, so you wind up eating less. (The slowpokes had the lower BMIs, 19.6 compared to 22 for faster eaters, to prove it.) Some easy ways to make meals more leisurely are to dim the lights (or dine by candlelight) and eat hot foods, which—as an added benefit—also tend to taste better because they're more aromatic than cold fare.

## Refined carbohydrates

You can slash the odds of putting on extra pounds if you eat the whole grain, high-fiber versions of your favorite carbs such as bread, cereal, rice and pasta. The proof: In a Harvard study of 74,000 women, those who ate more than two daily servings of whole grains were 49 percent less likely to be overweight than those who noshed on the virtually fiberless white stuff. Refined carbs cause levels of insulin, the hormone that regulates blood sugar, to spike quickly and then plummet. "It's that drop in blood sugar that often stimulates hunger," explains Lisa Young,

**T**elevision Does that bag of chips get polished off during your favorite TV show? According to research published in the journal *Appetite*, people consume nearly 140 more calories on days that they eat in front of the TV. Even worse, exercisers reported that they worked out about 20 minutes less on days that they ate with the television on. TV contributes to overeating because "we just don't think about what we're popping in our mouths while we're entranced by the tube," says John M. de Castro, Ph.D., professor and chair of the department of psychology at the University of Texas at El Paso.



Ph.D., R.D., adjunct assistant professor in the department of nutrition and food studies and public health at New York University and author of *The Portion Teller* (Morgan Road Books). Besides being more filling, high-fiber carbohydrates are digested more slowly, so you feel satisfied far longer.

## Stress

If you're overworked and overwhelmed, it might explain why you're also overweight. When the body is under physical or emotional stress, it churns out cortisol, a hormone that both increases appetite, particularly for sugar- and fat-laden foods, and signals the storage of fat around the abdomen. The best neutralizer of the weighty effects of cortisol is exercise, says Elissa Epel, Ph.D., an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of California in San Francisco. "It's a natural, considering that the stress response has already mobilized the body for activity."

**Diet tip:** Eat at least two servings of whole grains per day—this simple step can produce some slim-down magic!

Eric Jacobson

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## Thin for Life!

### Easy Ways to Lose 10 Pounds Fast

percent of calories came from fat. To work healthy fats into your diet, eat controlled portions of foods like avocados, fatty fish (like salmon or tuna), and nuts and seeds.

#### Vegetables

If you'd like to eat less but still feel satisfied and lose weight, consider vegging out at mealtime. According to research, adding vegetables, which have a high water content, fills you up and significantly decreases the calorie content of meals. In one recent study conducted at Pennsylvania State University in University Park, people who had three cups of low-cal salad (107 calories) before lunch ate 12 percent fewer calories at the meal than those who dived right into their main course. "It's the weight of food, not just the fat and calories, that satiates you, and water adds weight without calories," says Young, who suggests starting lunch and dinner with a green salad and increasing the amount of veggies in stir-fry and pasta dishes.

#### Water

Drinking enough water is important when you want to lose weight, since sometimes your thirst signal gets misinterpreted for hunger; guzzle first, and you might not feel the need to eat, suggests Blatner. As for the idea that drinking lots of water will help you lose weight by speeding up your metabolism—sorry, but it's not true. "Water itself doesn't promote fat loss," says Blatner. "However, replacing higher-calorie drinks like soda, juice, lemonade or sweetened iced tea with water is a wonderful way to save calories," she says.

before their periods. One thing that is for sure: Because a craving is very specific, eating only the particular food you want will satisfy it. "If you crave dark chocolate, having a piece of milk chocolate isn't the answer," says Robin Kanarek, Ph.D., professor of psychology and nutrition at Tufts University in Boston.

#### Yo-yo dieting

There's no convincing evidence that repeatedly losing and regaining the same 10 or 20 pounds permanently slows your metabolism, thus making it harder to reach and maintain a healthy weight. But riding a weight-loss roller-coaster often leads to feelings of frustration and failure, which can make it harder to try again. "The psychological aspect of dieting is enormous," notes Dr. Albu, who says it's best to undertake a weight-loss plan when motivation is high and commitment can be sustained.

#### ZZZ's

So what if all the hunky guys from *Desperate Housewives* are going to be on Leno—it's much more important for your waistline not to stay up. According to studies conducted at the University of Chicago, sleep loss interferes with the secretion of cortisol, a hormone that regulates appetite. If cortisol levels are out of whack, you may still feel hungry even if you've had enough to eat. Researchers also found that carbohydrates metabolize slower when you're sleep deprived, which translates into more stored body fat. Seems that when it comes to weight loss, the saying "You snooze, you lose" is right on. **FC**