

Weight-Loss Roadblocks

In theory, losing weight just takes eating less. In practice, lasting weight loss requires a realistic plan that suits your life and your taste buds. As you start, adjust your expectations and make the most of your effort. Listed below are common mistakes to avoid and better strategies for permanent weight loss.



Restricting entire food groups. **Best:** Get enough nutrients from all groups to protect your health and potentially lose more weight.

Eating too few calories. **Best:** Learn to count nutrients, not calories, and focus on portion control.

Not having a specific plan. **Best:** Identify small, attainable steps, such as fewer sweets, more vegetables and added walks. Having met those goals, after a week or so, add more goals.

Not tracking what you eat. **Best:** Monitor your food portions to be sure you're not eating more than you need to lose weight. Try using an online tracking site or app.

Not drinking enough water. **Best:** You may decrease your appetite by drinking water and eating water-rich vegetables throughout each day and before meals.

Sitting too much. **Best:** Keep moving. Simply walking more and doing physical chores can boost your metabolism, energy and motivation to succeed.

Unrealistic goals can lead to frustration and giving up altogether. Commit the time your body deserves to lose weight for good.



Looking forward to the holiday hoopla — or not? The extra demands can be challenging. To stay positive and enjoy yourself more, put your health at the top of your gift list.

Don't let the holidays tempt you to overindulge. Avoid mindlessly consuming sweet snacks and party food, as well as alcohol. Avoid super-sized portions. Eat slowly at festive occasions and recognize when you've had enough.

Don't skip exercise. A brisk walk may relieve stress, boost energy and aid sleep. Encourage others to join you.

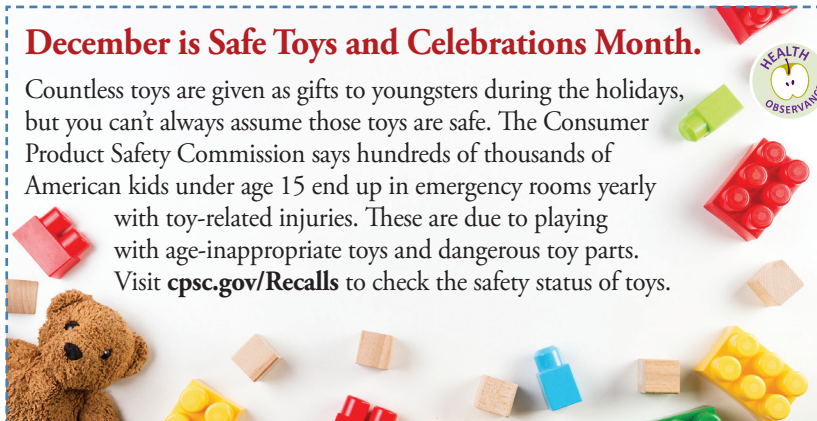
Deflect flu bugs. Whenever possible, avoid people who are obviously contagious, coughing and sneezing. Wash your hands often. And get a flu shot if you haven't already.

Unwind. Sitting quietly, close your eyes and allow each muscle group to loosen and relax, starting with your face, neck and shoulders with arms and hands loose at your side. Flatten your feet and feel your thighs sink into your chair. Breathe slowly and deeply.

Finally, break with holiday habits that no longer inspire you or choose simpler ones that strengthen the meaning of this special time for you.

December is Safe Toys and Celebrations Month.

Countless toys are given as gifts to youngsters during the holidays, but you can't always assume those toys are safe. The Consumer Product Safety Commission says hundreds of thousands of American kids under age 15 end up in emergency rooms yearly with toy-related injuries. These are due to playing with age-inappropriate toys and dangerous toy parts. Visit cpsc.gov/Recalls to check the safety status of toys.



Processed foods are everywhere.

So what are they?

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

When a whole food is altered or changed in some way, it undergoes a process or multiple processes. Foods processed several times and that contain added salt, sugar, trans fat, additives or preservatives are called ultra-processed foods, and are not as nutritious as whole or minimally processed foods. Examples of ultra-processed foods include sweetened breakfast cereals, chicken nuggets, hot dogs, fast food, soft drinks, candy, deli meat, salty snacks and baked goods.

If the food you're eating doesn't resemble anything that appears in nature, and contains added salt, sugar and/or preservatives, it's probably an ultra-processed food. Ingredients in ultra-processed foods are made from processed substances that used to be whole foods, such as hydrogenated oils, flours, starches, sugars and cheap parts of animal foods. Many ultra-processed foods are also convenient, ready-to-eat and tasty, which is why North Americans eat so much of them.

When you hear advice to cut back on processed foods, what it means is to cut back on these ultra-processed foods. Studies show that diets high in ultra-processed foods can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, digestive disorders, dementia and cancer. Unfortunately, the average American gets 58% of their daily calories from ultra-processed foods, most of them high in salt, sugar and/or fat.



The best advice?

Cook whole foods more often. The bulk of your diet should come from minimally processed vegetables, grains, legumes, fruits, nuts, meats, seafood, eggs and milk.



Life is a journey that must be traveled no matter how bad the roads and accommodations.

— Oliver Goldsmith



Winter-Weather Fit

Can't face chilly outdoor workouts? You may warm to the idea once you know the health benefits and how to best dress for comfort. Moderate to vigorous workouts in frigid temperatures can help you prevent weight gain and boost your metabolism, mood, energy, concentration and immunity.

Dress in layers to help maintain a healthy core temperature. Start with a thin synthetic (not cotton) layer; then fleece or wool for insulation; and top with a waterproof, breathable outer layer. Experiment to find the best clothing based on your exercise intensity. And protect your head, hands, ears and feet.

Check the forecast. A combination of wind and freezing can penetrate even the most protective clothing. Opt for indoor workouts when temperatures drop below 0°F.

Give yourself a chance to adapt. After a few sessions in the chilly outdoors and, as you enjoy the post-exercise benefits, you may find it suits you well.

Some chronic health conditions, such as asthma or heart problems, may be aggravated by cold-weather exercise, so check with your health care provider first.

Naps: Do They Work?

Naps, it turns out, aren't just for children. While a nap won't generally make up for inadequate nighttime sleep, a 20- to 30-minute nap can improve mood, alertness and performance, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF).

A third of American adults say they usually get fewer than the recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep at night, the CDC reports. If you are one of them, could napping help?

A NASA study found sleepy military pilots and astronauts on average were 34% better at their flight performance and 100% more alert after a 40-minute nap. Reduced fatigue, better memory and feeling more relaxed are also associated with naps, according to the Mayo Clinic.



But napping may not help everyone, the NSF points out. Potential negative effects include sleep inertia — feeling disoriented and groggy for up to half an hour after napping. Short naps don't affect night sleep for most people, but napping late in the day may adversely affect the quality and length of sleep at night.

Of course, napping at work is usually not possible, or appropriate. But if you work nights, napping during the day is essential. Keeping your bedroom quiet and hanging curtains that block out light can help.



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