

10 BIGGEST DIET MISTAKES

You try to do the right stuff: Fill the fruit bowl, heat up a diet frozen dinner, and never even glance at a dessert menu. So why is the number on your scale heading north? Turns out the road to healthy weight loss is paved with good intentions—and the occasional fumble. Get back on track with these fixes for common blunders, and shed those pounds for good

MISTAKE 3

YOU EAT HEALTHY FOOD BUT DON'T COOK IT YOURSELF

When is a plate of spinach not the dieting super-food it's cracked up to be? When it's dripping in butter and oil, restaurant-style. **Basically, if you don't prepare your own food, you give up control over your caloric destiny.** And it's not just the extras (like salt and sugar) that doom your menu orders; it's the massive portions too. Grilled salmon is fabulous, but not when you're eating enough for three people.

THE FIX Slip on an apron or order wisely. Nutritionist Tanya Zuckerbrot's F-Factor Diet Web site (ffactor.com) lists the healthiest options at popular chains.

DISH IT OUT

When you order in, put your food on a plate before you eat. It will be easier to resist extra helpings.

MISTAKE 1

YOU FEAR CARBS

Carbohydrates have a sinister (and unfounded!) rap for packing on weight. **But when you avoid them, you deplete serotonin levels, which can cause you to feel deprived.** And no one can last long on a diet that makes them grouchy. "Your brain energy fades, you're tired, and you're crabby," says Jackie Keller, founder of NutriFit, a healthy-meals service that counts Ginnifer Goodwin as a client. "Grains are for brains."

THE FIX Keller recommends loading up on "favorable" carbs, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. "Those have fiber, vitamins, and minerals."

MISTAKE 2

YOU OVERESTIMATE YOUR WORKOUT'S CALORIE BURN

You hop off the elliptical after a 45-minute sweat session, and as you're heading out the gym door, you pop a few handfuls of trail mix into your mouth. Bad move. **"You've just consumed double the amount of calories that you burned,"** says Joy Bauer, a *Today* show contributor and author of *Joy Bauer's Food Cures*. "A lot of women overcompensate this way."

THE FIX Even if it means keeping a flashcard in your gym bag, remind yourself—often—of the calorie expenditure of your favorite workout.



MISTAKE 4

YOU WING IT

Quick! What's for dinner tonight? "If you don't know, you're likely to decide when you're already hungry, tired, or rushed," says Lauren Slayton, owner of Foodtrainers.net, a nutrition firm in N.Y.C. **That can lead to grabbing whatever's handiest or most compelling, like that bag of "artisanal" potato chips.** Another no-no: not being prepared for those inevitable mid-morning and afternoon energy dips.

THE FIX Every day, make at least a rough plan for all meals and snacks. Yes, snacks. "Eating a small, healthful snack between meals"—try red pepper strips or low-fat string cheese—"will stabilize blood sugar and keep your metabolism going strong," says Tanya Zuckerbrot. "You'll also avoid overeating at your next meal."



MISTAKE 5

YOU EAT A LOT OF PRE-PACKAGED DIET FOOD

Low-calorie snack bars, frozen dinners, and the like aren't necessarily healthy. "Diet foods often have too much sodium and sugar," says N.Y.C. fitness and wellness expert David Kirsch. The fact that they're low-cal can also send the wrong message and set your munching wheels in motion—who hasn't absentmindedly worked her way through a giant stack of low-fat cookies? Joy Bauer acknowledges that a frozen diet meal can be convenient for time-starved women but points out that these dishes don't teach you how to eat wisely when the diet is over and you're back in the real world of cooking at home and eating at restaurants.

THE FIX Use diet meals sparingly, says Bauer. "They can be a great jump-start, but ultimately you have to be smart about the transition" to non-diet food and unregulated portions.

MISTAKE 6

YOU DRINK A LOT (AND WE'RE NOT TALKING WATER)

You thought this one would be all about alcohol, right? Wrong—sort of. Ignoring, for a moment, the 400- to 500-calorie frozen margarita, it's the liquids you guzzle on a daily (if not hourly) basis that you really have to watch. **"It's mind-boggling to tally the calories we consume in coffee concoctions, sweetened teas, sodas, and fruit smoothies,"** says Bauer.

"I tell clients to save their calories for food and concentrate on drinking water, naturally flavored zero-calorie seltzer, or unsweetened coffee or tea." If you need to sweeten up, do it yourself and stick to real sugar. At 20 calories per teaspoon, it won't wreck your get-slim plan.

RED ALERT

Cranberry juice packs about 120 calories per 8 ounce glass. Lighten it up with seltzer.



MISTAKE 7

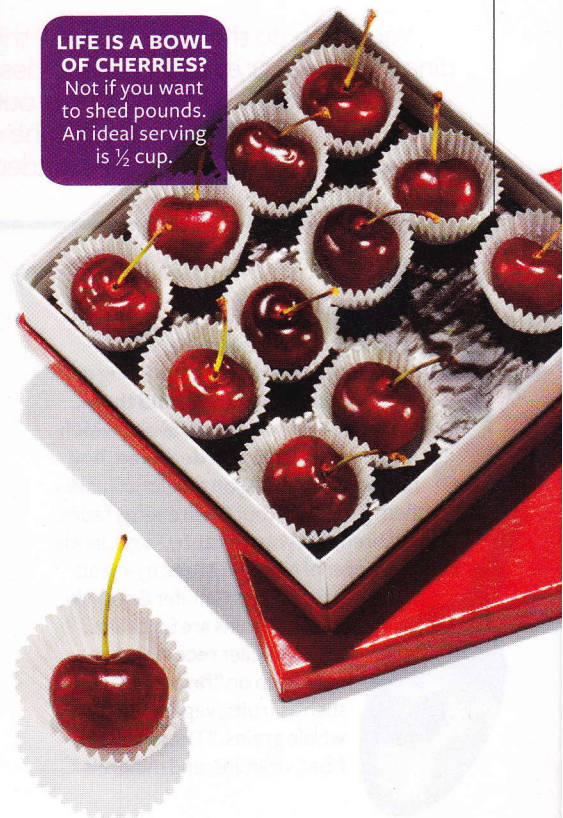
YOU "OVER-FRUIT"

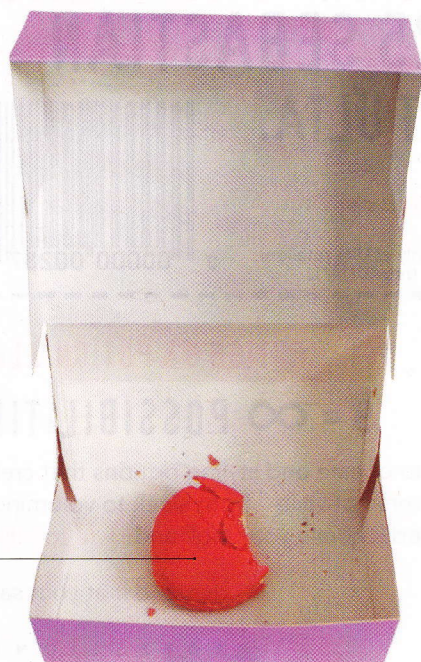
If one banana is good for you, five must be fantastic, right? Not exactly. Although fruit is definitely healthy, some are way more sugary and caloric than others. One medium banana, for example, contains about 105 calories and 27 grams of carbs. **Others in the supersweet camp include cherries, grapes, and mangos.** So while fruit is certainly nutritionally superior to, say, a Snickers bar, 100 calories here and there can add up fast.

THE FIX Don't cut out fruit—just cut down on portions. "Fruit is full of fiber, phytochemicals, and vitamins," says Slayton. "But if you're trying to lose weight, stick to one or two servings per day." And be sure to choose from the less sugary but still delicious part of the fruit basket, which includes berries (especially blackberries and raspberries), grapefruit, and apples.

LIFE IS A BOWL OF CHERRIES?

Not if you want to shed pounds. An ideal serving is ½ cup.





MISTAKE 8

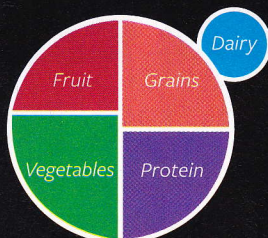
YOU LET YOURSELF GET TOO HUNGRY

Whether you're attempting to "save your calories" or you simply don't want to carve time out of your day for a proper meal, allowing yourself to become ravenous is a bad idea. **"There's nothing worse for your body than skipping meals in favor of hoarding calories at a later occasion,"** says Jackie Keller. "And it totally boomerangs because you overeat in response."

THE FIX Eat frequently, preferably every three to four hours. By approaching a meal (or that yummy tray of hors d'oeuvres at the cocktail party) with a lower level of hunger, you'll make smarter choices.

BUH-BYE, FOOD PYRAMID!

In June the Agriculture Department unveiled MyPlate, a replacement for the ultra-confusing food pyramid. The takeaway: Veggies are very, very good. Dairy? Not as much.



MISTAKE 9

YOU THINK SHORT-TERM, NOT LONG HAUL

If all you care about is looking great at next weekend's reunion, then go ahead and juice-cleanse to lose a fast five pounds. Lasting change, however, in the form of weight that doesn't bounce right back on, requires digging deeper and accepting the fact that staying lean is a lifelong process. **Yes, you can indulge every once in while, but then you need to get with the program again.** "I tell clients at the first session that weight loss is 50 percent attitude," says Joy Bauer. "If you're not truly ready to make a full-time commitment, the chances of long-term success are slim."

THE FIX "Do some soul-searching," Bauer advises, to discover your motivation for losing weight—and keep it on the front burner by giving yourself a pep talk every morning. Be patient; you won't become a healthy eater overnight. "After 48 hours of following a plan that's healthful, you'll feel markedly better," she says. "But for a habit to truly sink in, you're looking at two weeks—minimum."

MISTAKE 10

YOU GIVE UP WHEN YOU SCREW UP

Every healthy-diet plan needs wiggle room—for that ginormous slice of cake at your cousin's wedding, say, or the two-and-counting cosmos on girls' night out. **The problem is our all-or-nothing attitude.** "Women don't forgive their slipups," says Bauer. "We're human. It's inevitable that we'll fall off the wagon. But nobody ever gains weight from a slice of pizza or a king-size chocolate bar. You gain weight when you let those things turn into repeated binges."

THE FIX Don't beat yourself up; a positive attitude is crucial to staying the course. But definitely hightail it back to healthy eating after a fall. "Shake yourself off and make sure that at the next meal, or at least the very next day, you get back on plan," says Bauer.

