

What It Takes to Lose It All

Diet and Weight Loss Tutorial

For those planning to attend their class reunion next month, we recognize the need to crash diet with total disregard for health and long-term results. For all others, crash dieting is totally unacceptable. Even if you are headed off to Hawaii and want to look great in your bikini, forget about crash dieting. You won't have the energy to enjoy your vacation.

A good diet may serve you well while you learn to take better care of yourself, but a crash diet will only set you up for failure. *The faster you lose weight the more likely you are to put it back on.*

Aren't you really more interested in long-term results? Most diets trumpet fast weight loss to get your attention and your \$\$\$\$. But if you lost only a pound a week, that would be 52 pounds a year. Isn't that enough? *The slower you lose weight the more likely you are to keep it off.*

Spiraling Down to Crash and Burn

Crash diets are called crash diets because they cause you to lose weight quickly. But perhaps a better reason would be because a crash diet will eventually "crash and burn." Most diets are designed to have you lose a great deal of weight in the beginning to encourage you. But what you lose is mostly water and muscle. The water comes right back when you eat salty (processed) foods again, and losing muscle creates a much greater problem. Losing more than a pound or two a week can not only be unhealthy, but it will very likely cause you to lose muscle along with the fat. This is bad because muscle is a metabolically active tissue, which means that your body burns calories just to sustain it. Thus losing muscle results in a lower metabolism, the rate at which you burn calories.

With your metabolism running slower and slower, you have to eat less and less to lose weight. And it just keeps getting worse. If you continue to lose weight too quickly for a few days, your body thinks that you are threatened with starvation and goes into survival mode. Wanting you to eat more, your mind tricks you into thinking you are even more hungry than you are, making it all the more difficult to stay on your diet. And your metabolism is slowed even further to conserve energy. What it tries to conserve is your fat stores, and any weight loss comes at the expense of more muscle. Finally, you get discouraged, give up, and start eating like you used to. But now, with your slower metabolism, you quickly regain the weight you lost. And if you continue eating like you used to, you end up weighing even more than you did when you started the diet!

Your Goal Should Not Be to Lose Weight

The goal of your diet and weight loss plan should not be to lose weight, but to lose body fat. Exercise, in particular weight bearing exercise that builds muscle, will help prevent muscle loss and keep your metabolism from slowing. It's also necessary to eat [nutritious](#), well-balanced meals in order to maintain muscle and support all the bodily functions necessary for weight loss. But the most important factor in any weight loss plan is how many calories you consume each day, and eating too few is the most common mistake. In the next group of topics, Making Calculations, you will see how some common formulas categorize your current weight and suggest what might be an ideal weight. You will then learn how to use the calculators to determine your calorie requirements to maintain your current weight. And from this figure you can calculate an appropriate calorie deficit.

Creating a Calorie Deficit

To lose weight, you need to create a calorie deficit. This simply means that you need to eat fewer calories than you burn. In his book [Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle](#), Tom Venuto suggest a calorie deficit of 15-20%. This should be small enough to avoid the starvation response and any significant muscle loss. For example, if you are currently eating 2500 calories a day, or if you calculate that to be the amount required to maintain your current weight, you could create a calorie deficit of 15% by eating 375 fewer calories a day. Or you could burn 375 more calories a day, or combine eating less with burning more to achieve the 375 calorie deficit.

$$2500 \times .15 = 375$$

Remember that as you lose weight and activity becomes easier, you will burn fewer calories performing the same activities. Because of this, it will be necessary to eat less and/or become more active if you wish to maintain the same daily calorie deficit and rate of weight loss. Alternatively, you might do better to continue as you are and simply accept the fact that your rate of weight loss will slow as you approach your goal -- and rejoice in your progress.

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