

9 Best Weight-Loss Tips

We scoured scores of weight loss tips and found the cream of the crop to help you shed that flab for good.

This is certainly not the first list of weight loss tips you've stumbled upon. There is no shortage of advice, programs, and products designed to help people who are overweight. However, that's why it's difficult to weed out what's really useful and effective. And who isn't sick of hearing that the way to lose weight is to reduce calories and increase physical activity?

You're in luck: We dug deep to find the tips that make the most sense and really work. Let's go....

1. Stick to the measuring tape. When it comes to shedding body fat, the scale is not always your friend.

Consider this: The best way to slim down is to simultaneously change your eating habits and increase physical activity. Exercising, however, builds muscle mass -- which is a good thing. You may have heard that muscle tissue is more metabolically active than other body tissue, so the more you have, the more calories your body burns at rest. But you've probably also heard that muscle weighs more than fat. So, if you seriously increase your weight-bearing exercise, your weight could actually go up!

The measuring tape, on the other hand, can't lie. As you lose body fat, you lose inches around your waist, hips, thighs, and upper arms. Eventually, you won't even need the tape. Your skinny jeans will tell you all you need to know.

2. Choose soup. Ever notice how surprisingly full you feel after a bowl of soup? This is one of the best weight loss tips. A bowl of any broth-based soup, especially one with veggies and beans — try kale, onion, and white beans — can be a great strategy for weight loss. Make soup a habit for lunch or dinner every day, and add a whole grain to that soup every other day. A soup can sock in a lot of powerful nutrients and fiber; you'll likely find yourself so satisfied you don't even need that mid-afternoon or late-night nosh.

With soup, go homemade any time you can — the high sodium content of many canned soups may be too much for those with high blood pressure.

3. Learn from former smokers. Changing your eating habits to lose weight can be a lot like quitting smoking. It's all about dodging those cravings instead of indulging them. So when you're considering that pasta dish or some mouth-watering dessert, try these craving busters smokers use:

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- Count to 30 ... In a very short time, a craving will usually subside.
- Visualize ... your thinner, toned body, looking great in a pair of shorts and a form-fitting tee shirt.
- Adopt a substitute habit ... Of course, make it a healthy or at least neutral one, such as drinking tea (use the loose-leaf kind to keep your hands busy), chewing sugarless gum, etc.
- Change your routine ... Fill your time differently so you're more aware of eating. If you're a TV-time muncher, put on exercise clothes when you get home, and do stretches, leg lifts, and crunches while you watch TV.
- Just say "never" ... Smokers have to commit to never, ever taking another drag of a cigarette. Although we can't give up eating entirely, for some people, it is helpful to "just say no" to one unhealthy food or ingredient that is a significant contributor to their weight problem. Sometimes it's almost easier to know that you just can't ever have, say, potato chips.

4. Address your mental state. Without realizing it, many people use food as a comfort, distraction, pleasure, or as a buffer for stress and other negative emotions. Similar to smokers and alcoholics, some people are psychologically "addicted" to food, and they use it as a way of self-medicating an underlying problem. If you think you habitually use food to make yourself feel better, talk to a mental health counselor.

5. Add to your repertoire. Instead of focusing on the things you must limit or deny yourself in order to lose body fat, celebrate new foods that you can add to shake up your meal plans. Try to adopt a new whole grain, fruit, or vegetable every week. Maybe it's kasha (buckwheat groats), spaghetti squash, or papaya. Keep a running list of favorites that you can refer to when you find yourself drifting back to broccoli and carrots.

6. Choose foods that take time. This is a great tip for anyone trying to lose weight, but especially for people who eat too fast (a surefire way of consuming too many calories without realizing it). While expanding your culinary repertoire to include more healthy choices, add foods that force you to slow down. Think of foods you have to peel or pick apart — artichokes, pomegranate, kiwi, crab and other shellfish, or even a hard-boiled egg.

7. Retrain your taste buds. It is a well-known fact that when people give up salt, even lightly salted foods begin to taste terribly over-salty. The same is true for people who give up sugar -- things start tasting cloyingly sweet. (This makes a good case for giving up diet soda and other artificially sweetened foods and drinks. Without them, your taste buds will adjust to not needing as much sweetness.) Now, extend this concept to foods made with white flour, and you may find

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yourself losing your taste — or at least your cravings — for white breads, bagels, rolls, pasta, and the like.

8. Drink water before you start eating. Some research has shown that drinking two glasses of water before eating causes people to consume fewer calories. It's even better if the water is cold, according to some experts. The theory is that your digestive system has to expend energy to warm the water to room temperature, expending calories in the process.

SOURCES:

1 - Davy, B.M., Dennis, E.A., Hendrick, V.E., Estabrooks, P.A., and Dietrich, A.M. 2010. Drinking more water: An effective strategy for the prevention and treatment of obesity? Paper presented at the 240th National Meeting of the American Chemical Society in Boston, MA.

9. Try interval training. Interval training consists of alternating bursts of intense activity with intervals of lighter activity. For instance, alternate leisurely walking with periods of faster walking. If you're in better shape, you can try alternating walking with intervals of jogging. Some research shows that interval training is associated with improvements in body composition, decreased cardiovascular risks, and increased exercise tolerance in overweight patients.

SOURCES:

1 - Gayda, M., Gremeaux, V., Drigny, J., Juneau, M., Guilbeault, V., and Nigam, A. 2011. Long-term lifestyle intervention and optimized high-intensity interval training program improve body composition, cardiovascular risk, and exercise parameters in obese patients with or without metabolic syndrome. Paper presented at the 2nd National Obesity Summit in Montreal, Canada.

Here are some more weight loss tips from our own dLife Food Talk Forum members:

"I started using a smaller plate. It has always been hard for me to leave stuff on my plate...so, using a smaller plate keeps away the guilt AND the calories. And I purchased a really pretty set of four so that I am dining in style!" -- *vpenning*

"I try to eat only at the table (of course, if low blood sugar, eat where you must!). When eating while watching TV, driving, working on the computer, etc., I tend to overeat. --*uninvitedguest*

"Eating foods as nature intended them to be eaten has helped tremendously with kick starting my weight loss. I have already shed over ten pounds and have lost one dress size." --*mrsdestiny2003*

"Write down what you eat before you eat it this way you know what you are eating. This makes you more "accountable" for what you eat. It is easy to pop something in your mouth and forget

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that you ate it but if you adopt this philosophy it really helps!" — *elletucker*

"I have found that food prep is extremely important to me also. If I have healthy snacks prepared (i.e. celery sticks, cucumber chips, a bit of egg salad) before I get hungry, I am much less likely to snack on anything I shouldn't." — *fiercekitten*

"When I eat out, I always ask for a to go box/bag and put 1/2 the meal away before I even start eating. The portions in restaurants are always way too big and if it's not on my plate, I won't eat it." — *Aimeemol*

Have any weight loss tips to share? We want to hear! Post your ideas in the Food Talk forum.



