



**DROP THE  
HABITS**

**Drop the  
Pounds**

When it comes to losing weight, the most important factor is dropping bad habits. Then, when it comes to keeping the weight off, the most important factor is replacing those bad habits with good habits.

Since we rely on food to survive, eating is a natural habit that we don't often pay close enough attention to. In fact, most times we focus on the simple *act of eating*, when we really should be focusing on *what and how we eat*.

There are 5 common bad habits that can not only prevent you from losing weight, but can actually contribute to weight gain. The vast majority of people have at least one of these bad habits, if not more, and if you're not consciously paying attention, you may not even know that you're practicing these bad habits every day.

## **Bad Habit:** Not Eating Frequently Enough

Most people only have 1-3 meals a day instead of the recommended 5-7 smaller meals.

Not eating enough frequent small meals can lead to food binging that negatively affects your weight and fitness goals.

Eating 5-7 smaller meals a day gives your body time to digest the food intake instead of overloading it with too much food to metabolize. Eating 5 to 7 smaller meals, 3 hours apart jump starts your metabolism and allows you to stay full throughout the day.

### **Smart Health Tip:**

Plan and prepare your meals in advance. This will prevent you from being tempted to grab something fast while on the go.

## Bad Habit: Eating Out Too Frequently

You should cook at home for the majority of your meals and leave dining out for special occasions. Most restaurant menus have few healthy options and you can never be 100% positive on what the meal includes since you didn't cook it yourself.

Fast food should be avoided at all costs because of its extremely low nutritional value.

Plan your meals for the week and do your grocery shopping accordingly.

When you do dine out, don't be afraid to make special requests. For example, ask that foods be served with minimal butter, margarine, or oil. Ask if a particular dish can be broiled or baked rather than fried. Also, ask that no additional salt be added to your food.

You may also be able to make substitutions. A common substitution is a baked potato for fries, or a double serving of vegetables instead of a starch. If the ingredients are on the menu, the chef should be able to accommodate your needs.

If your dish does not arrive at the table the way you ordered it, don't be afraid to send it back. If you don't see something you like, ask for it. As a paying customer, you have the right to eat not only what tastes good, but what's good for you. Be weight assertive!

### Smart Health Tip:

Make better choices when dining out by asking the server about the details of the meal, including:

- How is this dish prepared?
- Can it be modified?
- What ingredients are used?
- Do you have any low-fat or low-calorie options?
- What comes with this meal?
- Can I make substitutions?
- How large are the portions?

## **Bad Habit:** Late Night Eating

This is a BIGGIE! Eating snacks or meals late at night is very common because it's convenient, especially for those who are always on the go. With busy schedules, it's easy to skip a meal or put it off until later when you have more time. This leads to snacking or eating a meal late at night which is when your metabolism is starting to wind down for the day.

Eating a full meal and going to bed is not good for weight loss. You should avoid eating late at night, especially carbohydrates which are much harder to burn, especially when your metabolism is "resting."

### **Smart Health Tip:**

If you're feeling hungry at a late night hour, choose a healthy option such as vegetables or lean protein to curb your appetite.

## **Bad Habit:** Not Drinking Enough Water

Water is a vital component to maintaining a healthy weight, metabolism and digestive system. Staying hydrated helps to keep your metabolism burning calories and also makes you feel full longer. Not drinking enough water can lead to fatigue, low energy, and weight gain.

You should be drinking half of your body weight in ounces of fluid daily. Consuming enough fluids with every meal will prevent you from overeating and consuming excess calories.

### **Smart Health Tip:**

Drink all of the water served to you at a restaurant, and when the first glass runs out, have the server refill your glass.

This will prevent you from drinking too much alcohol, and it will help your body flush out fattening stuff and other hidden gook from the restaurant meal.

## Bad Habit: Eating Too Much

One of the biggest contributing factors to the current obesity epidemic is oversized portions in the American diet. Not knowing the correct portion size for each meal will undoubtedly lead to overeating.

Become a master of portion size for each food group included in your meal. Most people eat more than they should because they simply aren't aware of accurate portion sizes necessary for their optimal weight and health. Being unaware of correct portion sizes also leads to not eating enough of the good, nutritious stuff. Educate yourself!

Avoid eating while you are doing another activity such as watching TV, working, or reading. Eating while doing other activities can lead to over eating since your attention is directed elsewhere and you are not aware of the portions you are consuming. To avoid this, measure out your portion sizes prior to cooking.

Make a commitment, right now, to make this year the healthiest, best year of your life!

### Smart Health Tip:

Use these visual references to help measure out portions:

- A serving of cooked meat, chicken or fish is like the palm of your hand, or about the size of a deck of cards.
- A serving of green salad is like an open-palmed hand.
- A serving of fruit or vegetable is like your fist, or about the size of a tennis ball.
- A serving of baked potato is the size of a baseball.
- An ounce of cheese is like your pointer and index fingers together, or about the size of four stacked dice.
- A serving of salad dressing is like your thumb.
- A 3-ounce hamburger patty is the size of a quart-size mayonnaise jar lid.