

45 of the Smartest Diet Tips Ever

Weight loss advice that really works--from top nutrition pros.

by Top Dietitians of the American Dietetic Association

Got a diet dilemma? Ask a true diet pro: an RD, or registered dietitian. Her job is turning complex nutrition research into doable plans for real people.

Courtesy of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), we took our readers' toughest diet problems and ran them by some of the top dietitians in the US: RDs who, in addition to their private careers, serve as media spokespersons or heads of specialty practice groups for the ADA.

Here's what they told us, in their own words. These tips are solid gold, learned from successful experience with thousands of clients. Some tips are new. Some you've heard before, but they're repeated because they work. This treasure trove of RD wisdom could change your life-starting today.

I Can Only Handle One Diet Change Right Now. What Should I Do?

1. Add just one fruit or veggie serving daily. Get comfortable with that, then add an extra serving until you reach 8 to 10 a day.
2. Eat at least two servings of a fruit or veggie at every meal.
3. Resolve never to supersize your food portions--unless you want to supersize your clothes.
4. Make eating purposeful, not mindless. Whenever you put food in your mouth, peel it, unwrap it, plate it, and sit. Engage all of the senses in the pleasure of nourishing your body.
5. Start eating a big breakfast. It helps you eat fewer total calories throughout the day.
6. Make sure your plate is half veggies and/or fruit at both lunch and dinner.

Are there Any Easy Tricks to Help Me Cut Calories?

7. Eating out? Halve it, and bag the rest. A typical restaurant entree has 1,000 to 2,000 calories, not even counting the bread, appetizer, beverage, and dessert.
8. When dining out, make it automatic: Order one dessert to share.
9. Use a salad plate instead of a dinner plate.
10. See what you eat. Plate your food instead of eating out of the jar or bag.
11. Eat the low-cal items on your plate first, then graduate. Start with salads, veggies, and broth soups, and eat meats and starches last. By the time you get to them, you'll be full enough to be content with smaller portions of the high-calorie choices.
12. Instead of whole milk, switch to 1 percent. If you drink one 8-oz glass a day, you'll lose 5 lb in a year.
13. Juice has as many calories, ounce for ounce, as soda. Set a limit of one 8-oz glass of fruit juice a day.
14. Get calories from foods you chew, not beverages. Have fresh fruit instead of fruit juice.

15. Keep a food journal. It really works wonders.
16. Follow the Chinese saying: "Eat until you are eight-tenths full."
17. Use mustard instead of mayo.
18. Eat more soup. The noncreamy ones are filling but low-cal.
19. Cut back on or cut out caloric drinks such as soda, sweet tea, lemonade, etc. People have lost weight by making just this one change. If you have a 20-oz bottle of Coca-Cola every day, switch to Diet Coke. You should lose 25 lb in a year.
20. Take your lunch to work.
21. Sit when you eat.
22. Dilute juice with water.
23. Have mostly veggies for lunch.
24. Eat at home.
25. Limit alcohol to weekends.

How Can I Eat More Veggies?

26. Have a V8 or tomato juice instead of a Diet Coke at 3 pm.
27. Doctor your veggies to make them delicious: Dribble maple syrup over carrots, and sprinkle chopped nuts on green beans.
28. Mix three different cans of beans and some diet Italian dressing. Eat this three-bean salad all week.
29. Don't forget that vegetable soup counts as a vegetable.
30. Rediscover the sweet potato.
31. Use prebagged baby spinach everywhere: as "lettuce" in sandwiches, heated in soups, wilted in hot pasta, and added to salads.
32. Spend the extra few dollars to buy vegetables that are already washed and cut up.
33. Really hate veggies? Relax. If you love fruits, eat plenty of them; they are just as healthy (especially colorful ones such as oranges, mangoes, and melons).
34. Keep seven bags of your favorite frozen vegetables on hand. Mix any combination, microwave, and top with your favorite low-fat dressing. Enjoy 3 to 4 cups a day. Makes a great quick dinner.

Can You Give Me a Mantra that will Help Me Stick to My Diet?

35. "The best portion of high-calorie foods is the smallest one. The best portion of vegetables is the largest one. Period."

36. "I'll ride the wave. My cravings will disappear after 10 minutes if I turn my attention elsewhere."

37. "I want to be around to see my grandchildren, so I can forgo a cookie now."

38. "I am a work in progress."

39. "It's more stressful to continue being fat than to stop overeating."

I Eat Healthy, but I'm Overweight. What Mistakes Could I Be Making without Realizing It?

40. Skipping meals. Many healthy eaters "diet by day and binge by night."

41. Don't "graze" yourself fat. You can easily munch 600 calories of pretzels or cereal without realizing it.

42. Eating pasta like crazy. A serving of pasta is 1 cup, but some people routinely eat 4 cups.

43. Eating supersize bagels of 400 to 500 calories for snacks.

44. Ignoring "Serving Size" on the Nutrition Facts panel.

45. Snacking on bowls of nuts. Nuts are healthy but dense with calories. Put those bowls away, and use nuts as a garnish instead of a snack.

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