

Ten Ways to Start/Resume a Low Calorie Diet

- 1) **Be Realistic.** If weight loss is your goal, don't set yourself up for disappointment or health problems by setting unrealistic goals. This should be a positive experience, so start with small, achievable goals. For lasting weight control, aim to lose no more than two pounds per week. Crash dieting is bad for you! Among other things, it will ultimately slow down your metabolism, making it difficult to shed pounds as your body typically goes into preservation or 'starvation' mode when you don't consume enough food.
- 2) **Clean out your kitchen/pantry!** High calorie leftovers and goodies such as cookies, cakes, full-fat cheeses and other full-fat dairy products should be tossed out! Cast out seasonal candies and treats, too. Remember, you can only prepare and eat the foods you have readily available. You can't polish off a package of cookies if they aren't there!
- 3) **Restock your refrigerator and pantry with healthy, wholesome ingredients.** Start fresh and new. Refer to [the low calorie kitchen](#) article for guidance on stocking up on low calorie snacks, as well as healthful staples for quick meals. Substitute low calorie and light products for their high calorie counterparts (see [basic ingredient substitutions](#)). Buy whole grain pastas, breads, and cereals; and keep plenty of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables on hand. For more ideas, read [low calorie versions of your favorites](#).
- 4) **Slowly cut back on excess calories.** Start by monitoring your portion sizes. Portions (and plates) have grown so much that we don't recognize what a standard serving is or looks like anymore (according to the [United States Department of Agriculture \[USDA\]](#)). Always read nutrition fact panels as food packages often contain *two* servings but the nutritional analysis label refers to *one* serving. Become familiar enough with standard serving sizes to be able to 'eyeball it' and use smaller plates for meals.
- 5) **Minimize your fat *and* empty calorie intake.** Doing this can and will drastically decrease the amount of calories you take in. Why? Each gram of fat equals 9 calories, whereas each gram of protein or carbohydrate equals 4 calories (less than half). Also cut back on "empty" calories. Refer to [what are empty calories](#) for more information. Small changes make a big difference. Swap your 12 ounce can of soda with sparkling water and you've just lost 1 pound per month!
- 6) **Always eat breakfast.** Wait – put down those pastries! A *good* breakfast jump starts your metabolism and sustains you until lunchtime, keeping your blood sugar steady. Ninety-five percent of those that are most successful at losing weight are breakfast eaters. In addition, noshing on a nutritious breakfast gives you the opportunity to start the day right, filling up on premium fuel, such as vitamin and mineral-rich whole grains, low or non-fat dairy products, and fresh fruit.
- 7) **Drink lots and lots of water.** Our bodies are made up of approximately 60% water. It's essential for life, proper digestion, and hundreds of functions and processes within the human body. In addition, water can replace empty calorie drinks (such as soda) and help us feel fuller for longer. It is possible to confuse thirst for hunger, so keep a bottle of water handy and sip it throughout the day.
- 8) **Replace at least one meat dish with a vegetarian meal weekly *AND* eat fish at least once a week.** I mean a *healthful*, well-balanced vegetarian meal. Check out some of our yummy [vegetarian recipes](#). How about a delicious veggie-filled egg white omelet with low-fat cheese? Also, fish (such as salmon) is naturally low in fat, and contains high levels of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids (good fats).
- 9) **Eat healthy snacks.** When you need to munch on something to tide you over between meals, reach for nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit, light yogurt, graham crackers, baked pita chips with salsa, or raw veggies. An occasional brownie or piece of dark chocolate is not forbidden! Just remember that these are treats, not everyday snacks, and *you* control what is in your kitchen and pantry now!
- 10) **Get moving.** Diet is only one component of a healthful lifestyle. Healthy eating's essential counterpart is physical activity. We all need to stay active and burn calories by engaging in regular exercise. You don't have to 'feel the burn' 7 days a week or become a weight-lifter to reap the benefits of exercise. Start out slowly. How about a brisk 30-minute walk or hike with your neighbor? Setting realistic goals and choosing activities you enjoy will keep you motivated. Consult your physician before starting an exercise regime (especially if you are currently inactive).