

Eating Tips for the New Year

The New Year typically brings with it fresh resolves to eat healthier and lose weight. Many people believe they know the best ways to manage their weight. So let's start by testing your knowledge of successful weight loss habits with a quiz! The questions are based on the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR). See the bottom of the article for answers and statistics.



1. Which of the following is true? The NWCR found that people who lost weight and kept it off:
 - a. Exercised at least 75 minutes every day of the week
 - b. Cut their carbohydrates in half and increased their protein intake.
 - c. Ate breakfast every day.
 - d. Stopped eating all sweets.
2. True or False: The NWCR found that people who kept the weight off used "special occasions" to treat themselves by eating more than they usually would.

Despite resolutions and billions spent on weight loss plans, why can't we seem to lose it and keep it off? The truth is: we may just be eating too much. The "2000 calories per day average diet" is actually too much for many women and older adults. And if you eat more calories than you burn, you won't be able to escape weight gain.

How many calories do you need?

Most people don't know how many calories they need in a day, which makes it difficult to create a plan that will promote weight loss. To estimate your individual calorie needs, click on the [MyPlate Supertracker](#). To estimate your BMI and determine a healthy weight range, click on the [BMI calculator](#).

For weight loss, a safe start is to cut 300-500 calories per day or increase your exercise to burn 300-500 calories (or some of both). As a "rule of thumb": most middle age and older adults need 13-14 calories per pound per day to maintain their weight. Most middle age and older adults need 9-12 calories per pound per day to lose weight. So: a 140 pound person needs 1800-2000 calories per day to maintain, and 1200-1700 calories to lose weight. A 200 pound person needs 2600-2800 calories per day to maintain, and 1800 -2400 calories to lose weight. If you have cut some calories and haven't lost weight, you may need to cut more.

Make calorie cutting easy...

by switching to foods lower in "calorie density." Calorie density refers to the calories of a food compared to its weight. A calorie dense food is high in calories for what seems like a small amount



of food, while a food with low calorie density weighs a lot compared to the number of calories it contains. High calorie density foods may contain a lot of fat or refined carbohydrates, like sugar and flour. It is easy to over-eat these foods because they don't fill you up. Don't be fooled by marketing - just because the label says "low fat" does not mean you can eat all you want! Surprisingly, many low-fat, fat-free, or sugar-free baked goods, desserts, and other processed foods have high calorie density, and these foods can sabotage your weight loss efforts if you don't pay attention to portion sizes. Low calorie density foods often contain a lot of water and fiber. Non-starchy vegetables and fruits, like spinach and oranges, are the lowest calorie density foods. For example, a "100 calorie snack" such as a tiny portion of mini Oreo crackers is equivalent in calories to **4 cups** of fresh veggies, or **3 cups** plain popcorn (a whole grain). Which snack is more likely to fill you up? Also, fruits and veggies are loaded with heart-healthy antioxidants that reduce the risk of cancer and fiber to lower cholesterol levels as well as promote control of blood sugar levels!

Let's get moving!



Even the healthiest, most well-rounded diet won't keep the weight off if you don't exercise. For weight loss, 45-60 minutes of aerobic exercise is needed most days of the week; you don't have to train for a marathon, but moseying around the grocery store isn't enough, either – get the heart rate up a little! Fast walking works well. But even if you're thin or happy with your weight, you're not off the hook. The Surgeon General says that living a sedentary lifestyle is as detrimental as smoking two packs of cigarettes *per day*. You do not need a gym membership to get moving: climb a few extra sets of stairs each day, dance to the radio, check out an exercise video at your public library, use books or canned foods for weights. Ask a friend to join or support you in your New Year's resolution. Success is much greater when you've got someone else who is aiming for the same goal. So enjoy healthy food, stick with your physical activity, and reap the benefits of a stronger, healthier you!

Quiz Answers

1. C
2. False

The National Weight Control Registry has found that people who lose weight and keep it off generally have these habits:

- 98% of Registry participants report decreasing calories to lose weight and keep it off (1400 calories/d)
- 94% of Registry participants increased their physical activity, with walking the most common activity, and 90% exercise, on average, 1 hour per day.

- 78% eat breakfast every day.
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week.
- 62% watch less than 10 hours of TV per week.
- Most rarely use “special occasions” as excuses to eat more than they should