

6 rules that make any diet

SUCCEED



Lose weight and stay slim for life with our easy-to-follow expert tips

By Karen Evennett

You could cut down on calories, go low fat, or reduce your carbs – however you choose to diet, chances are you'll lose some weight in the short term. But to keep that weight off forever, you need to change the way you think as well as the way you eat. Try these six rules for weight loss that really lasts



RULE 1...

Question your motives

Think hard. What is your reason for wanting to lose weight and keep it off? "Unless you have a goal that you really care about, you'll lack sufficient motivation to reach it," says Behaviour Change Psychologist, Dr Aria Campbell-Danesh (dr-aria.com).

TRY List the gains you'll make from losing weight – and the losses if you don't. Examples could be enjoying better health and being more active with your family.

RULE 2...

Never say you're on a diet

Ban the D word from your vocabulary. A diet suggests something with a beginning, middle, and – dangerously – an end. "Don't think about this as a period of hardship that you have to get through," says Paul Gibson, a Harley Street weight loss and addiction specialist (www.zoeclews-hypnotherapy.co.uk). "Choose a way of eating that you think is sustainable long term with a good balance of fresh fruit and vegetables, lean protein and wholegrain carbohydrates."

TRY to visualise how you'll look and feel once you reach your goal weight. Bring this positive image to mind to help you make healthier eating choices. This can be really helpful if you tend to give in to temptation and ruin your hard work.

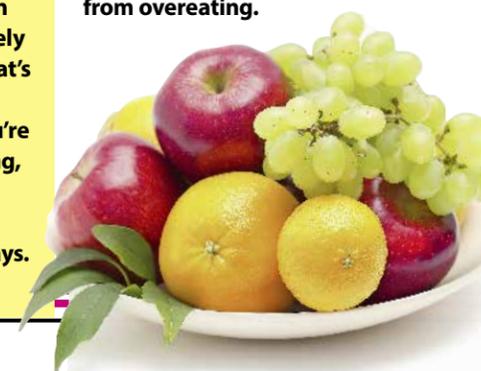


RULE 4...

Make more time for food

Give every meal or snack your full attention. Don't eat standing up, on the move, or in front of the telly. "We make hundreds of decisions about eating every day, and 90 per cent of these are made without conscious awareness," says Dr Aria. "You may swallow a handful of crisps or snaffle a biscuit just because there's an open packet on your kitchen counter – and not because you're hungry."

TRY to keep your kitchen surfaces clear of any food other than a bowl of fruit. If you're treating yourself, pour out a portion of crisps, or put a biscuit on a plate, and sit down to eat them. Eating mindfully like this will help your brain to register that you've fed yourself, and stop you from overeating.



RULE 3...

Tune into hunger

"Stop fearing famine and instead get to accept hunger as a natural sensation," says Dr Aria. Use a scale of one (so exhausted by hunger that you're unable to eat) to ten (so full that you can't even look at food). Aim to eat when you're around three or four on the scale, and stop at six or seven.

TRY Wait at least 20 minutes before helping yourself to seconds – this is how long it takes for signals of true hunger to reach your brain. "Eating to try to get rid of an emotion rarely works. If that's the kind of hunger you're experiencing, a short brisk walk will have more effect," he says.



RULE 5...

Monitor your progress

Weigh yourself regularly – it's proven to keep weight loss on track. Research has shown that people who monitor their weight loss make more progress than those who don't. "But remember that bodyweight on its own is not a true reflection of fat loss," says Paul Gibson. "As muscle replaces fat your weight may not change."



TRY taking regular photos and using a tape measure and you'll see how you're continuing to get leaner – even if the scale doesn't move.

RULE 6...

Ride the plateau

That point when weight loss slows down is a cue to step up the amount of exercise you take. "Your metabolism is designed to slow down as it adjusts to you eating fewer calories, but exercise will rev it up," explains Dr Aria. "Don't try to do anything you won't be able to keep up. Ideally start with a little more of what you're already doing – walking your dog for example."

TRY extending that walk by five or ten minutes and add in a bit of a hill to build more muscle (muscle burns fat). Add in a weekly yoga or a resistance class and it will soon become routine, giving you the confidence and desire to do more."



DON'T GIVE UP

Don't beat yourself up for having a 'bad' day – but don't use it as an excuse to carry on eating whatever you like, either. People who seem 'naturally slim' know how to enjoy chocolate, cheese, cake and wine – as occasional treats. Ask family and friends to support you when you decide not to drink wine or eat pudding when you're out. It's unhelpful if they treat you like a party pooper.