

# 13 Things Experts Won't Tell You About Weight Loss

From surprising foods that release fat to why watching TV can be healthier than you think, we uncovered these shockingly simple weight loss secrets.



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## 1. You Have to Eat Fat to Beat Fat

While too much of the wrong fat (certain saturated fats in highly processed meats and trans fat found in some cookies and crackers) is bad for your health and waistline, a diet rich in the right fat—good unsaturated fats—can help both.

Good fats, like monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs) in olive oil, nuts, and avocados have proven to be powerful reducers of belly fat. Other sources of good fat are the polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs); found in fish and its oil, and in many nuts and seeds, PUFAs help release fat, too. A Dutch study found that consumption of PUFAs lead to a higher resting metabolic rate (the calories used just to live), as well as a greater DIT, or diet-induced calorie burn. PUFAs are also burned faster than saturated fats in the body.

What's more, fats help you feel full—they have 9 calories per gram compared to 4 for protein or carbs. So a small nibble of something yummy, like a handful of nuts or some peanut butter on whole wheat crackers, can help you feel full for hours.



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## 2. A Daily Dose of Chocolate Can Trim Your Waistline

If you're like us, you welcome any new excuse to add more chocolate into your life. To release fat, here's the trick: Go heavy on the cocoa and light on sugar. Cocoa contains more antioxidants than most foods and is good for so many things, including—when consumed in moderation—weight loss.

In a June 2011 study from the *Journal of Nutrition*, researchers looked at the effect that antioxidants found in cocoa had on obese diabetic mice. (Since a diabetic's lifespan is, on average, seven years shorter, they were looking for any antiaging promise that increasing dietary intake of this flavonoid might give.) Their findings: The mice lived longer. The cocoa reduced degeneration of their aortic arteries, and it blunted fat deposition.

To add more cocoa into your diet, buy unsweetened, *non-alkalized* cocoa and add it to shakes, coffee, and other recipes.



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### 3. Dairy Promotes Weight Loss

Unfortunately some myths persist that dairy sabotages weight loss, but science proves this couldn't be further from the truth. Research shows that those who have deficiencies in calcium hold a greater fat mass and experience less control of their appetite. What's more, studies have found that dairy sources of calcium—like yogurt, low- or nonfat cheese, and milk—are markedly more effective in accelerating fat loss than other sources.

In one study out of the University of Tennessee, researchers showed that eating three servings of dairy daily significantly reduced body fat in obese subjects. If they restricted calories a bit while continuing with the same dairy servings, it accelerated fat and weight loss.



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### 4. Losing Weight Early and Fast Is Best

Besides giving you a great psychological boost right out of the gate, losing weight quickly may also help you keep it off longer. To those of us who are used to hearing that slow and steady wins the race, this news is a little shocking and counterintuitive.

In a 2010 University of Florida study, when researchers analyzed data on 262 middle-aged women who were struggling with obesity, they demonstrated that shedding weight fast lead to larger overall weight loss and longer-term success in keeping it off.



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## 5. Exercise Alone Is Not an Effective Weight Loss Tool

I learned this lesson the hard way. From 1998 to 2006, I was the executive editor of *Fitness* magazine. Studying the fitness research and trying the trends were all part of my job. For years, I believed that I could eat anything I wanted because I was exercising so much. But the more I exercised, the hungrier I was. And the more I ate, the more I needed to exercise to maintain a healthy weight.

Here's what happened: I saw a steady increase in my body weight of a pound a year. Thinking you can eat whatever you want as long as you work it off later is actually a pretty dangerous mind-set, particularly if you look at the current research. Exercise alone leads to a very modest decrease in total body weight: less than 3 percent!



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## 6. The Difference Between Being Overweight and a Healthy Weight May Boil Down to Fidgeting

Research shows that people who are naturally lean—you know the sort: They seem to eat all day, whatever they want, and never gain a pound or an inch—automatically, even subconsciously, find ways to move to make up for any extra calories they may be ingesting.

Believe it or not, spontaneous physical activity (SPA) like fidgeting, bending, brushing your hair, doing dishes, etc. can burn 350 or more calories a day, according to Mayo Clinic research.



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## 7. Long Cardio Sessions Aren't Helping You Burn Fat

Nod your head if you do the same workout over and over. You just hit that treadmill, elliptical, or jogging path and you put in your time. Unfortunately, this exercise strategy can actually backfire when it comes to weight loss and fat burning.

Aerobic exercise demands that you increase your energy output. Because our body is always trying to stay in balance, this type of movement may actually act as a biological cue to make you eat more, which can sabotage weight-loss efforts.

Besides that, research shows that continuous aerobic exercise isn't nearly as effective a weight-control strategy as surprising your body with aerobic interval training (short bursts of heart-pounding work, also known as HIIT, or high intensity interval training) or strength training (push-ups, squats, anything that builds muscle and power).



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## 8. TV Time is OK—but Make It a Sitcom

We're not recommending you ditch your exercise routine and sit on your couch popping handfuls of chips. But TV isn't the weight loss devil that many experts make it out to be, particularly if you use it to make you smile and laugh.

Here's why: Stress takes an enormous toll on your health (research shows it can increase belly fat and slow down weight loss), and laughing is the perfect stress-relieving, fat releasing antidote.

What's more, it's a pretty potent calorie burner in its own right. When British researchers looked into

the number of calories burned by intense laughing and compared it to the calorie burn of other daily activities (strength training, running, even vacuuming), they found that an hour of intense laughter can burn as many calories—up to 120—as a half hour hitting it hard at the gym!



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## 9. The Real Reason You're Craving Junk Food? You're Thinking Too Hard!

If you're like many office workers, your desk job gives you a double fat increasing whammy: Not only are you sitting, inactive, at a desk for most of the day, but this type of mental, knowledge-based work actually makes it more difficult to control appetite and may make us eat more calories and fat.

Research suggests that because brain neurons rely almost exclusively on glucose as fuel, intense mental work leads to unstable glucose levels. Since the work requires glucose for maximum brainpower—well, we naturally reach for more fuel.

To outsmart this fat increaser, it's important to fuel up on hunger-fighting foods high in filling fiber, protein and calcium. So the next time you feel that hunger pang, reach for a fat-free Greek yogurt or baby carrots with a tablespoon of peanut butter instead of a bag of chips.



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## 10. A Daily Glass of Wine Is an Effective Fat Releaser

So many people have asked me if it's okay to have a drink when trying to lose weight. Good news: Many studies clearly show that a small glass of red wine a day is good for your health. Now numerous animal studies are highlighting its great promise as a fat releaser.

In one large study of more than 19,000 middle-aged women of normal weight, those who were light to moderate drinkers had less weight gain and less risk of becoming overweight than those who drank no alcohol. And in another separate animal study done in 2006, the researchers found that resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant found in red wine, improved exercise endurance as well as protected against diet-induced obesity and insulin resistance, a precursor to diabetes.



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## 11. All Sugar Isn't Evil When It Comes to Weight Loss

It's no secret that America has a sugar problem: According to the American Heart Association, we eat 22 teaspoons a day on average. (They recommend six for women and nine for men.) While cutting back on sugar consumption all around is a smart, healthy move, you should also consider swapping some of your sugar for honey.

Honey has also shown great promise in animal studies for reducing weight gain and adiposity (fatness) when substituted for sugar. It's a nutritious fat releasing alternative that also boasts antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. It may improve blood sugar control, is a great cough suppressant, and it boosts immunity.



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## 12. Skimping on Sleep Can Negate Calorie Cutting

How long you sleep directly affects your body mass. One study found that dieters who got 8 1/2 hours of sleep nightly lost 56 percent more body fat than they did when eating the same diet but got just 5 1/2 hours of sleep a night. Other Columbia University research revealed that people may eat 300 extra calories a day when they get a few hours less sleep than usual.

Sleep deprivation interferes with the hormones leptin and ghrelin that regulate appetite. That means you'll feel hungrier and are more likely to indulge in poorer eating behaviors. Also, you may look for more energy in the form of unhealthy snacks!



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## **13. Your Secret Weight Loss Weapon May be a Good HEPA Air Filter**

More and more research reveals that the toxins, chemicals, and compounds riddling our food supply and self-care products are contributing to the nation's collective fat creep.

And air pollution is a particularly bad fat increaser. A 2011 study from the College of Public Health at Ohio State University found just that: Exposure to fine particulate matter (air pollution) induced insulin resistance, reduced glucose tolerance, and increased inflammation, leading researchers to mark long-term exposure to air pollution as a risk factor for diabetes. And as we know, diabetes and obesity are close cousins (80 to 85 percent of those diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes are obese).

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