

How to Win at Losing

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Confused about weight loss? You are not alone. Losing weight is hard and keeping it off is even harder. Most Americans diet throughout their lives with mixed results. "Crash diets" are popular because of the initial quick weight loss, but often dieters become discouraged when their weight loss slows or stops before their goals are reached.

Body weight is determined by a balance of calories in and calories out: Eat more than you burn and you gain weight; eat less and you lose weight. Crash diets result in an imbalance of calories consumed and calories burned, as well as a loss of muscle mass, stored sugar and water. This accounts for the easy weight loss early on in a diet. Eventually, your body adjusts to fewer calories taken in and begins to burn energy more slowly. It also begins to store more fat to avoid starvation. Your metabolism slows down and calories are burned less efficiently.

In contrast, when you combine eating less with more exercise, you ensure that the weight loss comes primarily from fat, not muscle. Exercise builds lean muscle, which in turn will increase your metabolic rate and help burn calories more efficiently.

The National Weight Control Registry compiles data from persons who have lost at least 30 pounds and maintained the weight loss for at least one year. The following are real-life tips from weight loss winners:

1. Set realistic goals. A five to 10 percent weight loss can make significant health improvements. Those with serious weight problems could benefit from a consultation with a registered dietitian.
2. Eat a low-fat, low-calorie diet. Cutting back 250 to 1,000 calories a day is reasonable. A deficit of 500 calories each day will cause a loss of one pound of fat each week. A slow and steady one to two-pound weight loss per week is recommended.
3. Eat breakfast regularly and avoid skipping meals. Most maintainers found keeping themselves nourished throughout the day helped prevent overeating. Eliminating high calorie, low nutrient snack foods around the house helped prevent temptation too!
4. Be Consistent. Maintainers kept their weight off by continuing to follow a moderate, low-calorie, low-fat and high fiber (fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains) diet on a regular basis, seven days a week. No slacking off on weekends.
5. Be physically active. Walking was the most common exercise among the maintainers. Check that your exercise choice is practical, safe and enjoyable. Spend at least 30 minutes in moderately intense activity five days per week.
6. Monitor your weight along with a record of your food intake and activity. Weigh yourself weekly, not daily, and use food journals and activity records to identify problems with weight regain.

Remain patient with the results and persevere. With time you can adapt to a new lifestyle of healthy eating.

SOUTHWEST CHICKEN SALAD WRAP

- 2 teaspoons ranch salad dressing mix (dry)
 - 4 Tablespoons mayonnaise, light
 - 2 Tablespoons milk, fat-free
 - 4 Tablespoons chipotle salsa
 - 1/2 cup red bell peppers, thinly sliced
 - 1/2 cup yellow bell peppers, thinly sliced
 - 1/4 cup green onions, chopped
- 3 cups chicken, cooked and cut up in 3/4" pieces
- 6 whole-wheat flour tortillas, low-fat (8" size)
 - (optional) lettuce, shredded
 - (optional) tomatoes, chopped

Combine dressing mix, mayonnaise, milk and salsa together. Add bell peppers, green onions and chicken. Blend together well. Spread one-half cup chicken salad mixture on each tortilla. Fold sides toward center, and then roll to form a wrap sandwich. Serve with shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes, if desired. Makes 6 wraps.

Serving tip: Best if made one day ahead to let the flavors blend. The chicken filling can also be used as a cold entrée salad on a bed of lettuce.

Calories per serving: 274.0 0 Protein: 20.gm Carbs: 30.gm Fat: 8.gm Cholesterol: 33.gm Sat Fat: 0.5.gm Trans fat: 0.gm Fiber: 3.5.gm Sodium: 552.mg