

Natural Weight Loss Secrets

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Table of Contents

PG 3: A Quick Overview

PG 6: Losing Weight Begins at Your Plate

PG 10: How to Shave Calories Through Exercise

PG 12: The Secret Third Factor

PG 13: What if You Hit a Plateau?

PG 14: Pulling it All Together

One day you wake up and it hits you like a ton of bricks: you need to lose weight. You're tired, dumpy and your favorite clothes don't fit any more. You may even feel a little disgusted when you look in the mirror.

Rationally you know this weight didn't come on over night. It took months, perhaps years for you to put the fat on. And yet when you reach your limit and decide you want to do something about it, you want it off NOW. No, make that yesterday.

Now here's the problem: the faster you lose the weight, the more likely it is that you'll be just losing "weight" and not fat. That means you're losing water, muscle, and other tissue. Sure, some of the weight you lose is fat – but not all of it. And that means that even though the scale says you're losing, you actually don't look better. You may even slightly shrink in size, but you'll become even more "lumpy" looking because the weight you're losing is muscle and not fat.

When this happens, you become "skinny fat." Sure, you're smaller. But you wouldn't be caught dead in a tank top much less a bathing suit. When you wave, your arms get left jiggling. You have enough fat hanging on you that your belly looks like a bed sheet flapping in the wind.

In other words, it's not pretty.

Besides being unattractive, losing all your muscle is also contradictory to your weight loss goals. You see, it takes far more calories per day just to maintain a pound of muscle versus a pound of fat. Indeed, you can consider muscle "active" tissue in that it needs calories to sustain itself.

That means that the more muscle you have, the more calories you're burning all day long. And of course the flip side of that is that the less muscle you have, the fewer calories you're burning ...and hence the less you can eat before you start gaining weight.

One problem with crash diets and fad diets is that people lose weight so quickly that they're losing muscle. Suddenly their metabolism drops like a ton of bricks because they no longer have that muscle to sustain. Losing muscle means your metabolism goes from a roaring furnace to a flickering candle.

Indeed, many experts suggest that one reason that people's metabolism tends to drop as they get older is because they are losing their muscle. Suddenly they can't eat like they did when they were younger, because now they gain weight when they do so.

By now you're probably getting a pretty good idea of why you should seek to lose fat while still maintaining your calorie-burning, shapely muscle!

So what's the solution if you want the best of both worlds? That is, what do you do when you absolutely need to lose weight fast ...and yet your goal is to lose the ugly fat and not your sleek muscle? In this report you'll discover how to keep your muscle and transform your body into a new shapelier, sexier you – quickly and easily.

Let's get started...

A Quick Overview

Strip away all the silly fad diets, and those that work boil down to one basic premise: weight loss and gain are a function of calories in versus calories out. That means if you eat more calories in a day than you expend, you gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than your body needs to function, it dips into your fat stores and you lose weight.

If you're looking to lose weight, there are only two ways for you to tweak this formula. Either you can eat less, or you can increase your activity levels so that your body needs more calories to function. Ideally you should do both. That is, decrease your calories a bit, and increase your daily activity.

Naturally that raises the question: how much less do you eat, and how much more activity do you inject into your day? To answer that, let's take a look at some basic math.

A pound of fat is roughly composed of 3500 calories. That means if you eat 3500 more calories than you need to maintain a steady body weight, you gain a pound of fat. The flip side is if you eat 3500 fewer calories than your maintenance level, you lose a pound (which hopefully will be fat versus merely water and muscle tissue).

Naturally it would be impossible (and unhealthy) for you to attempt to lose too much too quickly. So instead what you do is decide how much you can safely lose per week. For example, if you're just a little over weight, you can lose about a pound or two a week. If you're moderately to grossly overweight, you'll be able to lose fat much more quickly.

Let's suppose you wanted to lose one pound per week. That means you'd need to intake 3500 less calories over the week (and/or increase your activity level). Over a week, that's only a mere 500 calories per day (seven days times 500 calories per day equals 3500 calories in a week).

When you create a 500 calorie deficit each day through fewer calories and more exercise, you lose one pound. To reach this 500 less calories per day mark, you can take in approximately 250 fewer calories per day, and exercise enough to burn off the other 250 calories. Simple, right?

If you wanted to lose two pounds this week, you'd just double those figures. In that case you'd need to expend about 500 calories through exercise per day, and take in about 500 fewer calories so that you're at a 1000 calorie per day deficit. Again, simple.

At this point you may be wondering what exactly is your maintenance level. That is, how many calories does your body need each day to function? Obviously this is a useful figure to know, since it's from this maintenance level that you start subtracting calories through diet and exercise.

There are some fairly complex equations that allow you to get an estimate of your maintenance calories based on your height, weight, body fat percentage, gender, and activity level. For example, a 25 year old male with an active job (such as construction worker) will need far more calories per day to maintain his body weight as opposed to a 55 year old sedentary woman.

A quick and dirty way to figure out your maintenance calories is to estimate that 15 times your body weight in pounds is roughly equal to your maintenance calories, and 10 to 12 times your body weight in pounds is the number of calories you need to lose weight.

For example, if you're 200 pounds, that means to maintain your weight you need to eat roughly 3000 calories per day ($15 \times 200 = 3000$). To lose weight, you'd eat between 2000 and 2400 calories per day.

An even better way to discover your daily maintenance calories is to spend a week or two tracking them yourself. That means that every day you write down exactly what you eat – measure it if necessary to determine true calorie values – and at the end of a week see if you've lost, gained, or maintained weight. Once you figure out how many calories you need to consistently maintain your current weight, then all you need to do is create your calorie deficit as described above.

Now let's look at the specific diet and exercise requirements to create that calorie deficit...

Losing Weight Begins at Your Plate

We've already mentioned that the bare-bones formula is that if you take in less calories per day than you need, you'll dip into your fat stores and start losing weight. However, in order to maintain your muscle mass and stay healthy, it's not quite as simple as calories in versus calories out.

If it really were that simple, you could eat Snickers candy bars all day and still lose weight, as long as ate below your maintenance level. While you will undoubtedly lose weight doing that, of course the "weight" you lose is the wrong kind – like your muscle. So to avoid that, let's learn what we should be eating to ensure our weight loss is fat.

The best thing you can do for your health and for your weight loss goals is to eat as close to nature as possible. That means decreasing if not completely avoiding packaged foods, processed foods, and foods that have all sorts of added ingredients and preservatives.

This especially includes added sugar, which is one of the most important things you can eliminate from your diet. The reason is because sugar causes your blood sugar levels to spike, which sends a signal to your body to start storing fat if you've eaten any excess calories.

The other reason is because while sugar may give you a quick boost in energy, you'll just as quickly hit a big "crash." If you've ever felt sleepy an hour or two after eating, you'll know what I'm talking about. If you work to start eliminating sugar from your diet, you'll find your energy will stabilize, so you'll be on an even keel all day long. No more roller coaster energy rides with boosts followed by tiring crashes.

Eating close to nature means you choose a fresh chicken breast and skip the frozen, breaded chicken patties. You choose brown (natural) rice over processed white ("minute") rice. You choose steel cut oats over a regular or sweetened cereal. You choose an orange over a glass of concentrated orange juice. You choose natural peanut butter over regular peanut butter that includes preservatives, salt, sugar and other ingredients.

You get the idea.

You should also drink close to nature. Of course water is one of the best things you can drink, as it helps your body reduce bloating (which is water retention), and helps it keep in tip-top shape. People are always looking for a magic pill to take to help them lose weight, and oddly enough water is about as close to "magic" as you'll come. When you're thoroughly hydrated, your body has an easier time flushing the fat out of its fat stores and getting rid of it for good.

Whenever possible, avoid caffeine as it's a diuretic which dehydrates you. Also avoid alcohol, which tends to send calories to your fat stores until your body has metabolized the alcohol. And of course avoid drinks that have sugar added, since as sweetened juices and soda.

If you're a coffee drinker, you may consider drinking green tea in place of coffee. The reason is because green tea is thought to have some positive effects on weight loss. It's also full of anti-oxidants, which helps eliminate the free radicals in your system.

We've mentioned that you should eat as close to nature as possible. But what sorts of foods should you be eating?

For best results, choose meals that are a roughly a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats. If you find that you're not losing as much weight as you like, you may experiment by changing the balance. For example, you may try deriving roughly 40% of your calories from good carbs, 40% from protein, and 20% of your calories from healthy fats.

Good carbs include foods like steel-cut or rolled oats, yams, sweet potatoes, potatoes, natural brown rice, whole wheat bread, Ezekiel ("sprouted") bread, vegetables, and fruits.

Good protein sources include milk, cheese, whey, lean cuts of red meat such as round steak, tuna and other fish, chicken, pork, lamb, bison, and other similar sources of protein.

Healthy fats (omega 3, omega 6 and omega 9) can be found in nuts (such as almonds, walnuts, peanuts, etc), seeds (e.g., sunflower and flax seeds), nut butters such as peanut butter, certain oils like vegetable oil or flax oil, fish oils, and similar.

Note: *Don't buy into the "low fat" or no fat diets. Healthy fats are called EFA's or essential fatty acids because your body needs them to survive. Indeed, getting enough healthy fats in your diet (while avoiding the bad fats like fried foods) can help you lose weight, increase your good cholesterol while decreasing the bad cholesterol, and a whole host of other healthy benefits.*

Indeed, EFA supplementation has been linked to positive effects in all sorts of ailments, from improvements in asthma to arthritis. The American Heart Association recommends that you supplement with fish oil for a healthy heart.

So what does a balanced meal or snack look like? You might have a chicken breast for your protein, broccoli for your good carbs, and a handful of almonds for your essential fatty acids. Or maybe you decide to have a natural peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread and a glass of milk.

In other words, be sure that each meal you eat includes a good carb, a good fat, and a good protein source.

The next thing you should do is eat smaller, more frequent meals during the day as opposed to eating three big meals. For example, you may want to eat anywhere from five to seven small meals per day.

Let's suppose you're aiming to eat 2000 calories per day, and you want to eat five meals per day. That means you should create five meals worth 400 calories each. If you want to eat six meals, then create meals that are worth about 330 calories each.

For example, let's suppose you wanted to create a 400 calorie meal. You might eat a chicken breast (100 calories), a side of brown rice (100 calories), a salad or some mixed greens (100 calories), and a handful of nuts (100 calories). In this particular meal you get more carbs than fats or protein, so you may adjust the next meal accordingly, or adjust this meal to bring the nutrients roughly into balance.

So why eat so often? Eating several smaller meals per day not only keeps your energy levels stable, it also keeps your metabolism firing. Every time you eat your metabolism spikes. So if you eat six small meals per day instead of three big meals, you spike your metabolism six times per day and thus you're burning more calories!

Here are a few more nutrition tips:

- **Cook ahead and put your meals in the refrigerator or freezer.** For example, cook up enough chicken breast and brown rice to last you all week long, put the desired amount on plates, and grab a plate whenever it's meal time. You can also take them to work so you don't end up going out for fast food or eating something you shouldn't.
- **Go ahead and "cheat" for either one or two meals per week, or for an entire day** (provided you don't go overboard). That means feed your cravings without guilt, whether it's Kentucky Fried Chicken you're craving, a cocktail drink, or a candy bar.

Just as eating one healthy meal per week doesn't make you healthy if your eating habits are otherwise poor, eating one or two unhealthy

meals per week won't "ruin" your healthy diet. Indeed, it may even be good for you! Psychologically you'll feel better and be ready to return to healthy eating after you've satisfied your weekly cravings. But some people suggest that it's also beneficial in that this indulgence may boost your metabolism ...or at the very least, keep your body guessing so you get back on the path to fat burning!

- **Start a food journal** where you record everything you eat, right down to the after dinner mint. Just being aware of what goes in your mouth each day can be an extremely effective tool to help you lose weight. Knowledge is power!

Note, however, that you may initially need to measure your food. For example, you may find that the "serving" of meat or pasta you've been eating is actually two or three servings worth of food. Eyeballing the portions won't help if you really have no idea what size is considered a normal portion. Spend a few weeks measuring everything, and soon you'll be able to do a better job estimating your portion sizes.

- **You don't need to make every dietary change at once.** In fact, you shouldn't do that or you're likely to get overwhelmed, or perhaps your weight loss will stall (e.g., you'll hit a plateau).

Instead, make a positive change every week. For example, start by reducing your soda intake and increasing your water intake. Next week focus on eating closer to nature. The week after, work to start cutting sugar out of your diet. And so on, working every week to add a positive change.

In this way you gradually change your diet and continually make walk towards a healthier lifestyle. If you do it all at once, it's easy to get frustrated and fall back to your old habits. But do it bit by bit, and you'll find it much easier ...and your new habits will "stick" with you. That means you're more likely to hit your goal weight in less time!

- **Protein is the building block** that helps you both build and retain muscle. To aid your body in burning fat rather than muscle, be sure to eat plenty of protein! Some experts recommend that people who lift weights should eat about one gram per pound of body weight per day. So if you're 200 pounds and lifting weights, shoot for 200 grams of protein per day.

Hint: take the total amount of protein you need per day and divide it by the number of meals you'll be eating. That gives you an idea of how much protein you need to eat per meal. If you're having troubles getting in the suggested amount of protein per day, you may

supplement with whey protein shakes. Avoid any whey that includes high calories, fat, or sugar. Optimum Nutrition's 100% Whey Protein (chocolate) is a good choice.

How to Shave Calories Through Exercise

If the thought of exercising makes you cringe, chances are you've spent some time pounding a treadmill day after day until you grew bored. Take heart! Exercise doesn't have to be boring, and it doesn't have to mean spending hours upon hours exercising. Indeed, more isn't always better.

Think about it for a moment. Have you ever been a regular member of a gym? Think back to the "cardio bunnies." These are people – typically women – who spend day after day on treadmills, ellipticals, stationary bikes and other cardio equipment. Many of them go at it for at least an hour or more per day.

And yet nothing changes. They're soft – skinny fat if you will. They might initially lose some size (because they're losing muscle, not fat), but soon they even stop losing any weight at all. Cardio king Richard Simmons is a good illustration of a cardio enthusiast whose physique never improves despite countless hours doing cardio.

The problem with people like Richard Simmons, marathon runners, and your neighborhood cardio bunnies is that they do too much. The body adapts to any activity you throw at it, and this is especially true if you teach your body that it will have to accept long bouts of slow, steady-state cardio. It reserves its fat stores and instead eats away at the muscle. After all, slow cardio doesn't require much muscle.

Now think of a sprinter. Usually she's muscular and sleek -- slim with very little fat. Because she's trained her body to expect short bursts of intense activity, the body has kept the muscle and shed the fat in order to perform this activity optimally.

What does this mean to you? No more marathon cardio sessions. Instead, you can lose fat by doing short bursts of activity if you choose. Indeed, this activity even has a name: high intensity interval training, or HIIT.

The premise of HIIT is simple. You choose any activity where you can vary the intensity level. Then you do a short burst of the activity at 100% effort, followed by an active recovery period where you slow your pace (but don't stop).

For example, if you're on foot you may run as fast as you can for 50 yards, and then walk 50 yards. Or you may run as fast as you can for 30 seconds, and then walk for 30 seconds. Whichever type of interval you choose is fine. Then you complete 7 to 12 of these intervals, so your session only lasts 12 to 20 minutes. Be sure to thoroughly warm up and cool down.

Keep in mind that during the high intensity phase of your interval, you should be giving 100%. When you start the beginning of the recovery period of the interval, you should be winded and fatigued. In other words, you should be very grateful for the "rest!" When you're all finished with your intervals, you should be absolutely exhausted. If someone asked you to go on a mile walk with them, you would likely decline because you're tired.

Because these HIIT sessions are so intense, you don't want to do these every day. Your best bet is to do approximately two or three per week, with days of "steady state" cardio or weight lifting in between. For example, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday you can do 30 to 45 minutes of steady-state cardio (e.g., walking, biking, swimming, skating, etc) or weight training, and on Tuesday and Thursday you can do HIIT sessions.

If you've never lifted weights before, visit your local gym and hire a trainer for a few sessions. He or she can show you how to choose the correct weight, what exercises to do, and how to do them for best results.

In general, you should look at compound lifts that use the large muscles in your body, such as the bench press, squats, military press, weighted lunges, bent over rows, etc. You should choose weights that you can only comfortably lift 8-12 times in a row before your muscles fatigue.

Note for the Ladies: *There's a myth that lifting weights will make you big. That's totally false. The only women who get big lifting weights not only eat a large amount of food and spend a large amount of time in the gym, they also take steroids. Without the use of illegal substances, you simply cannot get big.*

Instead, you will actually get shapelier and smaller as muscle is less dense than fat. Think about some of the most firm- looking actresses you see in movies and on TV. They got that way by lifting heavy weights.

In short: skip the lightweight pink and blue dumb bells, because they won't do a thing for you.

Whatever schedule you decide on, your best bet is to keep your body guessing. If you do the same thing every day, your body adapts and your progress will stall. So mix things up – play basketball, go skating, go hiking, run hills, go biking, use the cardio equipment at your gym, etc. In short, get your heart rate up several times per week for at least 20 minutes per session.

When you're lifting weights, keep your body guessing by adding repetitions, sets and/or weights to your lifts each week. In other words, work towards constantly progressing.

If you develop a mixed schedule of steady state cardio (which burns fat), HIIT (which burns calories while preserving muscle), and weight training (which maintains and builds muscle), you'll not only lose fat, you'll also keep your muscle and boost your metabolism!

The Secret Third Factor

We've discussed how to change your nutritional and exercise habits for maximum fat loss and muscle retention. But there's one secret factor many people neglect – and yet it's this factor that could very well make or break your weight loss program goals.

What is that factor? Getting adequate rest.

More and more research studies are beginning to link lack of sleep and rest with being overweight. Even at a basic level, if you're not getting enough sleep you're going to feel stressed out. When you're stressed, your body releases stress hormones, which in turn cause your body to hoard fat.

When you get enough sleep, it helps regulate your response to stress. End result? No more stubbornly holding onto the fat.

But that's not all. If you're trying to build muscle (and this should be a goal for both men and women), your muscles won't grow unless you rest. You see, muscles aren't built in the gym. The gym is where you tear your muscles down. It's at night in bed when you're resting that your muscles repair themselves and grow. If you don't get enough sleep, you can bet your muscles won't grow at their optimal rate.

Getting enough sleep and rest doesn't just mean that you get at least eight hours every night. It also means that you need to have a complete day or two of rest from each week from all physical activity. This is especially true when you're doing high intensity exercises like HIIT sessions and weight lifting. Your body needs to recover, and only a full day or two of rest per week allows it to do so.

Lack of rest in the midst of a tough exercise schedule that includes HIIT and weight training can also lead to over training. Over training symptoms include irritability, depression, feeling “on edge”, feeling fatigued, and similar. The physical symptoms include lack of progress (such as improved cardio health or better lifts) and lack of weight loss (if that’s your goal), more time needed to recover between weight-lifting or exercise sessions, being more prone to injury, and similar.

If you schedule in at least a full day of rest each week, and several days to a week of rest every six to ten weeks, you won’t have any problems with over training.

What if You Hit a Plateau?

Your body is remarkably adept at adapting to any diet or exercise program you give it. It was built to survive – which includes doing things like holding onto fat stores in times of famine -- so sometimes it adapts by holding onto those fat stores. Plus if you cut your calories too far, it may think you’re starving, and hold yet harder onto your fat.

End result? You hit the dreaded plateau. If you’re lucky progress will have just temporarily slowed a bit for a week, and then you get back on track. But chances are, you’ll likely spend a few weeks without any visible progress. And if you don’t change things up, you may sit on your plateau long enough for you to get discouraged and quit your new lifestyle.

The trick to breaking through plateaus and completely avoiding plateaus? Keep your body guessing! We’ve already talked about how you shouldn’t do the same exercise every day. But this also extends to your eating habits. Not only should you avoid eating the same thing day after day, you should also give your body different calorie amounts each day, and perhaps differing amounts of fat, carbs, and protein.

For example, let’s say your goal is to eat roughly 2000 calories each day. If you eat 2000 calories each and every day for weeks on end, your body begins to expect that number of calories, it adapts, and your progress stalls.

A better way to do it is to enjoy an overall average of 2000 calories per day, but each individual day is different. For example, one day you may eat 2500 calories, another day you may eat 1500 calories, the next day 1800, and so on.

Zig zagging your calories keeps your body guessing. This is why having a cheat meal (and sometimes a cheat day) rarely hurts your progress, and can actually

help it. Indeed, if you hit plateau, one way to break it is to take a few days off and eat whatever you want. This technique tends to jump start your progress because your body doesn't know what's coming next!

Another way to keep your body guessing is to keep the daily calories roughly the same, but change the sources of those calories. And the best way to do it is to change the number of carbs you eat per day. Just as you zig-zag calories, you can also zig-zag your carbs by having days where you eat a high number of carbs, some where you eat a medium number of carbs, and a few low carb days thrown in per week.

Add these zig-zagging dietary changes to a constantly fresh exercise schedule, and you'll likely completely avoid ever hitting a plateau!

Pulling it All Together

Eat well, exercise regularly, and rest – that's the simple formula for good health and easy weight loss. It sounds easy, right? But we all know that old habits die hard. That is, it's very easy to slowly but surely backslide right back to your unhealthy lifestyle. That means you'll also likely put all the weight back on, and probably more.

So what's the solution? First off, you need to find a way to keep motivated. Ideally you need to find an emotional reason that will get you out of bed in the morning to exercise, and one that will hold you through those times when all you can think of is going on a week-long fast food binge.

Even if the reason you want to lose weight seems a bit vain, if it's an important reason to you that's all that matters. For example, a short-term motivator like an upcoming reunion may seem like a vain reason to get in shape. But if you can maintain your habits after the reunion – perhaps by finding another emotional reason to continue – then it really doesn't matter if others would think it's vain or not.

A second way to keep yourself motivated is to keep a journal. On the day you begin your new lifestyle, take pictures of yourself in a bathing suit, along with measurements (chest, waist, hips, thighs, and arms), your weight, and your body fat percentage (you can buy body fat calipers for about \$20 at a fitness store). Then every week take new pictures and measurements to track your progress.

Sometimes you look in the mirror and don't see the changes every week, but you'll see them when you look at the pictures and your statistics! This is a great motivator to keep you on track.

Finally, another great way to stay motivated is to be held accountable by someone else. It's hard to avoid exercise and eating right when you know someone is going to ask you if you did it. It's even harder to avoid it if you find someone to exercise with you, because if you don't show up to your exercise session, you let them down!

If you don't have someone local to hold you accountable, then get online and find support on fitness forums. Offer to lead a month-long weight loss challenge (you'll feel like you're really being held accountable if you lead a group).

Above all, keep reminding yourself of why you're doing it. Post pics of your former fat self on your mirror to keep from backsliding. Buy jeans one size too small to give you a motivator to keep losing weight. And remember: nothing tastes as good as being slim and sexy feels!

Recommended Resources

[Best Weight Loss Program](#)

[Best Fat Burning Program](#)

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