How to eat to lose weight. Enjoy delicious food & lots of it!

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Eat to lose weight. Enjoy delicious food & lots of it!

Many people are still stuck in the mind set that you have to eat less to lose weight. Lowering your calorie intake may help you shed those pounds in the short-term, yet they are likely to come piling back on soon after. Read on to find out how you can enjoy delicious food and lots of it, and still shed those extra inches.

Which sort of foods help you lose weight?

Eat to lose weight

Eating little and often keeps your metabolism firing and burns fat. This means snacking every 3-4 hours on healthy, nutrient-dense foods. It's important that you always eat breakfast as this is definitely the most important meal of the day for weight loss, as it cranks up the metabolism ready for the day ahead as well as encouraging steady blood sugar control. Skipping breakfast will result in hunger, cravings and unhealthy food choices later. Don't miss your mid morning and mid afternoon snacks and take them with you to avoid the temptation of chocolate or crisps during the mid afternoon slump.

Weight loss power foods

Omega 3 rich foods, such as oily fish, avocados, raw nuts and seeds. They boost the metabolism and help the body utilise insulin for steady sugar control, as well as dampening down inflammatory responses in the body (often present when overweight) and help our cellular ability to burn fat. *

Fibre-rich foods, like oats, beans, carrots and apples. Fibre fills you up and keeps you satisfied for longer. These foods take a while to break down, so release their natural sugars slowly into the bloodstream. The body has to use lots of energy to break them down, unlike refined carbohydrates and sweets that cause weight-gain and blood sugar rushes.

Water. Thirst is often mistaken for hunger by the body. Stay hydrated with plenty of fresh water. Hydrated cells function at their best, resulting in efficiency of all bodily functions. Drinking lots of water will also stop you reaching out for sugary, fizzy drinks. Often the body holds onto water to dilute toxins. This will result in weight carried as water-retention. This is actually a sign of dehydration and means you need to drink more water.

Which sort of foods help you lose weight?

Fresh fruits and vegetables. These are high in nutrients and low in calories, You can snack on these to your heart's content. They are packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to provide your body with what it needs to stay fit and healthy

Colourful foods. Get as many colours into your diet as possible for an antioxidant boost. Fruits and veggies give your body a spring clean aiding weight loss. Eat citrus fruits, apricots, kiwi, peaches, berries, pears, red grapes, artichokes, beetroot, peppers, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, spinach, watercress, cucumber, sprouts, cauliflower, carrots, celery, tomato, lettuce and red cabbage for their cleansing action. *

Seaweed and seafood. They are rich in iodine to support healthy thyroid function, helping your body lose weight.

Superfoods. These give you a power boost to satisfy your cravings and provide a super hit of nutrients. Include these in your daily diet and watch your unhealthy cravings disappear. Try spirulina, chlorella, bee pollen, maca, flax meal, blueberries and goji berries.

Green smoothies. They flood your body with nutrients and raw enzymes for optimum health. Get your greens in a glass. Try blending any leafy green vegetable with some soft fruits, such as a banana and a kiwi. Add water to blend. Drink down immediately as a powerful snack.

Lean protein. This supports your hormones involved in weight loss and keeps your blood sugar levels balanced throughout the day. Eat lean organic chicken, fish, walnuts, almonds, raw seeds, tofu, sprouts, beans and organic yogurt

Get snacking for increased metabolism

Healthy snack attack

Try these snacks to eat your way to a leaner you:

- Apple and a handful of almonds
- Celery spread with fresh nut butter
- Hummus and raw veggie sticks
- Pumpkin seed butter on rye toast
- Organic cottage cheese and a handful of cherry tomatoes
- Organic yogurt with blueberries and sunflower seeds
- A handful of walnuts and almonds with a handful of dried apricots
- Mashed avocado and raw broccoli florets

Mindful eating and self-love are key

Abundance not deprivation

Losing weight and keeping it off is all about being good to yourself. Love yourself and give yourself time to adjust to a new way of eating, avoiding “diets” yet eating healthily for life, not just for a quick weight-loss-fix. Treat your body to healthy, nourishing foods not processed, empty ones. With the increased energy and vitality these natural foods bring you, you’ll feel more inspired to stay active and continue on a healthy eating path. Your body will begin to work at its optimum and your moods will stay elevated. Take things slowly and gently and enjoy the process. Remember that every time you eat you are giving your body a message, so eat with joy and awareness and love.

A nutritionist's top weight loss tips:

1. Eat small, regular meals to keep blood sugar levels even and increase metabolism. Eating every 2-3 hours will stop you over-eating and prevents cravings and unhealthy food choices. Eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, a mid-morning and a mid-afternoon snack.

2. Eat a healthy snack mid morning and mid afternoon to keep your blood sugar levels even and to avoid cravings and overeating. (See healthy snacks above)

3. Eat most of your food during the morning and lunch, choosing lighter foods as the day goes on and a light evening meal. This ensures calories get burned up during the day and helps to increase the metabolism. Eating large meals at night encourages weight gain, slow digestion and sluggishness upon waking.

4. Never skip meals. If you do, you will be very hungry and likely to over-eat as well as eating whatever you can get your hands on! This is the reason for most people's unhealthy food choices.

5. Don't get caught out without a healthy option. Plan ahead so that you don't have to settle for unhealthy food choices when out and about or at work.

6. Avoid white refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, white rice, white pasta, white noodles, croissants, cakes, pastries, pretzels, biscuits. They will turn to fat in your body very quickly and upset your blood sugar control. Choose wholefoods instead.

7. Add protein to each meal and snack to increase metabolism, keep you fuller for longer and keep blood sugar levels steady.

A nutritionist's top weight loss tips:

8. Eat essential fats from raw almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, linseeds (flax) and sunflower seeds, as well as avocado, extra virgin olive oil and oily fish. Use quality oils on your salads, such as flax, hemp, walnut, extra virgin olive oil.

9. Choose low sugar fruits over high sugar fruits. Low sugar fruits include: apples, pears, plums, citrus fruits (grapefruit, lemon, lime, orange, mandarin), kiwi, peaches, nectarines, berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, cherries).

10. Avoid or eat only in small portions high sugar fruits: bananas, pineapple, papaya, melon, dried fruits, grapes.

11. Eat as many vegetables and salads as you can. These are high in nutrients and low in calories.

12. Eat only small portions of starchy vegetables, such as potato, pumpkin, squash, sweet potato. If you eat potato, eat a small amount and keep the skin on.

13. Drink a nutritious smoothie everyday, preferably a green smoothie packed with green leafy vegetables. Adding a superfood such as spirulina, chlorella or wheatgrass powder to your smoothie will flood your body with nutrients. Increased nutrient status equals a healthier, more efficient body without cravings. Many cravings are a sign of nutrient deficiencies.

14. Avoid stimulants, or limit to maximum one coffee a day, or two weak teas, or three weak green teas.

A nutritionist's top weight loss tips:

15. Avoid pastries, cakes, biscuits, sweets and sugary foods as these will also upset the body's sugar balancing. The body turns excess sugar into fat.

16. Avoid fruit juice and sweetened drinks as they encourage weight gain and blood sugar fluctuations.

17. Avoid alcohol or limit yourself to one drink on maximum 4 nights of the week. Choose red wine, champagne or dry white wine as they are lower in sugar, or a spirit such as gin, vodka or whiskey with soda water and fresh lemon or lime.

18. Have a teaspoon of cinnamon each day. This helps balance blood sugar levels, reduces cravings and increases energy.

19. Drink 1.5-2l of pure water every day. Dehydration is often mistaken for hunger!

So, what's the skinny on fat?

Scales do not differentiate between muscle and fat. Remember, muscle weighs more than fat and also increases your metabolic rate, encouraging further fat burning. Your body is composed of muscle, connective tissue, bones, organs, water and fat. Relying on the outdated weight scale as a measurement of whether you are “healthy” or “unhealthy”, or looking at height versus weight (body max index/BMI), will not determine if you have elevated fat levels.

It’s all about healthy balance

Even if your weight is within a “normal” range you can still have an unhealthy body composition. Two people at the same height and weight may look completely different from each other because of their body composition. Muscle takes up less space than fat, so muscle to fat ratio determines how lean you look.

Forget how much you weigh, it’s your body composition that counts. Looking at your fat and lean muscle mass is the best way of defining how “in shape” you actually are.

If you are carrying too much fat compared to your lean muscle mass, even if you do not consider yourself overweight on the scales, this is termed as sarcopenic obesity. Sarcopenia is the medical term for the degenerative loss of muscle mass with ageing and is associated with a risk of chronic disease. A healthy muscle to fat ratio on the other hand is associated with longevity and a reduced risk of disease.

Improving your body composition

Stress management.

Stress hormones encourage muscle breakdown and increase fat, especially abdominal fat.

Exercise.

Include weight training to increase muscle mass.

Eat a low glycemic diet.
The body turns excess sugar into fat. Avoid white, refined carbohydrates, sugar and starchy foods to maintain balanced blood sugar levels to keep insulin and stress hormones in check and encourage fat burning, not fat storage.

Eat regularly.
Healthy meals and snacks crank up metabolism and keep blood sugar levels even.

Detox.
Excess fat can be a sign that your body is storing toxins in fat tissue.

Eat quality protein
for healthy muscle mass.

Practice yoga
for a toned body and stress relief.

Supplement
with nutrients such as chromium, magnesium and B vitamins to promote healthy fat metabolism.

See a nutritionist
to help you determine exactly what your body needs.

Belly fat and unhealthy body composition

So, if you think you need to “lose weight” just because you weigh too much, think again. If you have excess fat on your body, it’s recommended that you lose the fat, not simply “lose weight”, which means focusing on a healthy body composition.

Keeping the fat off for good and maintaining a healthy muscle tone will stoke the body’s metabolic fire, keeping you burning calories, whether you are moving, standing, sitting, or even sleeping, and will set you up for healthy ageing. Men and women begin to lose muscle tone after the age of forty, which is linked to an increase in waist circumference, AKA the middle-aged spread.

It is now medically recognised that the apple-shaped body (fat around the middle) is a biological marker for increased risk of diabetes, stroke, hypertension and heart disease. Abdominal fat is metabolically active and upsets the body’s delicate biochemistry, especially your hormonal balance.

Aim to feel good in the body you’re in

Instead of standing on the scales, stand in front of the mirror naked. Aim to love your body and be happy with the way it feels and looks, regardless of what the scales may tell you. Commit to a healthier diet and lifestyle that supports a healthy body composition, in order to look – and more importantly feel – good in the body you’re in.

If you need help to learn a healthier way of living, including improving your body composition, you may benefit from consulting with a nutritionist who can recommend a specific diet, supplement and lifestyle plan for you.

Article by Jo Rowkins, nutritional therapist and founder of Awakening Health.

See a nutritionist

Body composition program

Learn what your own body needs

Find out more about healthy weight loss

Find out what your own body needs to stay healthy and maintain a stable weight.

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