

# 20 Easy Eat-Less Tricks

You've tried them all—the crash diet, the fad diet, the liquid diet, the starvation diet. Enough is enough. It doesn't have to be that hard. "It's as simple as finding something you can stick with," says Cynthia Sass, R.D., nutritionist at the University of South Florida in Tampa. We agree. So here you'll find 20 surprising ways to shed pounds. Try a single tip at a time, finding the strategies that work for you. Once you've accomplished a goal, pick another to focus on, while maintaining the previous ones. Losing weight should be easy.

## Make Time for Breakfast

Women who eat cereal or fruit for breakfast weigh less and have healthier diets than women who eat something else or nothing at all, according to a study conducted by Gladys Block, Ph.D, professor of epidemiology at the School of Public Health at the University of California at Berkeley. Those who skip the first meal of the day tend to make up for it by eating more higher-fat foods later. And those who opt for bagels, muffins, French toast, or bacon and eggs tend to consume more fat and calories at breakfast.

Pass on the bread basket or **consume only the crust** to save calories and feel satisfied.

Besides being low-fat, a good breakfast should be loaded with nutrients—and also with fiber. When choosing a cereal, reach for one that contains at least six grams of fiber (about 25 percent of your daily need) per serving. You'll feel fuller longer, causing you to eat less throughout the day.

## Eat More Often

Don't go more than three or four hours without eating. "Many of us eat something at eight A.M., then have lunch around noon," says Sandra S. Karp, R.D., a certified dietitian-nutritionist who is based in Windsor, Connecticut. Be realistic and be prepared. If you're eating dinner at seven, Karp says, that's a long stretch. Plan for a late-afternoon snack to tide you over.

Women also tend to make up for

**Late-night noshing doesn't have to sabotage your diet. A healthy snack two hours before bed will crush cravings.**

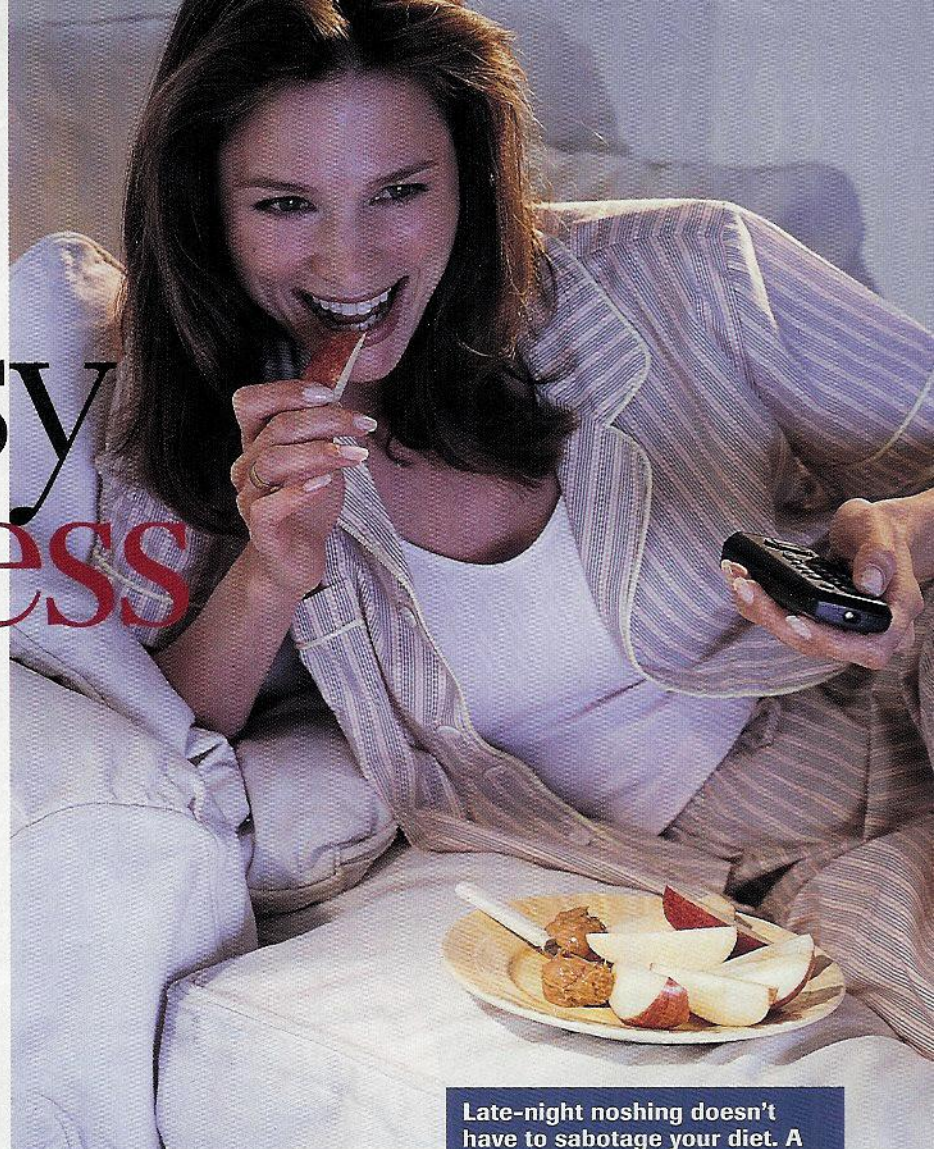
food not eaten—plus some. For instance, some women have coffee for breakfast and then eat nothing all day. When they finally get home and start making dinner, they snack while cooking. By the time they sit down to enjoy their meal, they may have already eaten hundreds of calories!

Be sure to refuel your body regularly. When you go for too long without eating, your metabolism slows down, which prevents weight loss.

## Nix the Low-Fat Muffins

A reduced-fat blueberry muffin at Dunkin' Donuts contains a whopping

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13 grams of fat and 450 calories compared with the regular one measuring in at 490 calories and 17 fat grams. Although this may be a slight reduction in fat and calories, the reduced-fat version is not going to set you on the road to weight loss. Two low-fat whole wheat waffles with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar-free syrup, on the other hand, is only 170 calories and 2.5 grams of fat.

## Keep It in Balance

Think of your daily food intake as a budget. If you splurge, you have to cut back somewhere else to keep it in balance. For every high-fat or high-calorie food you "spend," you can save by eating three low-fat, low-calorie choices. Exercise should also be part of the equation. For instance, a 15- to 20-minute walk subtracts that extra slice of bread.

## Dish It Out

Never eat food out of a container. "When reaching into a bag of chips and munching, you can easily grab four servings without even realizing it," says Bettye Nowlin, R.D., spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and a nutritionist in private practice in Los Angeles. Pour out one portion to keep calories in control.

## Stop Fighting Fat

A new study suggests that fat may actually aid weight loss—as long as it's the healthful unsaturated fat found in foods such as olive and canola oil, nuts, peanut butter and fatty fish such as salmon and tuna. In moderation, fat plays an important role in a healthy diet, says Kathy McManus, R.D., director of nutrition at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and co-author of the study.

She found that people on a diet rich in unsaturated fat lost 11 pounds over the course of 18 months, while those on a low-fat diet lost half as much. So go ahead and sprinkle a small amount of olive oil on your pasta, eat a handful of nuts or add some avocado slices to your salad.

## Cut Back on the Sweet Stuff

Americans eat more refined sugar in just one day than our ancestors ate in

an entire lifetime, reports Elizabeth Somer, R.D., in her book *The Origin Diet* (Henry Holt and Company). In fact, on average people consume 20 teaspoons a day, which adds up to 146,000 calories in a year and about 42 pounds of body fat! Cut out sugar and replace it with other flavor boosters, such as cinnamon, nutmeg or vanilla.

## Size Up Your Servings

Most people are still unsure of what constitutes a portion. Sass likes to give people a visual image: For example, a serving of rice is a half cup, about the size of a fruit cup. A portion of meat is the size of a cassette tape; a vegetable serving, the size of a baseball; and shredded cheese, a golf ball. Assess the number of portions every time you look at food. Over time, it will become a familiar habit.

## Eat the Edges

When you're eating out, ask the waiter to remove the bread after you have one piece. Or eat only the crust, advises David Nash, M.D., a cardiologist and clinical professor of medicine at Upstate Medical University at the State University of New York at Syracuse. You'll take in far fewer calories but won't feel deprived.

## Select a Smarter Appetizer

Start your meals with a bowl of broth-based soup, salad, fresh fruit or raw vegetables. "All of these are high-bulk foods that fill you up," says Nowlin. "They will help you feel fuller sooner, so you'll eat less at the main meal."

## Place Your Order First

When eating out with friends, people who hear what their dining companions are having are more apt to change their minds. So choose a low-fat option from the menu and place your order without thinking twice.



**Cheese, please! Strong, flavorful cheeses will satisfy your taste buds in smaller portions.**

"Altering your original plan often occurs during dessert,"

adds Nowlin. "You may have wanted to have just coffee, but when you hear someone else order cheesecake, you may be tempted."

## Dine In and Drop Pounds

Besides saving money, home-cooked meals may spare you a few pounds. According to a study conducted at the Tufts University Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging in Boston, there's a correlation between eating meals out and higher body fat percentage. "We found that the more often you eat out, the more calories you consume per day, the higher your intake of fat, saturated fat and sodium, and the lower your intake of fiber," says Megan McCrory, Ph.D., a nutrition research scientist at Tufts University and lead author of the study.

## Throw Cabbage in Your Cart

Not only is raw cabbage thought to fight cancer, but its abundance of pectin may enhance fat burning, according to Grigory Sadkhin, Ph.D., a naturopathic doctor in Brooklyn, New York. Pectin also goes through the body without being stored as fat or added calories. And cabbage is filling so it leaves you feeling satisfied.

## Resist Supersizes

Does the label 30 PERCENT MORE grab your attention. Perhaps it makes you think you're getting a bigger bang for your



**A filling vegetable that satisfies hunger, cabbage may be king when it comes to burning fat.**

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**back?** Don't fool yourself. The super-size is going to last the same amount of time as a smaller package, because the more food in front of you, the more you're likely to eat, says Joan Carter, R.D., American Dietetic Association spokesperson and an instructor in the department of pediatrics at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Instead, buy products packaged in smaller portions. Not only will this tactic shrink your waistline, it will enlarge your wallet as well.

### Try "Stinky" Cheese

Instead of throwing a couple of slices of processed cheese on your burger, go for the really flavorful and aromatic stuff, such as blue cheese or Limburger, recommends Carter. While both types of cheese contain a similar amount of fat and calories, you won't need to use as much of the stronger stuff. A little goes a long way when the flavor is intense.

### Count to Ten

The Food Guide Pyramid's recommendation of five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day is a dieter's best friend. Even better if you can exceed those daily requirements.

"I recommend ten a day," says Karp. "Not only do all those fruits and vegetables keep you feeling full, but by the time you get them in, there isn't much room—or desire—for other foods that might get you into trouble."

### Hit the Road

Get in the habit of walking after dinner. If you know you're going to exercise right after you eat, chances are you won't overindulge. And by walking, you'll burn off some of the calories you did eat.

### Have a Snack Before Bed

"Many experts tell you not to eat after six o'clock," says Sass. "But that's silly." Here's why: If you eat dinner at 6 P.M., you're going to be hungry again at 9 or 10. And if you don't go to bed until 11 P.M., you'll undoubtedly be hungry. Don't send yourself to bed on an empty stomach. Instead, plan for a healthy late-night snack about two hours before you retire. A few to choose from: three cups of light microwave popcorn or an apple with one tablespoon peanut butter.

### Get Support

Even if you are uncomfortable with the idea of talking to a group of people about your weight, you may benefit from doing so. Two studies conducted at the University of Florida Health Science Center in Gainesville analyzed whether people were more successful at weight loss when they talked with just one person or when they spoke to a group. Researchers found that people who participated in groups fared better.

It doesn't have to be formal. You can gather a few friends for a weekly meeting where you simply talk

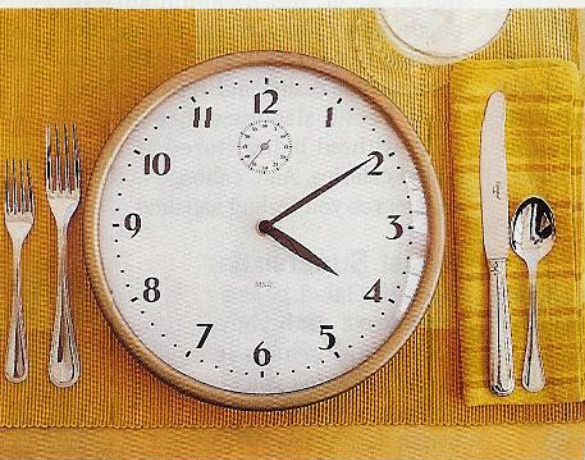
about weight-loss issues. According to study author Michael G. Perri, Ph.D., professor of clinical and health psychology at the University of Florida, groups can help people realize that it's normal to run into problems while trying to manage weight. They also present a greater number of solutions, so you can find the right one for you.

### Make It Last

Any time you start a diet, ask yourself, *Is this something I can do for the rest of my life?* If the answer is no, it will most likely result in temporary weight loss, at best. Give up on the quick-fix diets and focus on making small changes that you can keep up with, like those mentioned above. But most of all, be patient with yourself. Lasting change takes time. **FC**



**Use the home advantage. One study found the more people ate out, the higher their body fat.**



**Make time for food. Eat every three to four hours to stoke metabolism and boost weight loss.**