

50 Diet Tips for 2015

Pair These Tips With Your Favorite Diet Plan
or Use It as a Stand Alone Program to Help You
Shed Pounds and Feel Better Than Ever Before

www.HowToGetFlatAbsFast.org



50 Diet Tips for 2015

Tip #1

Water Load

When it comes to losing weight, there's no more powerful weapon than water. Making this your number one beverage will allow you to see results much faster. The typical person is recommended to have at least 6-8 glasses of water daily.

For real weight loss, you can drink 8-10 glasses of water each day. It may seem hard to down that much water when you aren't used to it. There are several ways you can add water that will make it easier to swallow.

- Keep a water glass on the kitchen counter. Make this a special glass that's one of your favorites. Fill it up each time you walk into the kitchen.
- Drink a glass of water before meals. This will help to make you feel full and get more water in your body.
- Carry a water bottle with you wherever you go. If you have water with you, you'll be more likely to drink it.
- At restaurants, skip the soda and stick to water. It's better for you and it's almost always free.
- Drink a glass of water as soon as you wake up each morning. It will help to hydrate you and give you a pick-me-up.
- Add lemon to water. Sometimes the taste of water keeps people from enjoying its health benefits. Adding a squirt of lemon or lime juice can help to perk up the flavor.
- Drink water cold. While some people enjoy room temperature water, many people find it more palatable when it's cold.

Why is water so important? You are made of more than 70% water. Every cell in your body requires water in order to carry out its processes. You need water to dissolve important vitamins and minerals.

Water helps to regulate your blood pressure, your body temperature, and keeps things running smoothly. When you don't give your body enough water, it holds onto it. When you give it plenty, you're less likely to retain water.

Your body also gets rid of fat through sweat and urination. If you're not providing it with water, you're not giving that fat an easy exit. But by drinking plenty of water, you'll lose weight faster and you'll feel better.

Tip #2

Ditch the Diet Soda

It's pretty common for someone to go on a diet and then immediately make the switch to diet soda. And while diet soda is free from calories and fat, it isn't the best thing you can do for your waistline or your health.

Diet soda is full of chemical sweeteners that have been shown to have some negative effects. For example, saccharine is a known carcinogen – which means it can cause cancer. And other sweeteners, such as aspartame and sucralose, can actually cause your blood sugar to spike.

While your body isn't actually receiving sugar, these sweeteners trick it into thinking it is. This can make you feel hungrier – something you don't want when you're trying to take off a few extra pounds.

Drinking soda also decreases the amount of water you consume. This can also have negative effects on weight loss and dieting. If soda is your regular drink, you'll want to look at ways to limit consumption.

Instead of drinking diet soda, there are many things you can do:

- Drink regular soda. If you have to have the flavor of soda it would be better to drink a real one and account for the calories in your diet plan.
- Drink carbonated water such as Perrier and Pellegrino. These have the slightest taste of citrus, but don't have the calories or artificial ingredients.
- Making a mix of half juice and half club soda can give you a sweet soda flavor and the feeling of bubbles without the artificial ingredients.
- Make iced herbal tea. This can be a satisfying, flavorful drink that you can use to replace the need for soda with a meal.

For some people, ditching the soda habit can be tough. You may be addicted to the caffeine as well as the flavor. You may not want to quit cold turkey. It's a good idea to cut back if you're someone who drinks several sodas daily.

Instead, try to limit soda to once each day. Look at it as a treat, rather than your main beverage. Eventually, you'll find that you don't have to have as much in order to be satisfied and you may even find that you can let it go completely.

Diet soda is not the best thing for a diet. It's time to say goodbye to soda and hello to a new you. By drinking more water and less soda, you'll find that weight loss is a much easier challenge. You'll also save money – soda can be a bit pricey.

Tip #3

Fill Up on Fruits and Veggies

Most diets extol the virtues of fruits and vegetables. These natural products are chock full of vitamins and minerals that help your body to function properly. They also happen to be very tasty.

For this reason, the recommendation for most people is to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and veggies (combined) each day. For some people that's pretty easy, but others find that many hard to attain.

Dieters can especially enjoy the benefits of fruits and vegetables because they are filling and very low calorie. That means you can eat a lot of them without totally going over your calorie goal for the day.

While you know you need to eat your fruits and vegetables, many people are confused about how to incorporate them into their everyday diet. Here are a few tips to help you get your servings of plant-based foods:

- Try new foods. There is a huge variety of available fruits and vegetables available at your local supermarket. Try to pick up a new one each time you go shopping and research healthy ways to prepare it.
- Substitute spaghetti squash for actual spaghetti. It's low calorie and delicious. Kids especially like to see how the squash turns into "noodles" after cooking.
- Eat a salad with every meal. This is a simple way to add veggies. Make one big bowl of salad and eat it for the entire week.
- Roast vegetables for easy flavor. All you need is a cookie sheet, some olive oil, and a little salt and pepper to make delicious roasted veggies. This is an easy way to add any type of vegetable to your dinner plate.
- Keep raw veggies on hand. Most people like raw carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, and snap peas with dip. Keep an assortment of raw veggies at the ready. You can make a healthy yogurt ranch dip that will complement them perfectly.
- Make a fresh fruit bowl every week. Keeping fruit prepared and cut will make it easier to add a cup to your breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- Look for bargains. Weekly grocery store fliers will show you what produce is the best deal for the week. While fresh fruits and vegetables can be expensive, shopping the sales will make it easier on your family budget.

Tip #4

Pay Attention to Your Hunger

When you're dieting it can be easy to get caught up on calories and grams of various nutrients like carbs, fats, and fiber. But sometimes it can be easy to ignore nature's most important signal – your level of hunger.

Most people who need to diet have ignored that trigger for a long time. Eating until you're stuffed can sometimes signal the end of a meal. However, if you feel stuffed you're long past satisfying your hunger.

It might help to spend an entire day or two devoted to paying attention to your hunger signals. Some signs that you're hungry may include:

- An empty feeling in your stomach
- Weakness or fatigue
- Thirst

If you're feeling hungry in your mouth or that you just want to taste something, you're probably not actually hungry. People eat for many other reasons than hunger such as emotions, sharing in social occasions, and wanting to experience a flavor.

By focusing on using your food as fuel, you'll be more likely to eat healthily. When you begin to feel hungry, have a small amount of food. Focus on eating until you're feeling satisfied or the feeling of hunger in your stomach has gone away.

Eating past the point of satisfaction can lead to:

- Feeling sick
- Indigestion
- Feeling bloated
- Having to unbutton your pants
- Ultimately gaining weight
- Feelings of failure that lead to more emotional eating

When you stop eating as you feel satisfied, you'll naturally attain a weight that is natural and healthy for you. This is one of the most important things you can do for your health – but also one of the most challenging.

Tip #5

Fill Your Plate Perfectly

When it comes to eating, you can use some simple cues to make sure you're getting satisfied without overdoing it. A simple technique can help you to eat healthy without having to measure your food – and you'll find that weight loss follows.

First, make a commitment to fill half your plate with vegetables at every meal. This sounds simple, but most people are not eating enough fruits and vegetables – especially before dieting. There are many choices that will get that plate filled such as:

- Salad
- Green beans
- Carrots
- Squash
- Peas

Once half your plate is filled with veggies, you have half your plate to fill with a serving of protein and serving of carbohydrates. Many recipes, such as casseroles, will end up giving you both of these nutrients.

For example, a taco includes a carbohydrate shell filled with protein found in ground beef or chicken. So half of your plate would have a taco and the other would be filled with vegetables. This system helps you to make sure you eat a lot of foods high in nutrients, but low in calories.

Every time you sit down to a meal, and before you start heaping foods onto your plate, think about visualizing a plate where half of it contains vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ of it contains carbs, and the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate is full of protein that your body needs for optimal health.

Tip #6

Don't Go It Alone

When you're trying to diet and lose weight, it can feel like a lonely business. There's so much temptation all around and it's hard to stay motivated. Having a buddy system can really help you to succeed.

There are many routes to getting support for weight loss and dieting. It's important to choose the option that's best for you. Here are a few things to consider:

- **Joining a weight loss program.** There are many weight loss programs that you can join that offer meetings and/or one-on-one counseling. These can provide support and come in a wide range of costs. Look in your local area for weight loss centers.
- **Find a friend.** This is one of the easiest routes. If you have a friend who also wants to drop a few pounds, you can support one another in the process. That could mean swapping recipes, phoning each other for support, or meeting daily to get a workout in.
- **Look online.** There are many places where you can find support online. In fact, many free websites provide social networking just for people interested in dieting and weight loss. There are some programs that charge a nominal fee. This is a good solution if you have a busy schedule and don't have time to meet with people face-to-face.
- **12-step groups.** If you're truly concerned that you may have disordered eating, you may want to try a 12-step program such as Overeaters Anonymous. This is an organization that provides meetings to help you overcome problematic eating.
- **Take a class.** Taking a class in health and fitness can help you to find people who are interested in a healthy lifestyle. Look at your local gym, community center, or even hospital for classes that might help you to network.
- **Form your own group.** Many people have a circle of friends or coworkers interested in dieting and getting healthier. You can start your own group at the office or in your neighborhood. This route is free and helps you to get support from the people with whom you spend the most time.

The benefits of social support are great. People who don't try to diet alone tend to lose more weight, keep it off for longer, and feel happier about the process. Friends can help you to keep going when you feel like giving up and help to cheer you on when you're having success.

Trying to diet alone can be isolating and can cause you to feel discouraged. The good news is that many people are where you are – ready to lose some weight and feel great. You're sure to find a friend to help with the process.

Tip #7

Brown Bag It

One of the most difficult parts of dieting is getting away from eating all of your meals out. When it comes to lunch, it's not uncommon for people to eat out every day either from a cafeteria or a restaurant.

An easy way to cut back on calories and stick to your diet is to take your lunch with you to work or school. It takes some planning, but when you take your lunch you can be in control of what you're putting into your body.

If you're new to taking your lunch, you may be at a loss of how to get started. Here are a few things to help:

- Buy a reusable, insulated container for your lunch. There are many stylish options available online or in our local superstore.
- Purchase several containers of different shapes and sizes for portioning your food.
- Get a thermos to help keep soups warm.
- If you don't have a refrigerator available, look for reusable ice packs to help keep food cold and safe.
- Stock up on lunch foods such as bread, meats, cheese, fruit, vegetables, and low calorie snacks.

If you have a microwave available to you, leftovers can make an excellent and easy lunch. When you're preparing dinner, just make a little extra to take for lunch the next day. Package it immediately and voila – your lunch is packed.

If you don't have the ability to reheat leftovers, a simple sandwich and veggies can get you through the day. You may want to pack your lunch the night before to avoid the morning rush of trying to get things together.

When it isn't the culture of your office to bring lunch, it can be difficult to stand alone. Try talking with coworkers and see if you can start a trend of eating in. If you really need to get out of the office, try taking your lunch outside to a local park or good picnic spot.

Taking your lunch can help you to save many calories and it can also help you to save money – something that just about everyone enjoys. You may find that just by making this simple switch you'll lose a great deal of weight.

Tip #8

Don't Want to Do Without? Plan Ahead for Eating Out

While skipping the restaurant is usually easier on your diet, many people enjoy the experience of eating out. If you travel a lot for work, it may also be necessary for you to manage in a world of restaurant meals.

You don't have to avoid restaurants altogether if you're willing to plan ahead for meals. There are several ways you can make good decisions and have a healthy meal when eating out. These simple steps can help you to succeed on your diet.

- Look at menus before you go. Many restaurants have menus including calorie counts online. If not, you can always ask for the menu to be faxed to you. This allows you to choose what you're going to have before you even get to the place.
- Look for grilled options. When you avoid the fried items, you'll save calories and stick closer to your diet.
- Choose steamed veggies on the side. This is the best side option to keep you on track with your diet program.
- Beware of salads. Many people see salads on the menu and assume they are a healthy option. However, restaurant salads often contain hidden calories in the dressings, cheeses, croutons, and other extras.
- Look for a section on the menu with healthier options. Most menus have light items or healthier choices denoted on the menu.
- Create your own plate. If there's nothing on the menu that suits your needs, you can use the a la carte options to create the perfect meal.
- Keep a list of best options at different restaurants. This way when you travel you can have a list of go-to items and not have to do the research all over again.
- If you know you'll be eating a heavier restaurant meal for lunch or dinner, eat lighter portions the rest of the day.

Eating at restaurants doesn't have to be challenging. By making healthy choices, you'll be able to enjoy the convenience and ease of having your food prepared while sticking to your diet plan. For many people, restaurant dining is a necessity.

Tip #9

Get a Reality Check by Setting Goals

As you travel along the road of dieting, it helps to have a map. Setting goals can help you to have a clear idea of where you're going and how you're going to get there. Many people set goals that aren't realistic or attainable.

It's important to set goals that you can actually attain in order to succeed. Otherwise you end up frustrated and wondering why you didn't lose 100 pounds in 3 months. There are many ways you can set realistic goals.

Goals need to have three specific characteristics in order to work for you. They need to be:

1. Measurable
2. Attainable
3. Specific

Many people make mistakes by setting goals that lack one of these essential components. When it comes to dieting, weight loss goals are common. But they aren't the only way to go. If you do set weight loss goals, be realistic. Try setting a goal to lose 1-2 pounds each week.

Make weight loss goals short-term. Setting a goal to lose the first five or ten pounds is more attainable than a goal to lose 50 pounds. Even more attainable than weight loss goals are goals that have to do with behavior.

For example, you might set a goal to drink 8 glasses of water each day for a week. This is something that is doable, that can be measured, and is specific. While weight loss has many factors that affect it, you are in total control of behaviors.

Setting goals can help you to stay on track when you use them properly. Think about setting goals for eating fruits and vegetables, exercising, and keeping a journal of what you eat. If you reach these goals, you will inevitably lose weight and be healthier.

Dieting is a long-term decision for most people. Make sure to set goals that will help to keep you motivated. There's no better feeling than accomplishing the goals that you've set for yourself.

Utilize goal setting to stay on track. Be careful not to allow your goals to become too broad and unrealistic – that can lead to failure. Ultimately, when you set realistic goals, you'll find that you are able to stay on track.

Tip #10

Play the Numbers Game the Right Way

Dieting can make you a scale watcher. You're constantly watching the scale for any change in the numbers. Slow progress on the scale can lead to feelings of failure and frustration. However, the scale is not the only way to measure your progress.

There are many numbers that can change in response to the changes you're making in your diet and lifestyle. It may help to keep track of numbers that aren't related to the scale that can help you to see your success.

Take note of your measurements. A tape measure can help you to see progress that the scale doesn't show. You may want to log your measurements weekly to keep track of how you're doing with your diet.

For example, measure the circumference of your arm, thigh, waist, hips, and bust/chest. Taking these measurements regularly can show you that you're changing the composition of your body. Another measure of body composition is a body fat test.

Calipers or electronic measuring devices can help you to determine your body fat percentage. These tests can also show that you while your weight isn't changing as much as you would like, your body fat is decreasing.

There are also health measurements that can make a big difference in your understanding of your success. You can ask your physician to help you track the following numbers:

- Cholesterol
- Blood glucose
- Blood pressure
- Heart rate

You'll be amazed how much a few weeks of dieting can change these important numbers. Your health is much more precious than any numbers on a scale. These indicators can show you success.

Keep a small journal where you can look at your numbers and see progress. You may even want to plot a graph or make a chart that shows how well you're doing. Use this as inspiration when the scale doesn't give you the results you want.

Tip #11

Reward Your Accomplishments – Even the Small Ones

Dieting can be a long haul – but you don't have to wait until you reach your final goal weight in order to celebrate. It's best to give yourself rewards along the way. There are many things you can do to keep the motivation going.

Here are some ideas of goals that are worth rewarding:

- Each 5 pounds lost
- Big milestones such as 20 pounds or 50 pounds lost
- Achieving your goal to drink water daily
- Exercising 4 times in one week
- Freedom from dependence on diabetes medication
- Seeing your cholesterol drop below 200

When it comes to determining rewards, it's important to keep them unrelated to food. So often we have special meals to celebrate important events. When it comes to dieting, this isn't a good practice.

Instead, reward yourself in ways that are good for you and will help you to stay motivated. For example:

- Get a new pair of earrings (they always fit!)
- Buy an outfit in your new size
- Go to a movie
- Take a mini-holiday
- Get a manicure/pedicure
- Schedule a massage

There are many ways you can reward yourself – and many reasons to do so. Take time to look at the little victories. This will help you to stay motivated and get to the end goal that you've been dreaming of achieving.

Tip #12

Portion Prowess – From Supermarket to Success

Success has a lot to do with being prepared. One way you can have more success is to portion out your food as soon as you get home from the grocery store. This will help you to have foods you can grab and go about your daily life.

For example, when you purchase veggies in large containers you can peel, chop, and separate them into one-cup portion sizes. Using re-sealable plastic bags or small plastic containers can help you to store them in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them.

Food items such as nuts, potato chips, and crackers can also be portioned in smaller bags and kept in your cupboard. While you can buy small packages of these items, those are often more expensive.

You can also prepare large bowls of mixed fruit that you can scoop quickly for meals. Whole pieces of fruit can be washed immediately and made ready for consumption. The more convenient it is to eat fruit, the more you will do it.

You can save time and money by portioning your food and keeping it handy. Once you have it portioned, you can just grab what you need for your lunch or a snack and get moving. The trick is to do this as soon as you get home from the supermarket.

As soon as you get home:

- Wash produce
- Peel and chop produce as needed
- Put single servings of produce in small containers and store in refrigerator
- Keep a large bowl in the refrigerator for washed whole fruit – you can just grab it when you need it
- Make a large bowl of mixed fruit and store it in the refrigerator to add to meals
- Keep small portions of nuts, crackers, and other snack foods at the ready

Planning ahead and preparing ahead makes it easier to stay on track when you have just a few minutes to get out the door each day. This will actually help you to save money and time in the long run.

Tip #13

Start the Day with a Power Breakfast

It may seem counterintuitive, but by eating a big breakfast you can actually lose weight faster than if you skipped it. Breakfast helps your body to get started for the day. It kick starts your metabolism into gear.

That means you can burn more calories all day long. Who wouldn't want to burn more calories by eating more food? What you choose for breakfast can affect how much you benefit from eating it.

The best breakfasts include:

- A serving of carbohydrates
- A serving of protein
- A fruit
- Water

When eating breakfast, many people stock up on sugary foods such as processed cereals and toaster pastries. However, this type of breakfast food can cause you to crave sweets all day and do the opposite of what you really want.

Some good choices for breakfast include:

- Oatmeal
- Eggs
- Whole grain toast
- Yogurt smoothies
- Protein shake with fruit
- Whole grain cereal (low sugar)
- Peanut butter and apples or bananas

Making a healthy breakfast can lead to long-term weight loss and dieting success. Prepare breakfast the night before if you're crunched for time.

Tip #14

Take a Break Before Bed

One of the toughest times to stick to your diet is late at night. You've had dinner and now your body is starting to shut down for the night. What you may mistake as hunger is actually your body craving energy – and the best way for it to recharge is through sleep.

Eating too late at night can actually make it difficult to get a good night's rest. Late night eating can cause indigestion, strange dreams, and too much food can even cause you just to feel too uncomfortable to rest well.

Food is designed to give you energy, so when you're feeling drained you may naturally start to crave a boost from food. However, the best thing you can do is give your body the rest it really needs at the end of the day. Eating and getting a quick burst of energy makes sleeping more difficult.

Late at night your body doesn't really need calories. It needs to focus its efforts on restoring the body from the day rather than digesting snacky foods. And the choices that most people make at night aren't usually the best.

You may find yourself going for that last bowl of ice cream, a few chips, cookies, candy, or any number of foods that shouldn't make the bulk of your diet. And you'll be adding unnecessary calories to your day.

Make a goal to stop eating at least three hours before you go to bed. This gives your digestive system a chance to take a break while you sleep. You'll eliminate the extra calories that evening snacking can cause.

You may also find that when you stop eating before bedtime you sleep more soundly and have fewer problems with heartburn. People who are dieting generally see better success when they don't eat before bed.

After you finish dinner, you can clean up and then turn off the lights. Consider the kitchen closed at this point. Instead of eating a snack at the end of the evening, try drinking a glass of water.

Herbal tea is also a nice way to relax and unwind in the evening. Try a caffeine free herbal tea with stevia as a sweetener. This is a no calorie beverage that's packed full of flavor. The warmth will also soothe you and helps your body prepare for sleep.

It can be a hard habit to break – especially if you've enjoyed nighttime snacking for a long period of time. But you'll find that giving up late night snacking will help your diet to be much more successful.

Tip #15

Add Variety to Your Routine

When you're dieting, it can be helpful to have a routine. But after eating the same plate of grilled chicken for 3 weeks, you may start to resent your diet plan. While too much variety can make dieting hard, some is essential.

You can add variety to your diet in several ways. While your breakfast and lunch routine may be best left to a standard routine, dinner is an area where you can add variety easily. Make it a habit to try a new dish every week.

While it can be difficult to constantly try new recipes, one recipe each week can be an easy and welcome addition. Look for recipes that fit your diet plan but also fit into your lifestyle. Most people are pretty busy and looking for simple and delicious recipes is a necessity.

Where can you find new foods? There are many places. For example:

- Talk to other friends who are on a similar diet plan and get suggestions.
- Look for a fabulous cookbook that includes recipes with just a few healthy ingredients.
- Search online in forums for recipes from other dieters.
- Lighten up some of your family favorites. For example, substitute fat free soups for cream soups or add vegetables to a dish that doesn't have many (or any).
- Experiment in the kitchen. If you love to cook, you may be able to try some new ingredients and make a special meal.
- Start a recipe swap with your friends. You'll be amazed at what other people are making. You can even organize a party for taste testing the recipes. Everyone brings their dish and the recipe on cards. Then you have a bite of each dish and take the cards that appeal to you most.
- If you belong to a weight loss center, take advantage of the perks. Most offer specific recipes that go right along with the diet plan.

When you find a recipe you love, add it to your rotation. If you make a recipe that misses the mark you can note that it wasn't good and move on. Sometimes you can take a recipe that wasn't perfect and add or omit a few ingredients to suit your taste better.

By trying new things on a weekly basis, you'll be less likely to get bored with your diet and quit the plan. Knowing that you'll have a new dish to try each week is sometimes the motivation you need to keep going.

Tip #16

Cook Once a Week

Cooking after a long day at work can be overwhelming. And as any dieter knows, eating out every night isn't the easiest option for weight loss and good health. One solution for making sure you have great meals every night is to cook once each week.

This means setting aside one day (a day when you don't have work) to cook all the meals for a week. You'll have to do some planning ahead, but you'll find that it pays off in a big way. The basic idea is that cooking once will allow you to have nutritious meals all week long.

First, you'll need to decide how many servings of food you'll need. This will depend on how many people you're feeding. If you're single you don't have the same needs as someone who has a large family. Take a look at your situation and plan accordingly.

Next, choose the recipes that you'd like to use. In order to save time and money, you may want to look for recipes that use the same basic ingredients. For example, you might want to look for two recipes that both use cut up chicken.

Then you can make one big batch of chicken and use it for more than one recipe. The same goes for pasta, ground beef, and other common ingredients. Then you can add variety by tweaking the spices and other components of the meal.

After you spend the day cooking your meals, it's time to decide on storage. It's best to store your meals in portion sizes that meet your family's needs. Large recipes can be split into smaller portions so that you don't have to heat more than you need.

Once you've divided your meals into portions, you can refrigerate those that you're going to eat in the next day or two and freeze the rest. Make sure to label each portion with the name of the recipe and the date on which you cooked it and froze it.

Keeping organized will help you to get what you need and avoid spoiling food. While it may take a long time to cook all of the week's food in one day, it will make it so much easier to stay on your diet when you're busy.

There's nothing harder than coming home from a long day and facing the fact that you need to cook a big meal. With this system, all you have to do is take a portion out of the freezer or fridge, heat it, and serve.

Sticking to your diet is much easier when you have meals prepared in advance that fit the guidelines you're trying to follow. If you're a really organized person, you could even cook for longer periods of time such as two weeks or even a month.

Tip #17

Stock Up for On-the-Go Days

One of the hardest parts about dieting is being able to get food that fits your plan while still being convenient and fitting your busy lifestyle. It's critical for your success that you stock up on foods you can grab and go on with your day.

Some foods you may want to consider keeping in the kitchen include:

- String cheese
- Pre-measured portions of nuts such as almonds
- Fresh whole fruit, washed and ready to eat
- Cut veggies such as carrots and celery
- Yogurt vegetable or fruit dip measured into portions in small reusable containers
- 100 calorie snack packs
- Granola
- Cereal
- Protein bars
- Protein drinks
- Yogurt cups
- Fruit cups

In a perfect world, you would be able to sit down with your family to a perfectly prepared meal each and every night. But if it were a perfect world, you wouldn't need to diet. In order to manage your lifestyle, you'll need to find a way to work healthy foods into your lifestyle.

Having a good stock of items in your pantry or refrigerator will help you to stick with your plan. You won't have to hit the drive through when you've got a few healthy snacks in your work bag or purse.

Being able to have a quick snack throughout the day will make you less likely to indulge at mealtimes. Overeating is often a result of allow your yourself to become too hungry throughout the day.

Tip #18

Spice It Up

How often have you eaten a plain grilled chicken breast when embarking upon a new diet. After weeks of bland, boring food it's no wonder you finally had enough! This tip may be one of the most important for sticking to your plan and having the success you crave.

Who ever said that healthy food has to be boring? The more you can make your meals interesting, the more likely you'll be to enjoy what you eat and want to keep eating it throughout your life.

Don't be afraid to use spices to make your food more delicious. Spices also add an element of nutrition and natural appetite suppression in some cases. You'll never regret eating a healthy, flavorful meal. There are many herbs and spices that dress up your favorite foods. Try taste testing some of these delicious choices:

- Curry
- Italian herb mix
- Fresh basil
- Fresh mint
- Dill
- Oregano
- Garlic
- Nutmeg
- Cinnamon
- Cardamom
- Capers
- Jalapeno peppers
- Green chilies

And don't forget about your old friends salt and pepper. Sometimes just adding a dash of these spices can help to make a boring meal into something that is tasty. Don't be afraid to experiment with adding spices to your favorite dishes.

Spices can be expensive, so if you want to stretch your budget try finding a store that sells bulk food items. There you can portion out just the amount of spice you want and spend pennies instead of dollars to try something new.

Once you know you love a new spice, you can fork over the money for a larger container. But don't buy more than you'll use in a year. Dried spices do get less potent the older they are. It's best to use those that have been purchased within the past year.

Tip #19

Write It Down

Dieting can be a major change in your lifestyle. One way to help become more conscious of what you're eating and if you're sticking to your diet is to write down what you're eating. There are many ways you can do this – and how you proceed will depend on your personal goals.

There are many things you can track about your eating including:

- Servings of proteins, carbohydrates, and vegetables/fruits
- Grams of fat, carbohydrates, fiber
- Servings of water
- Number of calories
- Satiation (how full or hungry you feel)
- Emotions (did you eat because of boredom, loneliness, or stress?)
- Time you ate

There isn't a right or wrong way to keep track of your food. Some people have programs that provide journals either online or on paper. If you don't have a set journal given to you, you may want to look online for free journals.

You can also find cell phone apps that help you to track your progress. If you're old-fashioned and prefer a paper journal just about anything will work. You can use a cheap spiral notebook or purchase something a bit fancier for your journaling.

You may also want to use your journal to keep track of other information such as minutes of exercise, weight, measurements, medications/vitamins, blood pressure, blood sugar, heart rate. All of these are good measures of your progress and your success.

Your journal can help you to focus – if you're honest when using it. Make sure not to lie to your journal. If you ate it, write it down. When you have a successful weight loss week, look back at what you did to make it work.

When you have a tough week, your journal can be a place to record what went wrong and make some plans for how to deal with roadblocks when they come – and they will. By writing down what you eat and your activities, you can stay focused.

Tip #20

Find Activities that Don't Focus on Food

If you're dieting, you've probably struggled with eating at times when you weren't really hungry. One of the best ways to lose weight and improve your health is to find activities that will help to take the focus off of food.

Food can be viewed as a source of fuel that is also enjoyed. But it doesn't have to be the center of every activity and every celebration. It's a good idea to keep a list of activities that you can do that will take your mind off of eating when you're not really hungry.

There are many to choose from, but here are some of the top ideas:

- Knitting
- Crocheting
- Reading
- Watching a favorite movie
- Taking a hot bath
- Enjoying a leisurely walk
- Taking a drive
- Calling a friend
- Listening to music – recorded or live
- Try a new hobby for the first time

Getting involved in a club or team can help you to find outlets for your time and energy. A book club, cooking club, walking club, or photography club could be the answer to your desire to eat when alone or bored.

If you tend to eat when you're stressed, exercise can often provide an outlet for your feelings without ruining your diet progress. By taking the focus off of food, you can stick to your plan and still have fulfilling activities in your day.

Changing your lifestyle means changing the focus that you've previously put on snacking and using food to celebrate or suppress every emotion. Keeping your hands busy and expanding your social outlets can help with this.

Tip #21

Serve Food from the Stove

If you're in the habit of dishing up your plate at the dinner table, you may want to consider making food a little less accessible during meals. Instead of serving the food at the table, try leaving the food at the stove or placing it on the kitchen counter.

When food is sitting all over the dining table, it's much easier to overindulge. As soon as your plate is clean, there's more food nearby to fill it again. But when you keep food away from the table, it takes additional action to go for seconds.

There may be times when you need to have more food because of true physical hunger. There's no law about having a second helping. However, when you have to get up from the table to get it, you'll have a little more time to think about it and make sure you really need it.

This is just one way to break up old habits of automatically filling up your plate as soon as it's empty. If you've had a long tradition of serving food from the table, this can be a habit that takes some getting used to.

However, you'll find that your diet plan becomes easier as you become more mindful about your eating habits. Getting up to go get food from another location simply helps you to be more conscious about what it is you're eating.

After eating your first helping of a meal, take a few minutes to think about how you're feeling. It takes your brain a little more time than you may realize to get the signal from your stomach that your body is no longer hungry.

If you make it a habit to wait about 15 minutes after your last bite before you go to get a second portion, you may find that you're eating quite a bit less than you used to eat. Life is so busy and on-the-go that we sometimes forget to stop and actually enjoy a meal and feel hunger cues.

Moving the serving dishes to another room helps you to slow down and actually listen to your body. Instead of eating more food "because it's there" you'll make a wise decision about whether or not you really need another portion.

When you do go for a second helping, try to focus most of your attention on vegetables. These are low calorie foods that provide a lot of nutrition. They also help you to feel full as they take up a lot of space in your digestive tract.

While it may seem strange at first, serving your food from the kitchen or another location will become easy after a short amount of time. Just like many other parts of your new diet plan, it will take some practice.

Tip #22

Indulge on Occasion

Nothing is more dangerous for your diet than deprivation. If you insist on never eating any of the foods you enjoy, you are headed for trouble. One can only feel like he or she is missing out for so long.

Eventually, feeling deprived can make you feel anxious, angry, and lead to out of control binging. The cycle goes something like this: You feel deprived, so you eat a large amount of a “forbidden” food.

Then you feel guilty for what you’ve done and drown your sorrows in more of the off-limits contraband. This cycle can keep you from sticking to a healthy diet and lifestyle faster than almost any other roadblock.

Diets that work best are those that include occasional treats. When you allow yourself to have the foods you crave, you don’t have to feel bad about eating them. You can enjoy them and then go back to your healthy plan.

It’s hard for many people to wrap their brain around the idea that you can have your cake and your diet, too. In fact, if you don’t have some of the foods you enjoy on occasion, you’re more likely to binge and eventually just give up.

There’s no such thing as a food that’s forbidden. As soon as you do that, you’ll be on the road to self-destruction. To stick to your diet, you need to calculate favorite foods into your healthful eating formula.

Some foods that feel like indulgences, even though they’re not, can help you to feel satisfied and crave fewer of the higher calorie, low nutrient foods. Some good things you may want to work into your diet plan include:

- Dark chocolate – a little dark chocolate can satisfy your sweet tooth and give you powerful antioxidants.
- Fruit – fruit is nature’s candy. It’s sweet, easy to eat and full of vitamins and minerals.
- Yogurt – flavored yogurts can help you to indulge your sweet tooth without expanding your waistline.
- Fat free pudding – this is a sweet treat that tends to be low in calories and high in flavor.

Eating these items will help you to regularly indulge your sweet tooth without blowing your diet. Then you'll have a little wiggle room to enjoy a piece of chocolate cake or a chocolate chip cookie on occasion.

Tip #23

Fill Up with Fiber

One of the best things you can do for your diet plan and, more importantly, your body's overall health is to eat plenty of fiber. Fiber does many things for your body that make it an excellent addition to your diet plan. For example fiber helps:

- Fill up your digestive system and make you feel full
- Lower cholesterol
- Allow for regular bowel movements, relieves constipation

Fiber is an excellent way to help improve your health, but many people only get a tiny amount of fiber daily compared to what they actually need. In order to increase your fiber, you need to eat more plant-based foods and whole grains. Fiber can be found in:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain bread
- Whole grain cereal
- Oatmeal
- Whole grain rice
- Legumes such as black beans, pinto beans, and navy beans
- Flax seeds

Foods that are not high in fiber include those made with wheat flour, white rice, and any animal product. While you don't have to eliminate foods that are low in fiber from your diet, you need to make sure you're adding plenty of foods that are high in this critical nutrient.

Even adding one serving per day can help you to see a health benefit. Not sure how to get started with adding fiber? Make a simple switch from white bread to whole grain bread. Eat an apple. Grind up some flaxseed and add it to your cereal or yogurt.

Small steps will help you to stay on track. Adding fiber is simple, but powerful. If you want to feel full, lower your risk for heart disease and cancer, and have regular digestion you can't beat the benefit of natural fiber.

Tip #24

Focus on Addition – Not Subtraction

One of the first things people do when they approach is dieting is make a list of all the things they aren't going to eat anymore. It can become immediately apparent that your new eating plan is going to cause you to have to subtract many of your favorite foods.

It's important to change your paradigm – or how you think about dieting. If your perspective is all about all the things you won't be able to eat anymore, you'll find yourself feeling deprived and that can lead to blowing your diet big time.

Instead, think about what you need to add to your diet. When you focus on adding healthy, nutritious foods it leaves less time for worrying about what you're missing. By adding healthy items, you actually will crave some of the less nutritious foods less often.

Some things you'll need to add when dieting include:

- Fresh fruit
- Fresh vegetables
- Whole grain foods
- Fiber sources such as flaxseeds and beans
- Lean meats
- Water, water, water

When you consume all of the servings you need of these foods your nutritional needs will be met. You'll feel full and healthy and less likely to crave the foods that don't fit in with your diet plan.

When you focus on what you can't have you increase the feeling of deprivation. When you focus on what you need to add you increase your feeling of fullness and wellbeing. Psychologically you can avoid the trap of blowing your diet and feeling guilty.

Your mindset is a critical component of making sure you eat healthy and take care of your body. While many people who diet only focus on calories in, calories out the mindset is something that cannot be ignored.

Pay attention to how you're feeling about your diet. Make a list of the things you need to add to your meals and you'll find quickly that this improves the way you feel about changing your lifestyle.

Tip #25

Eat Treats – But Not at Home

Earlier, you read the tip that said you should indulge from time to time. This is something that will make dieting much more bearable and help you to really change your lifestyle. However, keeping a lot of treats in the house can spell disaster.

If you know that a bag of cookies can't make it longer than a day in your home, you need to think about how you can indulge without overindulging. One of the easiest ways to do this is to indulge away from your home.

Instead of keeping your pantry stocked with the indulgences you love such as ice cream, cookies, cakes, and pies you can choose to enjoy them away from home. This way you can have the treats you love without having them all day every day.

When you keep the extras out of your home environment, you can go somewhere else to enjoy them and then feel satisfied. When you get home your pantry is still filled with delicious foods that are good for your body.

Some ideas for indulging away from home include:

- Going out for an ice cream cone instead of having a half gallon of ice cream in the freezer.
- Enjoy a cupcake at your local bakery instead of baking a cake to keep at home.
- Have dessert at a restaurant instead of going home and eating dessert.
- Make plans to have dessert at a friend's house instead of your own.

This can help you to enjoy indulging in your favorite desserts but not continue to indulge on them day and night. That said, you do have to make sure you're not going out for ice cream every meal.

Dieting is really about changing your lifestyle. It's not about becoming deprived. Allowing yourself to have some of your favorite foods is critical to success. But so is changing your home environment.

Indulging away from home can help you to have the best of both worlds – your home environment can remain healthy and intact, but you won't feel deprived and go off the deep end. You may want to make a weekly date to go out for dessert with a friend or with your significant other.

Knowing that you have something to look forward to each week can help you hang in there when you have a day that it's tough to stick to your plan. Being aware that you don't have to give up all your favorites will help you to stay on track.

Tip #26

Eat the Right Amount at Restaurants

Eating out at restaurants in modern times can be a necessity and part of your everyday life. However, you already know that this can be a diet danger zone for many people. How can you enjoy eating at restaurants without giving up your favorite things?

Try cutting back on portions. Restaurant portions often contain as many as 1000 calories or more! One meal at a restaurant can sometimes contain more calories than you want to consume in an entire day.

One way you can still enjoy restaurants while dieting is to cut back on your portions. Most restaurant meals can be divided into two or even three portions. When you order from the menu, you can ask the server to go ahead and bring you a takeout container.

When your meal arrives at the table, you can pack up your leftovers before you even have the first bite of food. Once your leftovers are ready to go, you can clean your plate without going out of bounds on your diet plan.

Going to a restaurant can often bring feelings of anxiety. You may feel frustrated when you don't get to choose your favorite items on the menu or have to have grilled or steamed sides instead of your usual choices.

Instead of feeling frustrated, just eat less of what you love. Go ahead and order your favorite food, just don't eat it all at once. The bonus is that when you take home leftovers you also have meals for the next day or two.

Another option if you and your significant other or a friend enjoy the same entrée is to split it. Instead of ordering an entrée for each of you, you can ask for an extra plate or for it to be divided.

Not only will this save you the trouble of going out of bounds on your diet, it will also save you some serious money. You'll see your calorie count be cut in half, but so will your final bill. Most restaurants don't mind when customers split meals.

Some restaurants offer different portion sizes of popular entrees. For example, you can order a lunch portion or a half order of a meal. In fact, many restaurants will allow you to order off the lunch menu any time of day.

When you go to your favorite restaurant and spend money on a meal, it should not be a time of anxiety but a time of enjoyment. When you make the decision to order your favorite foods and split the portions you can have fun instead of fretting.

Tip #27

Move

It can be said often enough that you need to get moving. Moving your body can improve your health in so many ways. It can:

- Help you to lose weight
- Raise good cholesterol
- Condition your heart
- Lower your blood pressure
- Reduce your risk for cancer
- Help you to feel strong and allow you to move more easily
- Improve your mood and reduce depression
- Reduce your stress levels

Many people who diet don't include exercise into the plan. Those who do include exercise often make the routine so rigorous that it isn't realistic for the long haul. It's critical that you include an activity plan you can stick to for a lifetime.

Whether you're new to exercise or a pro, there's always something you can do to add more movement to your routine. Exercise can aid in keeping you on your diet plan and it can help you to feel better and have a longer life with higher quality.

If you've never spent much time worrying about exercise, there are many things you can do. If you're the type of person who works out really hard and burns out quickly, you may want to take a look at the following moderate ways to add exercise to your life:

- Take a walk every evening after dinner – it doesn't have to be fast or long if you're not in great shape
- Walk in place, do sit ups, or stretch during TV commercials
- Take the stairs – if you can't take them all the way to the floor you need, get off the elevator one floor earlier and at least go up one floor.
- Park in the back of parking lots and walk further to your destination

- Walk indoors on rainy days at the mall – most malls have early hours for morning walkers

Tip #28

Slow Down and Enjoy Meals

In our busy, modern world it can be hard to take time to enjoy the simple things in life. For most working people lunch is quickly eaten so that you can get back to a busy schedule. However, for your diet success it's best to slow down.

When you eat slowly your body has time to understand its hunger signals. If you eat really fast your stomach doesn't have time to tell your brain that it's full. That's why when you eat really quickly you end up feeling sick and stuffed 20 minutes later.

The best way to eat is to do it mindfully and slowly. There are a few things you can do to help you slow down at the dinner table. It can be a hard habit to break and you have to retrain your brain to do it differently.

- Put your fork down after each bite. This will help you to slow down a few seconds before the next bite.
- Chew each bite thoroughly. This is the first step of digestion. If you don't get the food broken down well, it won't digest properly.
- Take a sip of water between each bite. This will slow you down and help you to feel fuller.
- Enjoy dinner conversation.

The more you slow down when you eat, the easier time you'll have sticking to the portions your diet requires. You'll be able to feel satisfied with less food and enjoy meals more. Take time to really taste your food.

Many times we rush through meals so much that we don't enjoy the flavors and combinations that make them special and appetizing. When you slow down and enjoy your food you'll find that your favorite foods can be savored even more.

Eating more slowly is also better for your digestion. When you scarf food down quickly it doesn't get chewed thoroughly and it's harder for the rest of your digestive tract to break it down.

To get the most out of your food you want to get all the vitamins and nutrition from it. To do this, your body has to have the time to process it properly. In addition, eating more slowly just helps you to relax.

Use your mealtimes to take a break from the normal daily rush. Make this a time of meditation and pay attention to your hunger. Don't eat to the point of feeling stuffed –

take your time and enjoy each and every bite. If you do this, you'll need fewer bites to be satisfied.

Tip #29

Don't Try to Change Everything at Once

You may really need a diet overhaul. If your someone who eats fast food at every meal, doesn't know the last time you had a vegetable, and feels stuffed and sick after every meal chances are you need to make some big changes.

But beware of making all the changes at one time. It's difficult to change lifelong habit patterns. If you try to change everything at once it can lead to feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and eventually lead you to give up.

While making many changes at once may give you results faster, it may not lead to long-term results. It's better to change one or two things at a time until those things become habits. Once they are habits you can make another change or two.

Easing your way into a diet program can actually make you more successful. You'll make a change, see success, and then be ready to make the next change. You'll be able to implement each change as you form permanent habits.

Where do you begin when you have a lot of changes that need to be made? Start with those that are the simplest and that you feel you're most likely to really commit. For example, if you eat almost every meal at a restaurant set a goal to eat one less meal out each week.

If you live on diet soda, make a goal to trade out two glasses of soda with water each day. As you become successful at making that switch, try substituting a couple more. You don't have to do it all at once – you just have to do it.

Don't let other people try to sway you that gradual changes aren't enough. For many people gradual changes are the only way to make lifelong choices. You don't want to lose weight after a few months of dieting only to find that the changes you made aren't realistic.

This is how people lose huge amounts of weight only to gain it back plus more. They didn't make lifelong changes – only short-term overhauls. Know that by going slow you will be making habits that will last the rest of your life.

Remember the old story of the tortoise and the hare? The tortoise took his time and won the race. It helps to look at dieting that way. You may be able to take off weight really fast, but if you aren't taking your time and making steady changes you won't keep it off in the end.

Take a few moments to look at your current lifestyle and the type of diet you want to eventually have. Think about just one or two changes you can make that will help you to make those changes permanent. Then get started!

Tip #30

Find a Mentor

We've already talked about having a buddy system, but sometimes it's even more powerful to find a mentor. This is different than a buddy who's trying to do the same thing. This means talking to someone who has already had the success you seek.

Most of us know someone who has made big diet and lifestyle changes and lost weight. When you're looking for a mentor, it's important to find someone who has had success long-term. That means they've changed their lifestyle and kept those changes for several years.

Once you find someone that is willing to discuss their success with you and help you, you need to make sure to ask the right questions. Ask your mentor if you can interview him or her and get some valuable information. Questions you may want to ask include:

- What made you decide to change your diet and lifestyle?
- How did you get started?
- Did you join a program or go out on your own?
- What was the hardest change you had to make?
- How have you maintained your weight loss after all this time?
- What did you do when you became discouraged?
- What kind of physical activity have you done?
- What were your greatest temptations?
- When did you feel you succeeded?
- What is your best advice?
- What advice have you received that didn't work for you?

Ask your mentor if you can give him or her a call when you're struggling. It helps to have someone to talk to who has been there but has also made it through those tough times. Not everyone can lend the same kind of empathetic ear.

Having a mentor can get you through the times when you're struggling. It can help you to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It can also show you the end result when you're feeling like you'll never reach your goals.

Tip #31

Eat Food the Way It Grew

When you're on a diet, you may be tempted to load up on foods that are pre-prepared. Having a can or a box to go to when you're pressed for time can be a relief. However, it's not the best way for your body to get the nutrients it needs.

The best way to eat your food is the way that it grew – in other words eat whole foods. That means that you should eat food that has been processed as little as possible before making it into your kitchen.

If a product is full of preservatives, is pre-cooked, has added sugar and colors it isn't going to give you the nutrition it contained before all that processing. It's best to do the processing yourself at home.

While convenience foods offer a certain amount of, well, convenience they aren't the best things for you. They come full of ingredients that you can't pronounce and added things you just don't need.

In general, here are some tips to help you choose whole foods:

- If the list of ingredients has words you can't pronounce, pass it by.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables, not those out of cans.
- If you can't get fresh produce, go for frozen over canned. Frozen is the next best thing to fresh.
- Grow your own produce and freeze it.
- Look for meats that are organic or grass fed.
- Choose eggs that are from free range farms rather than caged. Look for grass fed if possible.
- Look for milk that is made from cows not treated with growth hormones.
- If it sounds like it was made in a lab instead of grown on a farm or ranch, leave it in the store.

When you eat foods that are as natural as possible, you allow your body to get the most of the nutrients in it. You won't have a buildup of unnatural ingredients in your system. This will help you not only to lose weight but have better health.

Tip #32

Get Your Zzzzs

Did you know that getting a good night's sleep can actually help you to lose weight? Many people focus all of their efforts on diet and exercise but neglect one of the most important things you can do for your health and well-being.

People who don't get enough sleep actually gain more weight than those who do. Research study after research study has shown this principle to be true. It's thought that this has to do with the hormone cortisol and how it acts in the body.

What's worse is that the type of fat that tends to accumulate when people lack sleep collects around the abdomen. This is the most dangerous area of the body to pack on the pounds because of the stress it puts on your heart.

It can be pretty hard to get into a good nighttime routine when you're used to burning the candle at both ends. But getting enough sleep isn't only important for your weight- it can add years to your life.

Here are a few things you can do to improve your bedtime routine and get the sleep you need and deserve:

- Decide on a bedtime that gives you 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Go to bed even if you're not tired. Eventually you'll get in the habit of feeling tired and sleepy at the right time, but it may take a few days.
- Get a bedtime routine. Spend an hour or two before bed winding down. Dim the lights in your home, turn off the TV, take a warm bath, and relax.
- Make sure your pillow and mattress adequately support you. You'll get a better night's sleep if your body is comfortable.
- Keep clutter out of the bedroom – it can only remind you of all the things on your to-do list.
- It's better not to have a TV in the bedroom as this keeps you from going to sleep.
- Don't eat before bedtime – it makes it harder to fall asleep.
- Stay away from caffeine at least 3-4 hours before bed.
- Use white noise to prevent waking up from every little nighttime noise.

- Keep pets out of the bedroom if they disrupt your sleep

Tip #33

Serve on Smaller Plates

If you need to eat less, using smaller plates will help to get the job done. For many people heaping up a large plate is just a normal part of everyday life. The more you can get on the plate, the better.

While it can be tough to change that mentality altogether, it's possible that you can just trick your brain into thinking that you're still doing the same old thing by using smaller plates. You can go ahead and fill them up, but you won't be getting as much food.

Most dinner plate sets come with salad plates and dinner plates. If you don't want to add to your dish collection, you can just use your salad plates. These tend to be quite a bit smaller, though, so may not be ideal.

You can find plenty of shops that sell plates slightly larger than salad plates and smaller than dinner plates. You can often find them for sale individually rather than having to buy an entire new set.

It may seem like a silly idea to just use smaller plates, but it really does work. It will trick your mind into thinking you've got more than you really need when in actuality you have less than you normally do.

Not sure if this will work for you? Before investing much money in new plates, try using smaller paper plates to give it a trial run. If it doesn't seem to work for you, no harm done and not much of an investment wasted.

When eating out, you can always ask that your server deliver a smaller plate and you can choose smaller plates when it comes to eating at restaurant buffets. When you're at another person's home, you'll have to use your best judgment.

This isn't a magic bullet for suppressing your appetite. As you know, you can always make another trip or two or three to fill up the small plate. However, it can be one more weapon to have in your arsenal of weight loss.

Another consideration is plate color. Some studies have shown that eating on black or dark plates can help you to eat less per meal. While you're out looking for smaller plates, try purchasing one that's dark in color and double the effect.

Using smaller plates is definitely a consideration that can help you to keep your portion sizes manageable. It doesn't hurt to do a little psychological trickery when you're trying to win the diet battle.

Tip #34

Pay Attention to Progress

When you're dieting, it can be easy to get fixated on the numbers that show on the scale. However there are so many ways you can track your progress – your weight is just a piece of the puzzle.

There are many benchmarks that can actually help you to see how far you've come and how much further you have to go. You don't have to rely only on a scale. In fact you shouldn't only rely on the scale.

Several factors that have nothing to do with your diet can affect the scale readout including:

- Time of day
- Water retention
- Clothing you're wearing (although many prefer to weigh in the buff)
- Medications you're taking
- Hormonal fluctuations
- Body composition changes- adding more muscle to your frame

For these reasons, the scale can deliver a damaging blow when you really deserve a pat on the back. It's important to make sure and use a few other methods for measuring your progress. You'll find that other methods can make a more complete picture.

Here are a few things you can do in addition to measuring your weight on the scale:

- Take pictures. Before pictures compared with weekly photos can show you how far you've come. Keep a small photo album and take a new photo each week to add to it.
- Track measurements. Use a tape measure to keep track of your progress and record it in your journal.
- Pay attention to how your clothes fit. If they're getting looser, you're doing the job.
- Keep track of how much distance you can walk/run or how much weight you can lift. This can show you that you're becoming stronger and more powerful.
- Be mindful of your energy levels. If they're going up, you're making progress.

Tip #35

Drive Right by the Drive Thru

While there's no one single factor than can contribute to weight gain and make dieting difficult, drive thru restaurants have certainly made it more convenient to pack on the pounds. It's not the fault of the restaurant that you've gained weight, but you may have some habits to break.

What's the appeal of fast food?

- It's full of salt, fat, and sugar – three things we have been evolutionarily conditioned to seek (they don't occur very often in nature, so we are hard-wired to get them when we can)
- You're busy. It's fast.
- It offers a wide variety of foods to appeal to different people.
- It's an inexpensive way to feed yourself and your family – dollar menu anyone?

While not every selection on a fast food menu is bad for you, it's safe to say that most of them are. The easiest way to break the drive thru habit is just to quit cold turkey. Keep food on hand that you can make quickly so that you don't feel the need to stop for a quick bite.

However, in the real world you sometimes have to stop for something fast. In that case, you can always look for the best choices on the menu. Focusing on fresh or grilled items as well as small portions can help. If you have to hit the drive-thru, here are some things to remember:

- Look for grilled sandwiches instead of fried
- Eat a smaller burger instead of a double
- Eliminate the cheese from sandwiches
- Choose salads with low calorie/fat dressing
- Skip the fries or get a small
- Avoid the temptation to supersize unless you want to be supersized, too
- Drink water instead of soda with your meal
- Get the kids meal – automatically smaller portions

- Substitute fries for fruit if it's an option

Tip #36

Reduce Your Stress to Reduce Your Waistline

Stress is something with which just about everyone must learn to live. But stress can really wreak havoc on your diet. Stress can cause you to have all kinds of health problems. When it comes to your diet, stress can get in the way.

When it comes to your diet and weight, here are a few things that stress can do:

- Stress can cause you to hold onto fat even when you're eating properly
- Stress can cause you to want to eat more to satisfy emotional needs
- When you're stressed, your sleep is affected
- Stress can lead to feeling tired and having low energy levels, things that often trigger eating badly
- A busy, stressful life can cause you to have to eat on the go and leave little time for preparation of meals

As you can see, stress is not a dieter's best friend. Instead, you need to find ways to reduce your stress levels and outlets for the stress you can't completely remove from your life. Here are a few things you can do to reduce stress and stick to your diet:

- Focus on time management – when you stay organized and manage your time, your stress levels will get lower
- Get rid of unnecessary tasks. If you're able to delegate a task, do it.
- Take time to exercise daily – exercise can lower the effects of stress on the body.
- Seek help if you have emotional needs that require assistance – problems with anger management, substance abuse, and depression can be alleviated with help.
- Plan a time at least once a week for social activities.
- Join a club that meets once a month – this can greatly improve your emotional health.
- Face the problems that are causing you to feel stress. For example, if you're having financial troubles it actually makes things worse to just ignore them. You'll always feel better if you just face facts and take action.
- Find a hobby you enjoy.

Tip #37

Do Away with Dinner Distractions

How many things are going on when you're eating your meals each day? Do you have the TV on? Are you trying to take care of work or make big decisions about your household? Do you have a million things going on all around you?

If you have a lot of activity in your home during mealtimes, it could lead to overeating. It's had to stay on a diet program and lifestyle change when you aren't really focused on what you're putting in your body.

Being distracted will keep you from being able to pay attention to your hunger cues, portion sizes, and the health of your meal. It will also cause you to eat faster and can lead to making bad choices.

Instead, you need to focus on your food when you're eating a meal. Here are a few things you can do to make sure you stick to your diet and keep you on track:

- Keep the TV away from mealtimes. While it's tempting to watch TV and eat your meals, it can be very distracting.
- Choose a place in your home designated for eating meals – the dining room table is a great choice.
- Make a commitment to only eat in a designated place. This means that even if you're eating alone you will stop and eat in a specific place.
- When eating, focus on your hunger cues. Do you still feel hungry? Are you satisfied?
- When possible, eat with your entire family. This helps to bring social connection and keep everyone in the household focused on the meal.
- Don't use mealtimes to argue serious matters or make big decisions. It's a great time to catch up on the day, but it shouldn't be used for major issues that distract from the food.
- Make every meal an occasion. Use real dishes, real cutlery, and honor the time you're spending with your food.

Using mealtimes to focus on food instead of the million other things going on in your life will allow you to stick to your diet program. Instead of feeling distracted, you will be able to pay attention to the food you're eating and feed your body properly.

Tip #38

Avoid Alcohol

Alcohol is one of those things that people love and don't think much about when it comes to dieting. But alcohol is a source of many calories that can be a big problem for sticking to your plan.

You may want to just completely avoid alcohol when you're dieting. A lot like soda, it's a source of empty calories. And while some studies show positive health benefits from drinking, you'd be hard pressed to find a doctor to recommend drinking to someone who abstains.

In addition, alcohol's power lies in its ability to impair judgment. When you're trying to make good choices about your health intoxication isn't generally helpful. The more you drink the less you will think about the calories you're consuming.

Not only will you drink a lot of calories, alcohol consumption lends itself to eating more calories in food as well. Most social occasions where alcohol is available also have food available. One naturally leads to the other.

If you simply must consume alcohol, there are some things you can do to reduce the affect it has on your diet program.

- Don't forget to account for the calories you consume when you drink.
- Drink a glass of water after each alcoholic beverage.
- Look for low calorie alcoholic options.
- Limit yourself to one or two drinks – this keeps the calorie count low and keeps your judgment from becoming very impaired.
- Ask a friend to keep you accountable about your alcohol consumption
- Choose low calorie snacks when consuming alcoholic beverages
- Limit yourself to one night in a week that you will partake of alcohol
- Don't center social activities around alcohol

If you really enjoy drinking and it's a big part of your social life, cutting back or eliminating it can be difficult to do. However, you will see the results as you track your weight and measurements. The less you drink, the more you'll lose.

Tip #39

Create a Vision Visual

When you start a diet it's easy to feel motivated. But a few weeks in you may start to feel lackluster and lack the same drive with which you began. It's helpful to keep a reminder around that helps you to remember what it is that got you started.

Your vision for yourself is something that can help you to have the drive to keep going. You need to have a vision of where you would like to see yourself in the future. This includes your appearance, but can also include other factors.

Creating a vision board is one tool that can help you to stay on track. It's pretty easy to get started:

- Think about the things that motivated you to lose weight.
- Think about how your vision for your future.
- Cut out pictures from magazines that represent your future goals.
- Think about not only your weight but also factors like energy, strength, health, and mood.
- Purchase a large board to use for your vision board – poster board, canvas, or foam board work well.
- Gather an adhesive such as rubber cement – glue sticks don't stick permanently.
- Next set yourself free to make a collage that represents where you see yourself in the future.

If you're not familiar with vision board exercises, this may seem hokey to you. However, it's very powerful to have a visual representation of what you really want for your life. Keeping your vision board in a place where you'll see it often can help you to stay motivated to diet.

You can also keep smaller reminders in places where you spend a lot of time. For example, leave yourself small notes in your office or car to help you visualize your future. This will help to anchor you with your mission.

Occasionally take inventory and see if what you're doing is actually helping you get to your vision. If you have behaviors or actions that aren't contributing to your vision, it's time to eliminate them.

A vision board can give you that visual cue you need to work toward your goals for yourself. If you keep it in a central location of your home it will help to guide the decisions you make and help you to achieve your dreams.

Tip #40

Grow Your Own

When it comes to changing your lifestyle, one of the most important things you can do is add fresh produce to your diet. But sometimes there are factors such as the cost of fresh produce that can affect your ability to do this.

You may also be concerned about the use of pesticides and harmful fertilizers to the food supply. Buying organic produce can help to reduce the contamination of food, but it's even more expensive than average fruits and vegetables.

One solution to this problem is to grow your own food. Many people are turning to gardening in order to add inexpensive produce to their diet and to make sure the food they are eating is the highest quality possible.

In addition, fresh produce from your own backyard is very delicious. You can't get any fresher than walking out your back door and picking something straight off the plant. If you've never had homegrown fruits and vegetables you'll be amazed at how delicious they are.

No matter where you live, there's always an option for growing your own food. Here are a few tips to get started on gardening.

- Find a sunny spot to plant. If you have a backyard, choose a place that has few trees, is level, and is convenient.
- Try building raised beds if your soil is not conducive to growing.
- If you live in an apartment, try container gardening. Many plants have been bred for container gardening and others are naturally conducive to it. Tomatoes, onions, carrots, potatoes, and herbs are just a few of the possibilities.
- If you don't have outdoor space for gardening, try growing an indoor herb garden. You'll save tons of money on fresh herbs.
- Share with a neighbor – you can each grow different plants and swap.
- Use compost for fertilizer – it's easy to start a compost pile and you won't waste as much.
- Grow foods you like, but don't be afraid to try a few new varieties.
- Involve children and other family members. The greater their participation, the more likely it will be that they will also improve their diet.

By growing your own food you'll have access to fresh produce. You can freeze or can the extra harvest that you have so you can use it all year long.

Tip #41

The Skinny on Soups

When you're looking for a quick way to get good nutrition, soups can be a great tool to help you stick to your diet. But not all soups are created equally. It's a good idea to have a group of go-to recipes for soups that can help you stay satisfied and healthy.

What's so great about soups?

- Soups can be made ahead of time and frozen for easy accessibility.
- They can contain hearty ingredients such as lean meats and beans for protein.
- You can get your servings of vegetables in by eating a serving of soup chock full of them.
- Soups can be low calorie and filling. When you have a big meal ahead of you, soup can be a great lunch.

While soups can be purchased in cans, canned soup can contain many extra preservatives and have high sodium content. It's better to make your own soup and have more control of the ingredients in it.

For the sake of convenience, it's a good idea to make large batches of soup that can be portioned into smaller containers and frozen. Then all you have to do is grab a container and go. Soup can be heated quickly on the stovetop or the microwave.

Pair soup with a healthy salad and you have a great meal. If you don't have a lot of recipes on your own, ask your friends to share their recipes. You can also do a quick online search and come up with thousands of soup recipes that can fit into your program.

Focus on soups that contain lean meats, beans, or vegetables. These will be full of nutrition, but low in calories, fat, and other nutrients you're trying to limit. Add plenty of fresh herbs and seasonings to keep them flavorful.

Soups are also inexpensive to make. Even when you add meat, you can limit the quantities to be more economical. Dried beans are inexpensive and can be soaked overnight for use in soups. You can make big batches for just pennies a serving.

Stay away from soups that are cream based. These soups are higher in calories and fat. You'll want your base to be stock – vegetable or chicken. You can make your own chicken stock by boiling chicken. Use the chicken for a recipe and then save the stock for soup.

Stock can be frozen for later use. Make sure to keep plenty of soup portions on hand so that you can always have a safe option for any meal.

Tip #42

Choose Lean Protein

An unhealthy diet usually contains lots of carbohydrates and not enough protein – especially lean protein. It's important that you fill your diet full of lean protein. It has many benefits that will translate to more successful dieting.

- Protein is used by your body to perform almost every function.
- Protein can help you to feel satisfied.
- Protein will help to stabilize your blood sugar so you have fewer cravings.
- Protein helps you to build lean muscle and give you power for physical activity.

Many people get most of their protein from red meat. That includes steaks, ground beef, and roasts. For a large number of people the hamburger makes up most of their protein diet. In order to get enough protein and keep your heart healthy, you need to look at some different sources.

Some foods that are great protein sources include:

- Chicken, white meat
- Turkey, white meat
- Lean cuts of pork
- Fish
- Lean cuts of beef – 93% fat free
- Beans
- Milk protein
- Soy

When you include at least one serving of lean protein in every meal, you'll have enough protein for the day. You can also have protein between meals as a snack that can help you to feel satisfied and keep your blood sugar stable.

By eating lean protein, you'll have fewer cravings for quick energy providing carbohydrates. Protein takes more energy to break down and the energy from it will last longer.

Tip #43

Avoid Labor Saving Devices

One of the great advantages of the industrial revolution is that it allowed people to get much more work done with less physical effort. Farmers no longer had to walk the fields all day; machines could help to get the work done.

Fast-forward about 100 years and the industrial revolution has caused a few problems with the personal health of many. Instead of walking, lifting, pulling, and pushing we depend on machines to do most of the work.

But our bodies really were designed to work and to be physical. The problem with too much food and not enough work has led to the current obesity crisis that you hear about on the evening news.

There are many machines that take the place of work that we use almost every day. Take a look at some of the devices that make life a bit easier, but not healthier:

- Elevators
- Escalators
- Cars
- Remote controls
- Automatic doors
- Washing machines
- Electric/gas ovens
- Electric/gas lawn mowers
- Snow blowers

These devices can make life easier – and you don't need to give all of them up. But you do need to take stock of how much work you get done on your own and how much you rely on devices. There are several things you can do to get your body moving and rely less on technology.

For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk a few blocks to the convenience store instead of driving. Try taking a bike when you only need to go short distances. You may even want to try using a push mower instead of one with a motor.

Tip #44

Don't Skip Dessert

It may seem counterintuitive to eat dessert when you're on a diet. But the reality is you're going to want to eat a few treats now and again. And if you don't, you'll be more likely to blow your diet.

When faced with a piece of decadent chocolate cake, a piece of delicious pie, or the offer of a cheesecake to top off dinner you don't have to say no every time. It's important to be able to have foods you enjoy.

If you always skip dessert, you may end up feeling deprived and resentful about your lifestyle choices. So go ahead and eat dessert. But here are some things that can help you to keep from overdoing it.

- Split desserts with someone else at a restaurant. Most restaurant desserts can feed as many as 4 people.
- When you get a piece of cake or pie, take half of what you'd normally take.
- Skip the a la mode option for pies and cakes.
- When faced with a healthy dessert and one that you'd rather have, just have a smaller portion of your preference. If not you may end up eating the healthy dessert, feeling unsatisfied, and then eating the second one, too!
- Try adding a serving of fruit to dessert. You won't need to eat as much when filled with fruity fiber.
- Leave the leftovers at the restaurant. Instead of taking dessert home with you, eat a portion at the restaurant and leave it there. No need to add temptation to finish it off later.
- Eat slowly and enjoy. Decadent desserts should feel decadent. Allow yourself to slowly enjoy your favorite foods.
- Refuse to feel guilty about your dessert. Set yourself free.

Obviously a healthy diet can't be 100% dessert. However, it can't be 100% dessert free either. Enjoy the things you love so that you can continue to have success on your diet plan. If you don't you could find yourself going on a dessert bender.

Moderation can help you to enjoy your life and still enjoy the benefits of eating a healthy diet. Getting yourself the mindset that you have to feel deprived to be losing weight and dieting is a recipe for disaster.

Tip #45

Eat Friendly Fats

For many years dieting meant eating little or no fat. However, recent research has shown that you really need to eat fat in order to be healthy. Some fats are particularly good for you when it comes to your heart.

Instead of focusing on eliminating fat from your diet you should look at adding healthy fat sources to your food repertoire. You may be surprised to find out what fats are actually good for you:

- Nuts such as pecans, walnuts, almonds, and pistachios
- Flaxseeds
- Flaxseed oil
- Linseed oil
- Olive oil
- Canola oil
- Safflower oil
- Avocado

How do these foods help you? Fat can do many things that are good for the body. Healthy fats actually help to lower cholesterol. They have molecules that actually can pick up the “bad” fat from the blood vessels and clear them from the body.

Fat can also help you to feel satisfied. Every gram of fat has 9 calories of energy. That is the highest of any macronutrient. That means that you’ll feel less hungry when you eat them. You’ll also use the fat to keep skin and hair healthy.

Fat also helps to dissolve some of the micronutrients you need such as vitamins. If you don’t have enough fat in your diet, you actually can’t process some of the nutrients in other foods. Vitamins A, D, and Potassium are all fat soluble.

Flavor is also added when you use healthy fats to cook. Who wants to eat food that tastes terrible? Not too many people. Using healthy fats can help you to enjoy the variety of foods you eat and make your diet more of a lifestyle change.

Make it a point to eat at least one small serving of healthy fat with each meal. It will help you to digest the food properly and satisfy your hunger.

Tip #46

Add Appropriate Supplements

Even when you work very hard to eat healthy foods and balance your intake of nutrients, it can be difficult to get all the things you need. That's where dietary supplements come in to help you get what's lacking.

Everyone should take a multivitamin each day. These are designed to help fill in the gaps of your nutrition. While you may be getting most of what you need, very few people actually get everything they need from the modern diet.

In addition, there are other supplements that can help you to stay on track. For example:

- Chromium picolinate – this nutrient helps to control blood sugar. You won't have as many spikes in your levels so you won't have as many cravings.
- Fish oil – fish oil has been shown to lower cholesterol and help you to improve mental health. It provides the omega-3 fatty acids that your body needs.
- Flaxseed oil – much like fish oil, this provides a good source of unsaturated fat. Flaxseed oil components can be used by every cell in the body.
- Green tea – has been shown to speed up metabolism and increase energy throughout the day. It also has antioxidants to help slow the aging process.
- Glucosamine chondroitin – helps to rebuild cartilage in the joints. This is particularly helpful if you suffer from arthritis and are trying to stay active.
- Fiber supplements – help you feel full and lower cholesterol

While there are good supplements on the market, there are also some you should avoid. You don't want to use anything that can be harmful for you. Avoid:

- Diet supplements containing caffeine or ephedra (another name for caffeine)
- Products that claim to be a "magic bullet" for weight loss

Before taking any supplement, you should always check with your physician. While many supplements are natural, they do have potent effects. They can interfere with health conditions and medications.

It's important that you get the all clear from a healthcare practitioner before adding any nutritional supplement to your daily routine. You should also avoid taking too many supplements at once. Your diet should be made more of food than pills.

Tip #47

Walk, Walk, Walk

One of the best ways you can control your weight is to increase activity. And while you can join a gym and hire a personal trainer, you don't have to do those things to improve your physical fitness.

Walking is one of the best exercises around. It has many benefits including:

- Appropriate for almost any fitness level
- Doesn't require expensive equipment
- Can be done just about anywhere
- Doesn't require you to learn a new skill
- Walking can be done with a group, but also independently

All you need to get started with a walking program is a comfortable pair of shoes and some comfortable clothing. You also need a safe place to walk. These things are pretty easy to come by and you probably already have them.

If you're looking for safe places try:

- Your local mall – many have early walker hours
- Local schools with tracks
- Local community center
- City park trails
- Walk around your office building
- Walk around the block

Weather can make it difficult to get out - especially cold temperatures. Make sure to stay safe and bundle up when walking on frigid days. You may also want to try hooking on a pedometer to see how much you're doing throughout the day.

It's recommended that every person walk at least 10,000 steps each day. A pedometer will help you see how many steps you're taking throughout your regular routine. You can always try to add a little extra in small pieces throughout the day.

Tip #48

Lighten Up Your Favorite Recipes

When it comes to dieting, you don't want to have to give up your favorite foods. You can take some of your favorite recipes that aren't really on your diet plan and adapt them for your use. There are many substitutions you can make that will make foods a little better for you.

- Substitute fat free soups for regular cream soups – you can't taste the difference
- Cut the oil in a cake or brownie recipe by half and substitute the rest with applesauce
- Use fruit juices to sweeten recipes instead of sugar
- Use low-fat cheese instead of full fat
- In a recipe that calls for vegetables, double the vegetables and cut back on any fatty meats
- Use whole grain pastas instead of white
- Use whole grain rice instead of white
- Try using spaghetti squash to substitute for pasta in recipes
- Eat smaller portions of recipes that are higher in fat and calories and add a vegetable side dish to satisfy your hunger
- Substitute high fat meats with lean cuts
- Grill meats instead of frying them
- Use vegetable oil or olive oil instead of lard for frying
- Use nonfat yogurt in place of sour cream
- Use egg whites instead of whole eggs
- Use whole wheat flour instead of bleached flour in recipes to increase fiber
- Whenever possible, add beans to a recipe to increase fiber
- Use whole wheat tortillas instead of traditional white flour or substitute with corn tortillas

You don't have to give up your favorite foods. In many instances you can make a few simple substitutions to lighten up a recipe that your family enjoys. If you can't find a way to lighten the recipe, divide it into smaller portions and offer a healthy side.

Tip #49

Consume Fresh Caught Fish

In the Western diet, there isn't often a great deal of seafood. In fact, the Western diet is heavy on red meat and many people don't know how to shop for or prepare fish. But there are many health benefits to eating fish.

- Fish is full of omega-3 fatty acids that have been shown to improve heart health and lower cholesterol
- Fish has little saturated fat
- Fish is quick and easy to prepare
- Fish is flavorful and can help you to stick with your diet

If your only exposure to fish is a fried fillet from a fast food restaurant, it's time to become more familiar with it. There are many different types of fish you can try and endless ways to prepare it.

In areas of the world, such as the Mediterranean, where fish is a staple of the diet life expectancies are longer and obesity is not much of an issue. You can make this a part of your regular routine as well.

Some fish to try include:

- Mahi mahi
- Tilapia
- Cod
- Salmon
- Halibut
- Bass

All you need to prepare fish properly is a skillet or a grill. You can also bake and broil fish. Try marinating a fillet in olive oil, lemon, and fresh herbs. A fresh fillet of fish can often be cooked in fewer than 10 minutes. Pair it with some whole grain rice and a vegetable and you have a complete, healthy meal. Look for recipes online or invest in a seafood cookbook for more ideas.

Tip #50

Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself

Congratulations on making the decision to take better care of your health by embarking on a diet and lifestyle change! But remember you are a human being and it's almost impossible to implement a diet perfectly at all times.

If you're too critical of yourself you may find that you get burnt out quickly with your diet and give up. This is a common trap for many and can result in negative feelings as well as additional weight gain.

Give yourself a break from time to time. When you mess up, don't use that as a reason to quit completely. Just pick yourself up at that moment and start over again. Think of making a mistake as hitting the reset button not the ejection button.

There may be times when you just need to take a break from thinking about your food and lifestyle changes. That's okay, too. Just plan a holiday from your diet and plan for the date at which you'll pick up again.