

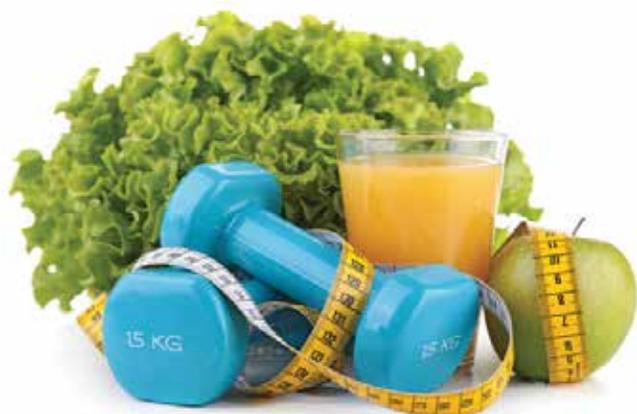


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# 5 WEIGHT LOSS MISTAKES TO AVOID

## BY CYNTHIA SASS



As a nutritionist one of my jobs is to help people lose weight, and I typically start by asking my clients about other methods they've tried that either didn't work, or didn't stick. Over the years I've heard it all, from detoxes and cleanses to low fat, low carb, no sugar, crazy food combinations, special plates, utensils, pills and potions. The common themes with methods that flop? They tend to be too difficult, too stressful, or not sustainable, and some are just downright unhealthy.

If you're feeling motivated to drop some winter weight, scroll through my previous posts for sound advice that will help you slim down while staying energized and well nourished. As for the tactics to skip, here are five that tend to backfire.



**Eating "diet" food. "Diet" foods are typically highly processed, and filled with artificial sweeteners, preservatives, colors, and flavors.** They also tend to be pretty unsatisfying, leaving you with lingering hunger, which can cause you to keep eating. And overeating anything, even "diet" foods, can either prevent weight loss, or even lead to weight gain. When choosing what to eat look past the promises on the label, read ingredient lists to see if a food is worth putting in your body, and trust your instincts. If diet drinks, dinners, and desserts have left you feeling unsatisfied in the past (e.g. you ate three helpings instead of one and didn't lose weight or keep it off) avoid going down that road again.



**Counting calories.** This one may sound out of place, but newer research shows that the quality, balance, and timing of calories matter more than the total number. In other words 1,600 calories worth of junk food will have a completely different effect on your health, waistline, and body composition than 1,600 calories worth of fresh, unprocessed food. Plus counting calories has been linked to a rise in cortisol, a stress hormone that can throw off appetite regulation and up belly fat. So instead of counting, focus on quality first, with the largest proportions of your meals coming from greens and veggies. Also, eat on a regular schedule, and pay attention to hunger and fullness cues. This pattern is much easier and less stressful than adding up numbers all day.



**Trying to cut out sugar completely.** Even the strictest guidelines on sugar allow some – up to six teaspoons worth per day for women and nine for men. That leaves room to include some healthy splurges, like dark chocolate, or occasional can't-live-without treats. Plus, being too strict about sugar can trigger deprivation-driven binge eating, or lead to giving up altogether on healthy eating (because let's face it, who can go through life never eating another cookie?). Your best bet for weight loss success is to nix sugary drinks, avoid processed foods, which often pack hidden sugar, and pre-plan indulgences that are completely worthwhile - a strategy that won't fizzle out after a week or two.



**Eat too little fat.** The old notion that eating fat makes you fat is only true if you eat too much, and the wrong kind. In fact, some fats are actually quite slimming. Fat is a major structural component of your cell membranes, brain, hormones, and skin, so fat in your diet is needed as a building block to maintain or heal these vital tissues. Healthy fats also boost satiety, so you feel fuller longer, and fat significantly ups the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and antioxidants. The latter is linked to less inflammation, and a slimmer physique, even without a reduction in calories. For both health and weight loss reach for moderate portions of whole plant-based fats, like almonds and avocado, use olive oil over butter, and avoid processed and fried foods. Bottom line: not all fat is created equal.



**Eat too little calories.** In addition to leaving you feeling irritable, moody, tired, and hungry, undereating can cause you to burn calorie-burning muscle, and slow your metabolism, which makes it harder to lose weight and easier to gain. If you've been overeating aim to less, but don't starve yourself. Slower, steady weight loss is the best way to stay energized, and maintain lean tissue as you shrink your fat cells.



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**& CYNTHIA SASS WILL ANSWER THEM!**

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