

# Losing weight – top tips & common myths



The desire to lose weight can be so intense that it is easy to be tempted by the quick fix. However, fad diets will only cause the wrong kind of weight loss and will eventually lead to the weight being put back on.

The secret to successful long-term weight loss is in making small changes to everyday lifestyle habits – this ensures healthy, gradual but permanent weight loss.

## Top tips on losing weight the healthy way

- Eat a healthy breakfast.
- Become more active.
- Eat healthier choices.
- Drink healthier options.
- Avoid eating when feeling down.
- Move temptation out of the way.
- Find support.
- Be patient.
- Don't deny yourself everything.
- Don't starve yourself.
- Keep lots of variety in the food you eat.
- Take care when you're eating out.
- Snack on fruit.
- Eat only when you're hungry.

We should all aim to achieve 30 minutes of activity or 10,000 steps per day as well as eating fruit and vegetables or lower fat and sugar options. Making changes from soda, sugary drinks and alcohol to water, fruit juices, and lower-fat milk can make a big difference.

Becoming more active will also improve your mental wellbeing as well as your physical wellbeing. You can do this with a friend or a gym-buddy to help you stay on track. Aiming to lose no more than one or two pounds a week is a realistic SMART goal. This will help make changes you're likely to stick with.

Aim to reduce your calorie balance by around 250 to 500 calories a day through a combination in changing the type of food you eat, and the amount of food you eat. So that you're still getting all of the nutrients your body needs keep your diet varied. This will mean you're also less likely to get bored and more likely to stick with your eating plan.

Eating grilled, boiled, or baked food rather than fried food as the way food is prepared can have a fairly drastic effect on the fat and calorie content.

Put salad dressings on the side and select fruit for dessert, rather than biscuits, cakes, and crisps. Leave out a bowl of fruit, so it's always at hand, and reduce temptation by storing fatty or sugary foods out of sight.

Get in the habit of refusing food when it's offered if you're not actually hungry at the time. Go to bed on time – many people eat when they're tired and sleepy. Avoid eating while watching TV – this can make you eat for longer, and also trigger the desire to eat more.

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People who exercise and follow a controlled, healthy and balanced diet see the best results. Exercise and eating a balanced diet will increase resting metabolism and the number of calories used at rest.



## Myth 1 - "Skipping meals helps you to lose weight"

You actually tend to gain weight when you skip meals because your body assumes you're starving and goes into survival mode, by hanging onto fat cells and storing any subsequent food you do eat as fat rather than burning it as energy. Skipping meals to lose weight is counter intuitive.

**Skipping breakfast is futile.** Studies show that people who eat breakfast are much less likely to be overweight. One reason for this is that it prevents you from snacking on high-fat and high-calorie foods during the morning. Remember your body has gone through an overnight fast, your brain needs food to perform properly and if the brain fails to get its kick start first thing in the morning, you inevitably start to crave food that will quickly raise your blood glucose and brain glucose levels – these tend to be high-sugar and high-fat foods.

**Healthy snacks are important.** If you really want to lose weight, eat both meals and snacks. Eating little and often is now recognised as the best way to keep your metabolism on an even keel, at the same time as regulating blood sugar levels.

## Myth 2 - "Only eat foods labelled as 'low fat'"

Foods that are described as 'low fat' can often have more calories than standard products because of the extra sugars and thickeners used to boost flavour and texture. While many are lower in fat they can contain just as much sugar as chocolate bars – cereal bars and breakfast cereals are amongst the worst culprits. Check out the food labels on these products – to be low in sugars they should contain 2 grams or less of sugar, per 100 grams of the product.

## Myth 3 - "Avoid carbohydrates at all costs"

'Low-carb' diets, such as the Atkins diet, have been very popular lately, but there is no evidence that 'carb-rich' foods are more likely to make us gain weight than any other food. Carbohydrates are an essential component of a healthy balanced diet. They are the food group most likely to keep you feeling fuller for longer and are the most important source of energy in your diet. That's why people on a low-carbohydrate / high-protein diet soon begin to feel lethargic and irritable.

## Myth 4 - "FAD diets are a great way to lose weight"

False! There are 'millions' of different FAD diets and research shows that one in four of us are on one at any given time, but none of them are proven to work. In fact recent research has shown that calorie-restricted diets create powerful cravings for the very foods you are trying to avoid, so these dieters have stronger urges to eat more frequently and a greater feeling of being out of control with their eating. FAD diets are also known for quick weight loss and even quicker weight gain once you finish the diet. Gradual exercise and steps to a healthy diet is key.