



Ways to Burn More Fat

You've counted calories and walked and walked, but your skinny jeans still don't fit. What gives? We turned to the experts for tips on how to rev up your metabolism, increase lean muscle mass and avoid eating those extra calories that end up being stored as fat.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Skimping on Protein

Women lose about 5 pounds of muscle every decade (and gain an average of 15 pounds of fat.) Protein helps you build lean muscle, so make sure you're getting enough: If you're in your 30s, aim for 50 to 56 grams daily; in your 40s, you need 56 to 62 grams daily. Good sources include tuna and chicken breast (6 oz. of either will give you 45 grams of protein).

Don't Make These Mistakes: Skipping Strength Training

Want to burn calories and fat even when you're sitting still? Then you need to increase your resting metabolic rate, and strength training (such as with light weights or resistance bands) is the key. Strength-train three times a week and you'll reduce your body fat percentage in about 10 weeks.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Underestimating How Much You Eat (and Overestimating How Much You Move)

Women tend to underestimate their daily intake by about 800 calories. A University of Florida study found that 47 percent of exercisers claimed they were working out at a moderate intensity, yet only 15 percent of them actually were. Keep a food and exercise journal so you can track your eating and exercise habits precisely.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Thinking Little Nibbles Don't Count

Whether it's grabbing candy off a co-workers desk or finishing your kid's fries, every bite averages about 25 calories. Have four extra bites a day and you'll gain a pound a month. Stop mindless munching by only eating when food is on a plate or in a single-serving container.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Consuming Too Few Calories

Yes, cutting calories is crucial to weight loss, but go too low and your body goes into starvation mode, which slows your metabolism. Never eat less than 1,200 calories a day. To figure out how many calories you need to maintain your current weight, go to caloriecontrol.org/calcalcs.html. If you want to lose a pound a week, subtract 500 calories.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Not Planning Ahead

Just saying you're going to watch what you eat or start exercising more isn't going to work unless you think about how those changes are going to fit into your day. If you want to stick to an exercise plan, for example, write workout sessions in your planner and stash sneakers in your car. Or if you're going out to dinner and know you want to splurge a little, cut back on snacks that day.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Doing the Same Workout All the Time

Mixing up your routine is key to burning the most fat and calories. Otherwise, your body adapts to the workout and goes on autopilot so you don't get as much out of it. So walk one day, do a DVD the next, and then try a dance or aerobics class.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Feeding Your Emotions

When the line between physical and emotional hunger gets blurred, you can end up inhaling hundreds of extra calories. Think before you bite. Ask yourself, "Am I really hungry? Or am I just bored or upset?" If you're not sure, have a glass of water and wait at least 20 minutes. If you're still hungry, eat something healthy or a small amount of a food you're craving. You're more likely to limit what you eat once you've waited it out.

Don't Make These Mistakes: Buying Into Quick Fixes

No pill, drink or fad diet is going to magically peel off the pounds. To lose weight (and keep it off), you need to make changes to your overall diet and exercise habits—and be patient.

Tips to Keep You Motivated:

Set Short- and Long-term Goals-- Make them realistic so you don't get discouraged. Want to lose 20 pounds? Aim for five this month.

Reward Yourself-- Put a dollar in a jar every day you exercise for 30 minutes. Soon you'll be able to treat yourself to a new book or a manicure.

Be Flexible-- If the only exercise you do is outdoor walking, you'll end up doing nothing if it rains all week. Always have a backup plan.

See the Old You-- Dig out a photograph of yourself during a time when you liked your weight and appearance. Hang it on the fridge or in your bathroom.

Build a Support System-- Pair up with a friend who has time to meet for walks, share low-calorie recipes and offer advice when you're tempted to stray.