

Body & More



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2009 Issue No. 6

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6 Reasons Your Diet Will Fail

6 Reasons Why Your Diet Isn't Working

These weight loss tricks might actually be derailing your downsizing efforts

By ANNA SACHSE
CTW FEATURES

If you're trying to trim down, there's a good chance your brain is full to bursting with diet tips from friends, magazines, books, television and the Internet. So then why does it still feel like your belt is about to burst as well? It may come as a surprise to discover that some of your favorite weight loss tricks are actually what's keeping you chubby. Here the experts weigh in on six diet dangers, and offer effective solutions that will help you drop the pounds for good.

You restrict calories

Dramatically cutting calories can help you quickly shed a few pounds, but you'll also end up quickly hitting a plateau because your body goes into starvation mode, says Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, senior food and nutrition editor of Health magazine and author of "Feed the Belly: The Pregnant Mom's Healthy Eating Guide" (Sourcebooks, 2009). Your metabolism slows down, thus the same dieting effort will result in less and less weight loss. In addition, drastically cutting calories will cause you to lose muscle along with fat, which can hamper your weight management efforts long after you stop dieting.

Healthier move: Largeman-Roth advises never eating less than 1,200 calories a day without doctor supervision. Instead, strive to permanently lose fat while maintaining muscle with the slow, steady method. You can shed about one pound a week by shaving 250 calories from your daily diet and burning an additional 250 with moderate exercise.

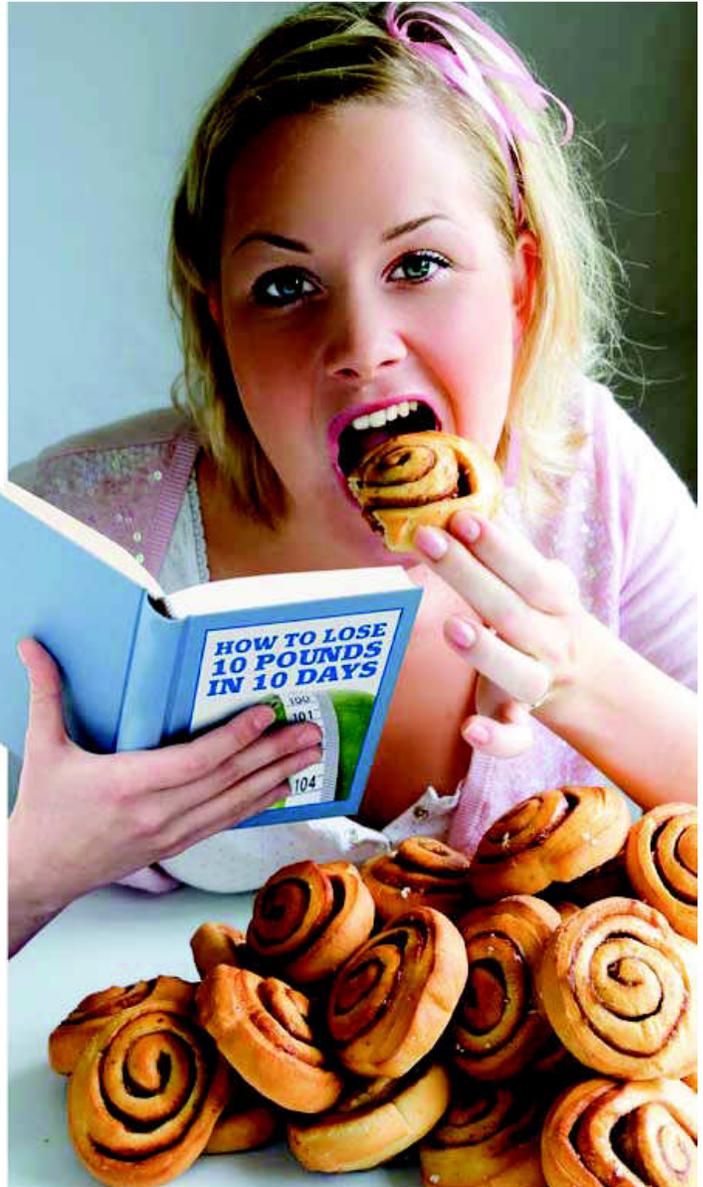
You restrict fat

Not only is some fat necessary for the absorption of important fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K, it helps us feel satisfied. For example, if you really want a brownie, settling for an apple probably won't tame the craving or fill you up. As a result, you end up eating the brownie, too, thus consuming more calories than you would have if you had just eaten the brownie in the first place.

Healthier move: Fat promotes satiety, so you can actually use it as a weight loss tool by incorporating foods rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fat like nuts, olives, olive oil and avocados into each meal and snack, Largeman-Roth says.

You restrict carbohydrates

Low-carb diets have worked for people because at their core they're simply low-calorie diets, Largeman-Roth says. But most people can't maintain a low-carb diet long term. In fact, a new study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic



Association found that people with a higher carbohydrate intake (47 to 64 percent of total calories) had the lowest risk of being overweight or obese.

Healthier move: The American Heart Association recommends losing weight with filling, high-fiber carbohydrates like fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains. This diet will also reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke and several types of cancer.

You eat your fill of healthy foods

"People often tend to overeat particular food items because they think the fact that the foods are healthy gives them a license to have as much as they want," says

BODY & MORE ISSUE NO. 6 2009

Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, LDN, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and author of "The Flexitarian Diet" (McGraw-Hill, 2008). "I call it the 'Health Halo Effect.'" But no matter how healthy chicken, brown rice, avocado, nuts and fruit may be, all food has calories and overeating will cause you to gain weight.

Healthier move: The answer is, of course, reading labels and exercising portion control. Blatner suggests using a measuring cup for grains like brown rice, measuring spoons for olive oil and counting out the nuts in a serving or eating pre-portioned packages.

You have a "cheat day"

According to the National Weight Control Registry, which is tracking over 5,000 individuals who have lost significant amounts of weight and kept it off for long periods of time, those who maintain a consistent eating plan tend to do better. One day of gorging on high calorie fare can negate an entire week's hard work. And setting up a feast or famine mentality makes it more likely you will abandon your diet altogether.

Healthier move: Instead of being an A student on the weekdays and a D student on the weekends, you should eat like a B student all the time, Blatner says. "Add a little cheddar cheese to your veggie chili, or eat that slice of pizza but stick to just one and pair it with a giant salad." That way you don't feel deprived but you also keep your calories in check.

You get heavy exercise

Overdoing exercise can lead to burnout, Blatner warns. "If a kid goes to school and gets beat up by a bully, he won't want to go anymore," she says. "Likewise, if you beat up your body through exercise, it won't want to do it anymore." In addition, some people think heavy exercise is a green light to overeat. But studies have shown that people typically overestimate how many calories they've burned by 50 percent.

Healthier move: Blatner recommends following the 30/60/90 rule - 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week is fantastic for disease prevention; sixty minutes most days of the week is great for weight stability; and 90 minutes is ideal for active weight loss. But it's okay for these times to fluctuate according to the needs of your body and your daily planner. Occasionally adopting a "less is more" attitude will allow you to maintain a routine for life.

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1/4 PAGE AD

1/4 PAGE AD