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HEALTH & FITNESS WEIGHT LOSS

19 Things All Twentysomethings Should Know About Weight Loss

Losing weight will never be as easy for you as it is right now.

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1. There are some parts of your body you can change and some parts you just need to learn to love. To some extent, your weight is something you can change by tweaking your diet and exercise habits. But you're pretty much stuck with your height, your body type, and the length of your limbs.

2. Quick fixes don't work. That goes for meal-replacement bars, juice cleanses, and every other fad diet a celebrity has ever sworn by. While these options may help you feel less puffy and bloated in the short term, they won't help you lose a significant amount of body fat. You just can't do that in a week or 10 days, no matter how much you cut back on food and increase your exercise, says Georgie Fear, registered dietitian and author of *Lean Habits for Lifelong Weight Loss*. And because weight loss shortcuts almost always involve extremely low-calorie diets, they're likely to end in binge-eating, which can make you gain back whatever weight you've lost (and then some).

If you're really short on time and determined to look slimmer, use the cash you'd otherwise spend on a cleanse or fad diet, and treat yourself to a contouring spray tan, an outfit that fits you well, and the right undergarments to complement your body.

3. Weight loss will never be as easy for you as it is right now. Everyone knows that the resting metabolism rate slows down as you age. If you think you could stand to lose a few pounds (here are some signs you need to), procrastinating for years will only make things more difficult.

4. A diet that worked for your friend won't necessarily work for you. Your one friend's uber-low calorie diet might leave you hangry, while your other friend's high-protein diet might contain more calories than you need. Everyone has different needs based on their metabolism and activity levels — and everyone's body responds differently to different diets.

5. You don't have to give up carbs to lose weight. Banning carbohydrate-rich foods only will only work if it helps you eat less overall, Fear says. But if you love fresh fruit, bread, and pasta, a low-carbohydrate diet is just going to make you miserable — especially if you're extra active, because you need those carbs for fuel. Instead of demonizing an entire food group, choose the right carbs — like starchy vegetables and whole grains, which provide fiber to keep you full — and give it about 25 percent of the real estate on your plate. Fill the other 75 percent with veggies and lean protein and you're good to go.

6. Sleep is the lazy girl's secret to weight loss. Getting at least seven hours of sleep every night doesn't just leave you with less time to graze, it helps you manage your appetite the next day, Fear explains. Just one late night or extra-early morning can immediately mess with your hunger hormones in a way that makes sends you straight toward high-calorie foods.

Moreover, lack of sleep is linked to poor performance — you won't get as much out of your workout if you arrive at the gym feeling completely exhausted, says **Franci Cohen, an exercise physiologist, certified nutritionist, and founder of the Brooklyn, New York-based Fuel Fitness.**

7. It's OK to let your body feel hunger. Some women are downright afraid of hunger, so they eat constantly to prevent it, telling themselves their habits keep the metabolism moving and prevent their muscles from wasting away. But the truth is, eating before you're hungry can lead you to eat too many calories. Your best bet? Commit to feeling hunger for a half hour or so before each time you eat, Fear suggests. This can help you produce a sustainable energy deficit, without making you completely miserable.

8. Gluten probably isn't making you fat.

Neither are sugars or genetically modified foods. For most people, the real problem is the quantity of whatever food it's trendy to hate on, Fear says. But avoiding one particular ingredient probably won't make the pounds fall off. If you really want to lose weight, there's something else you should avoid: overeating.

9. It's incredibly difficult to lose weight without changing your diet. No matter how many hours you spend at the gym, you will consume calories much faster than you can possibly burn them.

10. Sometimes eating more can help you lose weight. Doubling up on non-starchy vegetables (like leafy greens and crudités) fills you up without packing in tons of calories, which leaves less room for calorically dense junk and reduces the risk of a hunger-induced binge.

11. Eating less dietary fat won't make you less fat. It's true that dietary fat contains more calories than carbohydrates and protein, bite for bite — and everyone knows that overdoing it on calories can result in weight gain. But chances are, it's not the healthy fats in the olive oil or avocado you toss in your salad that make weight loss a challenge, according to Fear. (FWIW, healthy fats take longer for your body to digest, which promotes longer-lasting satiation and helps you eat less overall.) The real culprit is unhealthy saturated and trans fats found in your third slice of greasy pizza, bacon cheeseburger, and that XXL order of fries. The fats found in these foods ultimately stoke your appetite for even more high-calorie grub, sending you down a slippery slope toward weight gain.

12. Your thyroid probably isn't making you fat. It's tempting to blame excess weight on health problems like a hormonal imbalance or bad genes. While some very real health issues can cause weight gain in some people, chances are your weight is a direct reflection of your eating and exercise habits. The more time you spend in denial, the longer you'll be unhappy with your body — and unhealthy. If you suddenly gain weight without making any major changes to your diet or fitness routine, and without starting up any new medications, this could be a sign that your body is out of whack. Otherwise, your choices are probably responsible, and it's within your power to make some positive changes.

13. If you're a heavy drinker, changing nothing but your alcohol intake can help you lose weight, Fear says. Just because wine bottles aren't labeled with nutrition facts doesn't mean those calories don't count — they add up:

It's why cutting back a couple of nights a week can amount to measurable weight loss.

14. You have more than enough time to work out. If you can't find the time now — when it's likely that your only responsibility is to get yourself to and from work, and maybe pay the rent — you're pretty much screwed. Do you really think that you'll develop better habits down the road when you have kids or a higher-powered job and Real Adult Things to take care of?

15. Increasing the intensity of your workouts can help you lose more weight without spending more time at the gym.

Instead, Cohen says, you can increase the number of calories you burn in the time allotted by using one of these strategies to make almost any exercise more efficient: move faster; add an incline; increase your load by holding weights; upgrade to a heavier weight; stand on an unstable surface to challenge your balance.

16. The best fitness classes for weight loss involve high-intensity cardio. Even better is cardio that incorporates weights:

A barre or Pilates or yoga class won't burn as many calories as hardcore, sweat-your-ass-off cardio, Cohen says, so those classes won't help you lose weight quite as quickly. (Try these tips to maximize your workout for weight loss.)

17. You don't need to belong to a gym to lose weight. The "I don't have the money to join a gym" excuse is the oldest one in the book — and it won't help you reach your weight loss goals any faster. What will: Equipment-free workouts you can do anywhere (which you can find for free online).

18. Doing the same workout over and over might boost your confidence, but it won't necessarily change the number on the scale. While mastering one workout routine might make you feel like a fitness boss, the key to weight loss is mixing it up. That's because every time you challenge your body in a new way, it has to work extra hard to keep up — which means you burn more calories in the process. So the more you vary your workouts, the more progress you're likely to see in a shorter amount of time.

19. You can be healthy at (almost) any weight. So try not to harp on the numbers. If you ace your physical, you're not prohibited from doing the things you want to do because of your size, and you're happy with your body, then you don't need a scale to tell you that your weight is perfect.