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IMPACT Magazine

## Top Ten Weight-Loss Mistakes

Written by Suzie Robertson  
Monday, 05 January 2009 14:10

Been there, done that, and we're still too fat. Here's what we did wrong:

### 1 WE MEASURED SUCCESS BY THE POUND

Fat loss does not necessarily mean weight loss. Working out at the gym may lead to increasing muscle mass, which ultimately leads to weight gain—the good kind. "Changes in body weight reflect shifts in many different materials, not only fat but fluid, bone minerals and lean tissues such as muscles. This means that the loss of a pound does not always reflect fat, similarly the gain of a pound may not represent the gain of fat," said the authors of *Personal Nutrition*, a seminal textbook.



### 2 WE HAD AN UNREALISTIC BODY IMAGE

The "six pack abs" on magazine covers rarely exist in real life. Runners do not stride through the park with every muscle perfectly shaped and every curve accentuated. Those media images are generally created with a few swift strokes of a computer mouse. Set realistic body images, like looking or feeling close to what you believe was a fitter time in your life. Simple goals are easier and more gratifying.



### 3 WE BOUGHT DIET FOOD

"Fat-free foods and diet foods can be tricky: if you examine the package closely, you will often find that the calorie difference between the fat-free and the original version is very minimal. Why? When manufacturers take away the fat in a product, they add extras like sugar to improve the taste, thereby adding calories," said Beth Summersill Ehrensberger, a registered dietician in "Making Sense of Fat in Your Diet" at healthcastle.com. The grocery aisles are full of one-hundred-calorie snack bites and fat-free granola bars full of sugar and chemicals. While tasty, these provide mostly empty calories that do not fuel your body. Choose healthy nutritious snacks instead. Fruit or vegetables are loaded with energy, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

### 4 WE THOUGHT CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE ALONE WOULD GET 'ER DONE

A well-planned circuit involving a combination of cardiovascular exercise and strength training is more efficient for weight loss than sixty minutes on the treadmill. Building lean body mass is important to losing weight and increases the resting metabolism. "Muscle mass naturally diminishes with age. If you don't do anything to replace the lean muscle you lose, you'll increase the percentage of fat in your body," says Edward Laskowski, M.D., a rehabilitation specialist at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, and co-director of the Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center. "But strength training can help you preserve and enhance your muscle mass—at any age."

### 5 WE DETOXED

The detox or cleanse is always popular in the New Year: you go through pain all week, with no coffee, no bread, no dairy, relying solely on lemon juice and water, etc. At the end you take that perfectly cleansed bowel and stomach and start all over eating the same way you did before. Doing a detox or cleanse is not a lasting answer. Micheal Picco, M.D., gastroenterologist with the Mayo Clinic, states, "There is no evidence that detox diets actually remove toxins from the body. Most ingested toxins are efficiently and effectively removed by the kidneys and liver and excreted in urine and stool." This is clearly not a long-term solution and could be harmful to your health.

### 6 WE EXERCISED MORE, BUT ATE LESS—HEY, THERE'S A DUMB IDEA!

Exercise burns calories, but we have to replace those lost calories with high-quality nutrients. Proper balanced nutrition includes meals made up of all the macronutrients that include proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. When you begin any exercise regime your body will require increased amounts of calories to deal with the increased demands placed on your system. Without adequate quality calories, we often find ourselves reaching for the wrong types of food, which hinders our training recovery and defeats us mentally. Immediately we feel we have "cheated" and that we have lost all the benefits that we were trying to gain from exercise.

### 7 WE LIVED ON SHAKES AND PROTEIN BARS

Protein shakes and meal replacement bars are often full of sugar and chemicals—not the best building blocks for recovery and repair. In order to rebuild and restore for the next training session our muscles do require protein and glucose; however, they also benefit from antioxidants, which help to deal with the inflammation. Foods that don't create a lot of insulin release are better for your metabolism and save your pancreas from added stress. Balanced meals offer more nutrition. Preparing your meals ahead of time and having three or four meals ready to go is the solution; then you can just grab them and go.

### 8 WE ATE MORE THAN FIVE HOURS APART

When you eat meals more than five hours apart your body responds by burning calories rather than breaking them down for energy. Your pancreas excretes more insulin, causing you to feel hungrier and to experience an inaccurate feeling of fullness. If you keep your body well fueled what comes in will be used for fuel and not stored as body fat. This also keeps your metabolism operating quickly. If you are eating enough well-timed meals and working out this will help improve the process of building lean body mass.

### 9 WE IGNORED QUALITY CARBOHYDRATES

Most people who want to lose weight avoid carbohydrates, but your body needs carbohydrates, as they are converted for energy. Without them, your metabolism will slow. If you want to lose weight, you need to eat enough of the right carbohydrates: whole grain pasta, brown or wild rice, quinoa, barley, sweet potatoes, in other words, the complex carbohydrates. As the American Diabetes Association states on their Web site www.eatright.org: "Carbohydrates are the main power source for your brain and muscles. Chosen wisely, carbohydrate-rich foods—whole and enriched grain foods, fruits, vegetables, beans—deliver more than energy. They also provide important vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients."

### 10 WE DIDN'T EAT ENOUGH

How many people still think that losing weight is about cutting calories? Yes, initially, if we eat less, we drop pounds. Some even experience ketosis, which is when your body is not getting enough fuel and starts to eat its own muscle, a very destructive process. Commonly, deprivation leads to bingeing on donuts and chips. We've all seen it. Hell, we've all done it. The answer is to fuel your body with proper balanced meals and snacks and to make health-conscious decisions. So far depleting our body of calories hasn't worked, and if hasn't worked yet, it's not going to.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Suzie Robertson resides in Calgary and is a certified nutrition and wellness consultant working with Simply For Life. Robertson competes in triathlons and competitive running and is currently training for her first marathon. When not running, you will find her teaching cycling classes for World Health Club or skiing with her husband Tyler.

Last Updated ( Saturday, 10 January 2009 15:49 )



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