

# The 7 Biggest Weight-Loss Mistakes, According to Dietitians



Dietitians have seen it all when it comes to weight loss. From crazy fad diets to bulletproof coffee — while appealing, what sounds too good to be true usually is.

We are all susceptible to the lure of the quick fix or thinking there's one magic bullet to achieve ultimate weight-loss success. But this mindset often leads to mistakes that eventually get in the way of the long-term goals we're trying to achieve.

Is it possible to avoid some of these pitfalls that inevitably occur on your weight-loss journey? Absolutely — but we must be able to recognize those pitfalls first. Below are the seven of the biggest and most common weight-loss mistakes dietitians see, with tips from real-life RD's to help you stay on course.

## 1. TOO MANY RULES

Losing weight is hard enough without having to follow a bunch of strict rules. Melissa Rifkin, MS, RD, says not eating after 7 p.m. is a popular “rule” that may work against you if you work the night shift or wake up very early. If you want to

curb nighttime noshing, she recommends you stop eating two hours before bedtime.

Elizabeth Ann Shaw, MS, RD, finds her clients often avoid anything containing a trace of sugar, no matter the source. She recommends using natural sugar sources to satisfy a sweet tooth, like a delicious potassium-packed frozen banana topped with a tablespoon of nut butter and a few shavings of dark chocolate.

## 2. CHEAT DAYS

Employing cheat days as a way to stay motivated is a common tactic while on a strict diet. But Rifkin warns that entire cheat days can be a trigger to get (and stay) off track and derail healthy habits. She recommends a treat meal instead of a cheat day. It's much easier to re-establish healthy eating habits after one meal versus an entire day of indulgent eating.

Another issue for many dieters is alcohol. Natalie Rizzo, MS, RD, says her clients forget to count alcohol calories. "One glass of wine each night can supply an extra 100 calories per day (and 700 calories per week)," she says. "These calories add up over time and can slow weight loss."

Instead, Rizzo recommends reducing your intake by half. If you drink wine every night, cut back to three nights per week. If it's only one night per week, cut back to one night every other week.

## 3. NOT EATING ENOUGH

When dieting, many people think the less food you can eat, the better. (If you're in the same camp, [here's more](#) on why that approach doesn't work). Rifkin says her clients skip meals because they're too busy. Her answer? Find the time. "Wake up earlier, go to bed later, plan and prep your meals, bring workout clothes to work," she says. "Do whatever it takes to keep your commitment to yourself and your health."

Abbey Sharp, RD, couldn't agree more. Instead of eating in an overly restricted manner, Sharp suggests focusing on choosing high-quality, nutrient-dense foods rather than just looking at the calories. By substituting high-protein, high-fiber options for high-sugar, high-fat snacks, you'll naturally eat fewer calories without overdoing it or sacrificing nutrition, she says.

#### 4. THINKING SHORT-TERM

Angie Asche, MS, RD, says short-term [cleanse diets](#) are a huge mistake. "Weight regain is rapid after ending a seven- or 21-day cleanse, and fasting for too long can slow down metabolism, making it difficult to keep the weight off," she says. Her advice: Don't fall for the trendy diet fix or cleanse. Instead, stick to a diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and healthy unsaturated fats. Drink [plenty of water](#), cut back on [alcohol](#) and soda, and let your liver and kidneys do the cleansing!

#### 5. NOT TRACKING INTAKE

Dietitians know that not keeping track of your intake is a common weight-loss downfall. As most of you MyFitnessPal users already know, keeping a food log will not only keep you honest, it also provides a realistic picture of your overall intake. "Journaling keeps you accountable," says Sharon Palmer, RD. "It's easy to dismiss all of the food you consume in a day."

#### 6. OVEREATING HEALTHY FOODS

Lauren Harris-Pincus, MS, RDN, says her clients think that as long as they eat "clean" or organic, the calories don't count. "You can easily overdo healthy foods... nuts, seeds and dried fruit are all fantastic sources of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, but too many may equal too many pounds." Harris-Pincus recommends measuring out portions every time until you can eyeball the appropriate amount.

## 7. FOCUSING ONLY ON WEIGHT

“One of the biggest mistakes my clients make is to measure success only by the numbers on the scale,” says Bonnie Taub-Dix, MA, RD. “Not everyone drops pounds quickly, and success comes in many forms. Cutting portions, not snacking throughout the day, learning to say ‘no, thank you’ without feeling deprived, learning to say, ‘yes, thank you’ without guilt, and balancing out meals are *all* measures of success that take a lot of work and deserve applause.” She says positive self-talk and consistency when making sensible food decisions can fuel weight loss and self-esteem.