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As with all programmes, techniques and materials related to health, exercise and diet, you must first consult your doctor, physician or healthcare provider before implementing changes into your lifestyle. If you choose not to obtain a doctor’s approval prior to beginning this or any diet and exercise plan, you do so at your own risk.

The information offered within this book is intended for adults, aged 18 and over, who are in good health. Even if you have no known health problems, it is advisable to consult your doctor before beginning a weight loss programme.

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Cover design by Ovi Dagar
Interior images courtesy of istockphoto.com
Research & editing by Phil Davies BSc., CSCS, CPT
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INTRODUCTION

Weight loss. It’s a confusing issue, isn’t it?

Bookstores devote entire sections to diet plans. Health food stores are crammed with the latest slimming aids. The pages of magazines are littered with enticing ads promising the “ultimate weight loss solution”. And our TVs and radios seem to announce a new fitness craze on an almost daily basis.

Clever marketing can make even the most ridiculous and unappealing approach sound convincing, and all the while medical experts seem to be warning us about something else that is potentially harmful.

Add the World Wide Web and its sheer volume of information into the mix, and it’s no wonder that most of us are left completely perplexed when it comes to losing those extra pounds. What happens when we’re confused about what to do? We usually do nothing at all.

Of course, the moment you do settle on a programme to help you achieve your weight loss goals, it doesn’t take long before somebody, somewhere, offers up a very persuasive case as to why you are completely wasting your time and should try a different approach.

Here is just a small selection of claims you may have come across before (we’ll examine later on which ones, if any, have some truth to them):

- Certain foods are fattening while others are fat burning
- Eating at certain times during the day will force your body to store the meal as excess fat
- Fruit is fattening and should only be eaten on an empty stomach
- Weight training changes your body composition so you burn more calories even while you sleep
- Some people just have naturally slow and naturally fast metabolisms
- To lose weight you must only eat low GI foods
- High protein diets are the most effective for losing weight
- Carbohydrates are bad for you
- You have to exercise in your fat burning zone to lose weight
- Shorts bouts of intense exercise (interval training) is best for losing weight
- You must drink at least 2-3 litres of water a day to be healthy
- Fish oil and omega fats will help you to lose weight
- You can eat whatever you like as long you do enough exercise
• Blaming genetics is just an excuse for lazy, greedy people

Claims like these usually leave people with more questions than answers. Fortunately, there is a way to selectively sift through the vast quantities of anecdotes, subjective opinion and marketing hype and arrive at what you can feel confident, are the facts.

The solution is to use reliable scientific research.

Science certainly doesn’t have all the answers. But when it comes to nutrition, exercise and fat loss, there are some tried and tested principles (most of which have remained steadfast for many years) that will enable you to achieve and maintain a body shape and a weight you can be proud of.

What’s With All The Numbers in [Brackets]?

You’ll notice that there a quite a few references throughout this guide depicted by a number in square brackets like this [0].

One of the big criticisms of a lot of weight loss books and magazine articles is that they often make very controversial, very broad sweeping claims without backing those claims up. There is no way for the reader to know whether it’s just the author’s opinion and how well educated that opinion is.

No doubt you’ve seen the countless number of diet books to appear in the bestsellers list over the years. If you’ve ever read one of these books you’ll know just how enticing they can be - even more so if you know of someone firsthand who has lost weight following the same plan.

But is it the diet’s strange array of foods eaten in strict combinations at unconventional times of the day, which make this plan effective? Or is it because, as a result of following this list of weird and wonderful guidelines, you are simply consuming fewer calories than you burn off?

You can have confidence that the recommendations in this guide are not just the opinion of one individual. They are based on sound science and they will
give you the greatest returns for your efforts – all without a single supplement to buy!

That doesn’t mean it won’t take discipline, especially in the early stages. However, you won’t have to battle with starvation or spend hours on end in the gym. Nor will you have to completely give up foods you enjoy.

**4 Steps to Success**

This guide has been broken down into four key steps. It’s best to read these steps in order as each one builds on the next.

**Step 1** is perhaps the most important and unfortunately the most overlooked. It will help you set a target, an overall goal, for your health and physical appearance. Even more crucially, it will help you devise a powerful set of reasons that will keep you on track from start to finish. Please don’t skip this section.

In **Step 2** you will discover how to create and follow a healthy, fat loss eating plan. It covers six key principles that can easily fit into your lifestyle. There is no calorie counting, point scoring or food weighing, but you will know exactly how, what and when to eat in order to burn fat.

**Step 3** shows you how to develop an exercise plan that fits your routine and your preferences. It also dispels some common myths surrounding the best type of exercise and how much you really need to do.

Knowing what to do and actually getting yourself to do it consistently are two very different things. **Step 4** will help make implementing your plan as easy as possible. The key to long-term success is to reach a point where a healthy lifestyle and a lean, fit body are as effortless to maintain as your current lifestyle.

Follow these 4 steps and you will lose that excess body fat. You will also improve your health, your physical appearance and your zest for life. Just as importantly, you will give yourself the greatest chance of maintaining this new you for many years to come.
STEP 1 – WHAT’S YOUR GOAL?

Being clear about what you want to achieve, and why, is an essential first step in an effective weight loss plan. Unfortunately, it’s one that is often overlooked or dismissed. Remember, that losing weight isn’t just about what to eat and how to exercise, it’s also about getting yourself to apply what you know consistently.

Self-discipline and will power will only take you so far. In order to overcome any potential pitfalls, temptations and ingrained bad habits, you need a clear goal to keep you focused and a powerful set of reasons to keep you on track.

Before you can set a suitable goal, it’s important to know what is realistic and achievable. From a health point of view, realistic weight loss is 1-2lbs per week or 5-10% of your current body weight over 6 months. However, ‘weight’ loss is not always a good target to reach for…

You probably already know that weight can be lost easily and quickly on very low calorie diets (also known as starvation diets!). Unfortunately, most of this weight loss is in the form of water, which has to be replenished sooner or later and you can actually end up heavier and fatter than when you started.

A better approach is to aim for fat loss rather than weight loss. Assume that realistic fat loss is 1-1.5lbs per week. As a general rule, unless you have a significant amount of weight to lose (several stone or more) use fat loss rather than weight loss when setting your goal.

Be SMART

One of the best ways to create your overall goal is to use the acronym SMART.

SMARTS goals are:

Specific
General goals such as “I want to lose some weight” are less effective and motivating than “I will lose excess body fat, increase my muscle tone and improve my appearance”. It’s a good idea to make part of your goal about successfully following your plan.
Measurable
You should be able to measure your goal. So rather than saying “I want to lose weight” a better goal is “I want to lose 7lbs of body fat”.

Attainable
You want to find a balance between what is realistic and what is inspiring. Realistic weight loss is 1-2lbs per week or 5-10% of your current body weight over 6 months. However, your goal should be to lose body fat, so aim for 0.5-1.5lbs of fat per week.

Relevant
Your goal should be meaningful to you. It should be about you and rely only on you. If you feel happy at the weight you are for example, but would like to tone and re-shape your body, then create a goal around that. Your goal should not rely on other people or outside influences to be successful, for example “I will lose more weight than my friend Sam over the next 8 weeks”.

Time-Sensitive
Give yourself a date by which time you will have achieved your goal. E.g. “I will lose 7lbs of fat by February 28th”. A good time frame is 6 to 12 weeks as this is long enough to see measurable changes but no so long it becomes daunting.

Lifestyle Choices, Right?
You may have heard the phrase “diets don’t work, it has to be a way of life”. That’s true but many people interpret that to mean “start eating healthy today and maintain it for the rest of your life”. That can be pretty demoralising and with that mindset it’s very easy to give up at the first hurdle or the first lapse in your plan. You justify to yourself that you can’t keep things up indefinitely so you might as well quit now.

But compare this to someone who decides to train for his or her first marathon. They have an end-goal in mind – the race date. If training gets tough one day or if they skip a session, they can muster the will power to carry on because they know it’s not forever. That’s why most people who make the decision to run a marathon usually achieve their goal despite it being so difficult.

So take it one step at a time. In other words, make a commitment to see your plan through to the end no matter what. Remind yourself that you have the
right to quit after the end date but, just like a marathon runner, you want that sense of accomplishment to look back on for many years to come.

Only when you reach your goal, should you decide what to do next. And because by then healthy choices will be more habitual, and because you will be experiencing first hand the pleasure transforming your body, you will be much more inclined and motivated to keep going. Then you can set a new goal and then another and another, until suddenly you realise that healthy choices and being trim has become “a way of life”.

Here are some examples of SMART goals.

“By September 7th, I lost 4lbs of body fat, decreased my waist size by 1 inch and improved my overall shape by following my eating and exercise plan consistently”

“Starting January 1st, I will begin my highly effective 8-week fat loss plan and I will lose over 7lbs of body fat in less than 12 weeks”

“Over the next 6 months I will follow an enjoyable exercise and nutrition plan. By July 1st I will lose 1.5 stone and reduce my LDL cholesterol to less than 3mmol/l.”

Reasons

No matter how much you plan ahead, inevitably there will be days and moments when you find it tough and perhaps even feel like quitting. So once you’ve created a SMART goal the next step is to create a set of compelling reasons that are moving and motivating and really mean something to you.

Your reasons should be more of a driving force than any sacrifice you choose to make or discipline you must keep.

You should come up with both ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ reasons. In other words, think of the pleasurable consequences of achieving your goal as well as the negative ones if you don’t. As with goal setting, try to be specific and relevant. For example, “Looking fabulous at my cousin’s wedding” is more specific than “Looking fabulous” and relevant if that’s an event in your diary.

To help you create your list, here are some sample reasons:
**Positive Reasons**
- I will be a great role model for my kids
- I will have more energy to do more things, learn new skills, travel more often
- I will feel more confident and self-assured
- I will look and feel younger and more attractive
- I will be more influential in my place of work
- I’ll need less sleep and feel better in the morning
- My concentration will improve and I’ll be more productive at work
- I will be able to play tennis with my son… and give him a game!
- If I achieve this it will inspire me to set bigger and better goals in other areas of my life
- Clothes will fit me better and I can treat myself to a new wardrobe
- I can inspire other people to do the same
- If I achieve this I’ll have the confidence to train for the a Marathon
- I want to look my best at my daughter’s wedding

**Negative Reasons**
- If I don’t do something I’m only going to put more and more weight on over time
- I will be a burden to my children and unable to enjoy my grandchildren
- I am putting myself at a high risk of serious illness
- I feel embarrassed when I go on holiday
- I’ve set so many New Year’s resolutions and never stuck to them. This time I’m determined to succeed and prove to myself I can do it.

**Make a Goal Collage**

Once you’ve written your SMART goal and backed it up with personal reasons, you may want to turn it into a “Goal Collage”. This is simple but powerful way to make it more tangible and visible.

A Goal Collage is a collection of images that represent what it is you want to achieve. The images don’t have to be logical as long as they mean something to you. You can cut pictures from magazines, print them off the Internet or even create simple drawings yourself. You can stick all the various images on to a piece of A3 paper or use a pin board. Or for a more private version you can put them into a folder.

Your collage does not have to be superb work of art – it just has to trigger an emotive response when you look at it. You should look at your Goal collage as often as possible – at least once a day – and dwell on what the different
images mean to you. Your Goal Collage can really help keep you on track during difficult periods on your plan.

Write your SMART goal in the middle of your collage and place pictures that represent your reasons around your goal.

Keeping your new goal in mind, it’s time to move on to…
The Essential Guide to Fat Loss

STEP 2 – CREATE YOUR FAT LOSS EATING PLAN

Before we look at what types of foods and what kind of nutrition plan will help you lose excess fat, we need to review a few basic biological laws. This will help you to understand why following certain diet and exercise principles will give you the greatest chance of long-term success.

The First Rule of Weight Loss

The laws of energy conservation say there is one, and only one, way to lose weight and you will have no doubt heard it countless times before:

*Consume less energy than you expend*

Or put another way: eat less food calories than the calories your body requires during day-to-day life.

On the surface this rule looks like a very straightforward one to follow. Clearly, with ever-rising levels of obesity and so many people struggling to maintain a healthy weight, there must be more to it.

Let’s take a closer look at what that might be…

Your Metabolic Rate

Our bodies need energy for everything, from carrying out basic bodily functions to exercising vigorously. The energy we need during complete rest just to stay alive on a daily basis is known as our resting metabolic rate [1].

Several factors affect our resting metabolic rates:

- Body composition: the more fat free mass (such as muscle) a person has, the higher their resting metabolism will be
- Gender: men typically have higher resting metabolisms than women due to more fat free mass
- Age: resting metabolism usually decreases with age due to a decrease in fat free mass
- Surface area and mass: the bigger you are, the more of you there is to keep alive and warm so the higher your metabolism will be
• Body temperature: an increase in temperature increases resting metabolism
• Stress: increases resting metabolism
• Hormones: the amount of certain hormones secreted from the thyroid and adrenal glands can increase or decrease resting metabolic rate

Under normal conditions, resting metabolic rate accounts for 60-75% of our total energy needs each day [2]. The rest of our energy needs come from our daily activities (from fidgeting to intense exercise) and also the energy needed to digest our food (called the thermic effect of food).

How To Lose Weight

In order to lose weight, we must consume less food calories than the calories needed for the three components in the chart above – our daily energy requirements.

But the human body is clever. If you consume fewer calories than normal for an extended period (when on a diet for example), your body can lower its resting metabolic rate, decrease the amount of energy needed to digest food and decrease the amount of calories you burn during activity. In other words, when you eat fewer calories, your body lowers its daily energy needs in an attempt to defend and maintain its current weight [1,2].
If you make only very small changes to your diet alone, the chances are you won’t see a change on the scales. The good news is however, that the body cannot fully compensate for significant changes to energy intake. That means that if you reduce your daily energy intake by a suitable amount (i.e. 500 calories a day), you will start to lose weight despite your body’s best attempts.

Alternatively, you can keep your diet and energy intake exactly the same and increase your daily energy requirements. You do this primarily by increasing the amount of exercise you perform, and as we’ll see later in Step 3, some types of exercise increase your energy requirements even after you’ve stopped working out.

Finally, you could take the best approach: reduce your energy intake through a suitable eating plan AND increase your energy output with a suitable exercise programme.
The rest of this section deals with reducing your daily energy intake through an effective nutrition plan. The key to eating effectively for fat loss is to reduce your caloric intake by an appropriate amount but in way that is still satisfying and does not lead to feelings of hunger.

Of course a good nutrition plan should not only be effective for weight loss, it should also be balanced and healthy…

The Balance of Good Health

The National Foods Standard Agency [3] has devised a simple way to eat a balanced and varied diet. It's called The Eat Well Plate and consists of five food groups on a plate. The plate is divided into different sized sections depending on how much of a food group should be eaten:

![Eat Well Plate]

According to The Balance of Good Health plate, about one third of your diet should come from fruits and vegetables. One third should be in the form of unrefined carbohydrates (such as bread, pasta, rice and potato), the remaining third is made up of fish, meat, dairy products and a small amount of sugary and fatty foods.

Whilst we will use The Balance of Good Health plate as our starting point, there is evidence to suggest that a few small changes to this can help to burn fat more efficiently. We'll cover these changes a little later in this section.

How Many Calories?

We’ve all heard of calorie counting and many of us have first hand experience of it from one time or another. Its aim is to strictly control the amount of food
we eat – not just the quantity but also the energy within our diet – so we can precisely balance our energy input and energy output.

The problem is that calorie counting is not an exact science. Even when weighing food, it’s difficult to measure energy intake precisely and we can only take a best guess at what our daily energy requirement are. And when left to estimating calorie intake, most people underestimate how much they are consuming [4].

More importantly, most people find it extremely tedious and complicated, so much so that they don’t stick to it for long. Instead, most people trying to lose weight would benefit from a more intuitive nutrition plan – a few simple guidelines to remember when choosing meals and snacks.

The following six guidelines will allow you to significantly reduce your calorie intake whilst maintaining a balanced and healthy diet. They will also ensure you feel satisfied so you don’t have to fight feelings of hunger and boredom.

6 Simple ‘Rules’ For an Effective Nutrition Plan

Rule #1 – Eat Frequent, Regular Meals

Eating frequently enough to keep you satisfied is an important part of successful, long-term weight control. Obviously, that doesn’t mean you should eat continuously, but neither should you skip breakfast nor wait all day before you eat.

You should aim to eat a minimum of 3 meals per day and a maximum of 3 meals plus 3 small snacks. It’s best if these are evenly spaced, but you certainly don’t have to eat at set times.

Some diets and weight loss ‘experts’ insist you must eat 6 small meals per day. There is a small amount of research to suggest eating frequent, small meals (called ‘grazing’) can improve weight loss [5]. However, most studies show that whether you choose to eat 3 square meals or 6 small meals a day, the only thing that matters is how much you eat in total [6,7,8].

You should choose the number of meals and / or snacks you eat based on which is better at controlling your appetite. If you tend to get very hungry
between meals and you discipline yourself not to eat anything, you could end making up for it, and then some, at the next meal.

Evidence suggests that 3 meals plus a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack are best for controlling appetite and ultimately, energy intake [9,10,11]

**Meal Timing**

“Don’t skip breakfast” and “never eat at night” is advice most of us have heard before. But is there any value in either of them? In fact, does the time of day when you chose to eat have any real bearing on your ability to lose weight?

Apparently, eating late in the day is sure-fire way to gain weight. The rationale goes that because our metabolisms slow when we sleep [12,13], we don’t burn off the food and it gets stored as fat. But this is like saying your car will burn less petrol if you fill it up in the evening because it sits on the drive overnight. In the end, it boils down to energy in versus energy out, regardless of when either of those occurs [14].

There is a caveat to this however. If eating late at night causes you to eat more overall, then it would be detrimental to your weight loss goals...

Eating in the morning hours has been shown to be more satiating (meaning it controls your appetite better) compared with eating in the evening [15,16]. Another way of putting this is that if you eat a something early on you will feel fuller and more satisfied compared with eating the same thing later on. In practical terms, people who eat breakfast, a mid-morning snack and lunch will probably eat less overall without even noticing it.

Here are some practical guidelines for improving the frequency and timing of your meals:

- Eat between 3 meals and 3 meals plus 3 snacks each day; whichever is enough to keep you feeling satisfied.
- Try to eat at regular intervals and at roughly the same time each day
- Eat breakfast and a mid-morning snack. You will be less likely to be hungry in the evening when are most likely to overeat.
- It’s okay to eat in the evening but be aware that this is when you are most vulnerable to overeating.
Rule #2 – Choose Predominantly Low Energy Density Foods

It’s not the amount, or the weight, of food that you eat that is important when trying to lose weight, it’s the energy contained within that food.

So it makes sense then, to eat foods that don’t contain great deals of energy but leave you feeling fuller for longer. Foods that contain relatively few calories per gram of their weight are referred to as low energy density foods.

Good examples of low energy density foods include fresh fruits and vegetables as well as starchy foods like pasta, rice and potatoes. It’s easy to work out the energy density from any food label – simply divide the number of calories by the weight. A 100-calorie serving (100Kcal) weighing 100 grams has an energy density of 1 for example.

- Very Low Energy Density = 0.5 or less
  Examples include fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Low Energy Density = 0.6 – 1.5
  Examples include starchy foods like rice and pasta (especially wholemeal), milk, yoghurt (but not Greek-style) and cottage cheese.

- Medium Energy Density = 1.6 – 4.0
  Examples include dried fruit, bread, low fat/half fat cheeses, eggs and many fat-free snacks.

- High Energy Density = 4.1 and above
  Examples include high fat and high sugar foods like pizzas and confectionary, most cheeses, cream, butter and oils.

By eating plenty of low energy density foods it’s possible to reduce caloric intake by 400 calories per day without feeling like you’ve eaten any less than usual [17].

With each meal, try to include plenty of vegetables and choose fruit as a starter or dessert. Even eating a slice or two of pizza (a high energy density food) is less detrimental if combined with extra vegetables or fruit for example. Why? Because with the pizza alone you are likely to feel hungry again in a short period of time causing you overeat at the next meal, or eat more frequently than you would otherwise.
Here are some other practical examples for reducing the energy density of your diet:

- Opt for wholemeal or high fibre versions of pasta, breads and cereals. These have been shown to keep you fuller for longer [18] and most people can’t tell the difference when a suitable sauce or filling is used.
- Instead of a large bowl of cereal, have a small bowl and add chopped up fresh fruit and low fat yoghurt.
- Always add grated vegetables or sliced tomatoes and cucumbers to sandwiches made with wholemeal bread.
- Add chopped mushrooms, peppers and onions to pasta sauces.
- Have a piece of fruit before lunch and dinner and with snacks throughout the day.
- Have a bowl of soup before main meals. Fresh soup is available in most work canteens and can significantly reduce your appetite and the amount you want to eat [19]. Just avoid the cream-based soups, which contain a lot of calories.

Some commercial diets suggest that drinking water before a meal suppresses appetite and reduces energy intake. While it does seem to reduce appetite it doesn’t appear to reduce energy intake in the same way that soup does [20].

With these simple changes you can still eat the foods you like but because you’ll feel fuller for longer you will eat less overall. You will also easily meet your 5 portions of fruit and veg a day, and with this kind of approach, you need never go hungry on a diet again!

**Rule #3 – Eat a Portion of Protein With Each Meal**

This rule is in contrast to The Balance of Health Plate promoted by the Foods Standards Agency, which recommends limiting our intake of protein sources such as meat, fish and dairy.

However, there is an increasing amount of research to suggest that diets with moderate to high intakes of protein outperform high carbohydrate diets when it comes to fat loss [21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31].

For example, one study compared a diet according to the American Heart Association’s guidelines (high carbohydrate) versus a high protein version.
Both sets of dieters were allowed to eat “ad libitum” or as much food as they wanted. The high-protein group consumed nearly 500 calories less per day and there was even more favourable blood lipid profiles seen with the high protein diet [24].

There are three reasons why a higher protein intake may be more favourable. Remember from earlier in this section how our metabolic rates decrease when we attempt to lose weight through restricting how much we eat? Increased protein intake seems to curb this fall in metabolic rate [25,26]. In practice this should make it easier to lose weight (or maintain it) without reducing energy intake further.

Secondly, protein appears to be more satiating than carbohydrate. In other words, even when high protein and low protein diets result in similar amounts of weight loss, the higher protein diet results in greater satisfaction and fewer bouts of hunger [27,31].

Whenever a weight loss programme is followed, inevitably some of the weight lost comes from healthy, lean muscle. This is something that even women should avoid and it seems that an increased protein intake helps to do just that. By eating adequate protein it preserves muscle tissue so that a greater percentage of weight loss comes from fat stores – not healthy muscle tissue [28,29,30].

Of course, all of this does not mean that carbohydrates are fattening or bad as some popular diet programmes imply. Carbohydrates are essential both for health and for creating a slim, attractive body.

By the same token, protein is not a magic pill and more is not necessarily better. Although the Institute of Medicine has altered its recommendations for protein intake based on current research, some diet plans go overboard.

Here are some practical guidelines for increasing your protein intake without being excessive:

- Eat a palm-sized portion of protein with each main meal. Foods rich in protein include fish, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt. Vegetarian alternative include tofu, Quorn, soy and nuts. Each portion should be roughly the size of your palm or clenched fist.
• Opt for low fat versions of protein. For example, cut the fat off meat, leave the skin off chicken and limit the number of egg yolks in a scrambled eggs.

• Try to eat some protein with each snack. Snack ideas include nuts such as almonds, cashews, peanuts etc. (go for uncooked and unsalted and not dry roasted) with raisins or low-fat yoghurt with a piece of fresh fruit. You can also readily buy high protein, low fat bars and shakes and while these aren’t essential, they have their place if used for now and then for convenience.

Rule #4 – Reduce Bad Fats, Increase Good Fats

There is no question that the easiest way to reduce the energy intake of your diet is to reduce the amount of fat you consume. Each gram of fat contains over twice as much energy as a gram of carbohydrate or protein.

But despite the widespread awareness of the dangers of too much dietary fat, there is still much confusion surrounding the topic. Not all fat is bad. We need it for insulation and protection of vital organs such as the heart, lungs and liver and to transport vitamins throughout the body.

Let's take a look at some practical ways to limit the bad fats and increase the good ones…

Saturated Fat

Saturated fats are found in foods such as red meat, egg yolks, cheese, butter, milk and commercially prepared cakes, pies and cookies. Considered to be a major cause of coronary heart disease, no more than 10% of the diet should come from saturated fats – much less than a typical western diet.

When is a particular food considered high or low in saturated fat?

**High:** more than 5g saturates per 100g  
**Low:** 1.5g saturates or less per 100g

Reduce saturated fat in your diet by:

• Cutting the fat off meat and removing the skin from chicken
The Essential Guide to Fat Loss

- Eating leaner proteins such as poultry, fish and lean beef and avoiding pork, duck, standard burgers and sausages etc. (low fat versions made from good quality meat are acceptable).
- Boiling, grilling, steaming and baking rather than frying and roasting.
- Using low fat spreads and dressings on sandwiches and salads.
- Opting for low fat dairy products such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk and low fat cheeses.
- Using yoghurt or fromage frais instead of cream or sour cream.

You don’t have to eliminate saturated fat from your diet and in fact, a small amount may actually aid long-term weight loss by making a diet more palatable [32].

Trans Fats

Trans fats are another form of ‘bad’ fat that may be more harmful than saturated fat. Trans fats are formed when liquid vegetable oils are turned into solid fats through the process of hydrogenation. If you minimise your consumption of foods containing saturated fats (such as pastry, fast food, biscuits and cakes) trans fats won’t be an issue.

Unsaturated Fats

 Unsaturated fats come in the form of monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats. Monounsaturated fats can actually improve cholesterol levels and lower the risk of coronary heart disease and are found in foods like olive oil, canola oil, avocados, almonds and pecans. Polyunsaturated fats, found in sunflower oil, safflower oil and corn oil are not thought to contribute to heart disease but don’t offer the same protection as monounsaturated fats.

Even though these types of fats can be considered healthy, you should avoid over-consuming them. Fat in any form is very high in energy, or calories and too much will slow down your weight loss efforts.

You will naturally replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats by:

- Choosing oily fish such as salmon and mackerel instead of fatty meats.
- Using unsaturated oils such as olive, rapeseed and sunflower oil instead of butter, lard and ghee.
- Using mashed avocado as a dip or filling for a jacket potato instead of mayonnaise or cream cheese.
- Making mashed potatoes with olive oil, a touch of garlic and seasoning instead of butter and milk.
- Snacking on uncooked, unsalted nuts instead of biscuits.
- Choosing fruit or healthy option desserts instead of cakes, puddings and pastries. Note: not all low fat foods are healthy or low in energy. Compare food labels to see what the energy (kcal) per 100g is.

**Essential Fats**

Essential fatty acids are a class of polyunsaturated fats that have received a lot of attention in the media. Generally speaking, there are two types of essential fatty acids – Omega-3 and Omega-6.

Essential fatty acids are required for a healthy cardiovascular, reproductive, immune, and nervous system as well as healthy skin, hair and bones. A typical western diet tends to have too much Omega-6, particularly in relation to Omega-3, and this imbalance contributes to long-term diseases such as heart disease, cancer, asthma, and arthritis [33].

There is convincing research to show that increasing our intakes of Omega-3 can improve cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, prevent clogged arteries, improve diabetes, improve arthritis, prevent osteoporosis and help with a number of other ailments [33].

But what about losing weight and burning fat?

There is some research to suggest Omega-3 can boost fat loss by increasing fat metabolism during rest and exercise [46,47]. However, the research is limited at this time and there is no need to gulp down fish oil supplements every day. Eating 1-3 portions of oily fish, such as salmon or mackerel, per week is ideal for overall health.

**Rule #5 – Reduce Sugary Snacks, Alcohol & Salt**

Many people trying to lose weight are fixated on their fat intake. However, there are two other types of food that can hamper your efforts – sugary snacks and alcohol. Don’t worry, you don’t have to deny your sweet tooth or become teetotal in order to lose weight, but there are some simple changes you can make to help you achieve your goals…
Sugary Snacks

Examples of these foods include chocolate, cakes, sweets and sugary drinks such as soda and fruit juice. Although the carbohydrate in these sugary foods contains only half as much energy as fat, these foods tend to have a low satiety index [18].

The satiety index simple measures how satisfying a food is. Foods with a low satiety index leave you feeling hungry soon after you’ve eaten. Foods with a high satiety index have the opposite effect, leaving your feeling fuller for longer.

Concentrated sugary foods will supply you with lots of calories but you will likely want to eat soon after. If your diet consists of lots of sugary snacks and drinks the chances are you will feel the need to eat more than your body needs. In that situation it becomes very difficult to lose fat.

When is a food high in sugar?

- **High**: more than 15g sugars per 100g
- **Low**: 5g sugars or less per 100g

Here are some tips for reducing sugary snacks in your diet:

- Replace most cakes, biscuits and sweets with fresh and dried fruit. Although fresh and dried fruit is sweet, it has a high satiety index.
- Choose water, or flavoured water instead of fizzy drinks and fruit juice. Fresh fruit juice is not unhealthy but it is quite energy dense. As long as you are eating 5 portions of fruit and veg a day it may be best to limit fruit juice when trying to lose weight.
- Beware of low fat diet products. Some of these are very high in sugar and while they may contain less calories you may end up eating more each day because they don’t leave you feeling full.

Keep in mind, that sugar and sugary foods are not fattening per se. The only cause of weight gain is eating too many calories, regardless of where those calories come from. The problem is that lots of sugar makes it difficult for you to be diligent because it isn’t particularly satisfying.

There is no need to eliminate sugary snacks and studies show that as long as you keep your overall energy intake in check, they don’t hinder weight loss [34,35]
Alcohol

Many people believe that calories from alcohol are automatically stored as fat. It is true that alcohol can’t be used by the body as a fuel for energy, but relatively little gets stored as fat. However, too much alcohol can make it very difficult to lose fat...

Firstly, alcohol appears to increase our appetites causing us to eat more at a meal that includes a drink [36,37]. Secondly, it also limits the body’s ability to burn fat [38,39] and finally, it seems to have a negative effect on lean muscle mass [40]. As we’ll discover in the next section, some lean muscle tissue, even in women, is very beneficial for burning fat.

There is no need to abstain from alcohol but when on a fat loss programme you should try to limit it as much as possible and perhaps avoid drinking just before eating or with your meals.

Salt

The majority of men and women eat too much salt even though they may not add a great deal to their cooking and meals. Three quarters of our salt consumption is already in the food we eat such as ready meals, cereals and soups. Too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

When is a food high in salt?

**High:** more than 1.5g salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium)
**Low:** 0.3g salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)

If you follow the other guidelines in this guide, you will naturally cut down your salt intake. Here are some more tips for reducing salt in your diet:

- Don’t add salt to water when boiling rice, pasta and potatoes.
- Don’t automatically add salt to your meals – taste it first.
- Choose low salt versions of foods like baked beans, soy sauce and other condiments.
- Avoid cured, pickled and smoked foods.
- Choose tinned fish in spring water rather than brine when possible.
Water

Water has received a lot of attention in the last few years. Celebrities swear by it and it seems that everyone is telling us to drink more of it. But just how much water do we need and role does it play in losing weight?

According to a report published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, we need between 2.2 and 2.9 litres (9-12 cups) of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic fluids each day [41]. However, these fluids can come from drinks other than water and also water-rich food.

According to several studies, well-hydrated cells seem to be more efficient at burning fat [42,43,44] however, the intravenous techniques used to hydrate individuals being tested would be difficult to replicate just by drinking more water. Drinking cold water can increase your metabolic rate as your body expends energy to heat it up [45].

The bottom line is that drinking more water is probably an important goal for most people but it may or may not have some small effect on weight loss.

Rule #6 - Lapses Can Be Good!

There is no question that, at times, your fat loss programme will seem difficult to follow. And despite being diligent 80 to 90% of the time, it’s the occasional lapse that we focus on and beat ourselves over the head with.

It could be a social occasion, a bad day at work or that you’ve simply run out of healthy food in your kitchen – whatever the reason there’s a good chance you will have the odd lapse or two during your plan.

But it’s not how few lapses you have that will determine your success; it’s how you react to those lapses after they have occurred. Successful weight loss is about the things you do most of the time.

In fact, deliberately planning in some ‘cheat meals’ per week may actually increase your chances of success – especially long term. You can coincide these with social occasions or times when you know it will be difficult to eat healthily.

Here are some recommendations regarding cheat meals:
• Plan 1 or 2 cheat meals during the week.
• Try to make them the last meal of the day. A cheat meal may turn into a cheat day if you eat early on.
• The very best time to eat a cheat meal is just after exercising, although this isn’t always practical.
• Do not feel guilty when eating a cheat meal. Remind yourself it’s actually going to help you.
• By the same token, don’t use cheat meals as an incentive or reward.

Sample Meal Plans

With these 6 ‘rules’ to hand let’s look at some sample menus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENU 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Lunch**         | Tuna salad sandwich on wholemeal bread  
|                   | Piece of fruit  |
| **Snack**         | Apple           |
| **Dinner**        | Grilled chicken breast  
|                   | Vegetable rice  |
|                   | Yoghurt with fruit |

The food options are reasonably healthy and this menu would certainly be low enough to lose weight. However, there will be too few calories and even if a diet like this could be sustained it would lead to as much lean muscle loss as fat loss.

Skipping meals in the morning would make it highly likely that sooner or later overeating would occur in the evening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MENU 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snack</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Lunch**         | Beans on white toast, no butter  
|                   | Diet coke                      |
| **Snack**         | Piece of fruit  
|                   | Packet of low fat crisps      |
| **Dinner**        | Low fat lasagne  
|                   | Yoghurt                       |

This menu is actually very low in fat and low in calories. However, it is lacking in low energy density foods that will leave you full without the high calorie cost.

Corn flakes could be substituted for a high fibre cereal with some fresh or dried fruit added. Wholemeal bread could be used instead of white.

Vegetables, a salad or vegetable soup could be eaten at lunch and a jacket potato could be substituted for the toast at lunch.
### MENU 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Banana, porridge with honey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Low fat bran muffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>2 wholemeal pitas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avocado, mixed beans &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tomato filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Bag of mixed dried fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glass of fresh orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Wholemeal pasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomato sauce with chopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peppers, mushrooms and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>asparagus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thick slice of ciabatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>drizzled with olive oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a lot of plus points in this menu. It includes breakfast and regular meals. It’s based on low energy density, fibre-rich foods. It includes over 5 portions of fruit & veg and it has good fats from the olive oil and avocado.

It would benefit from the addition of protein at each meal however. A glass of skimmed milk could be added to breakfast. The low fat muffin could be substituted for yoghurt. A handful of almonds could replace some dried fruit and fish or chicken could be added at lunch and dinner.

Remember that protein helps to curb appetite and helps to maintain lean muscle tissue.

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### MENU 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Fresh orange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Porridge with sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tea with 2 sugars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wholemeal toast with jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Reduced fat carrot cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can of coke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Vegetable soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prawn salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruit smoothie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chocolate biscuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tea with 2 sugars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Low fat spaghetti bolognaise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ready meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low fat ice cream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This menu could be improved by reducing the amount of sugary snacks. The fizzy drinks and juice could be replaced by water – plain or flavoured. Tea would be better without sugar or replaced by a herbal tea.

Fruit, yoghurt, nuts or a high protein bar would be better options than the carrot cake and biscuits.
For the first few weeks of your weight loss programme, it’s a good idea to write yourself a week’s worth of menus or sample meals. Once you have followed these for a while, choosing balanced meals and a healthy diet should become instinctive – especially if you keep the 6 rules in mind.

It’s now time to move on to…

MENU 5

**Breakfast**
- Tangerine or two
- Scrambled eggs
- Wholemeal toast
- Cup of coffee, no sugar

**Snack**
- Natural yoghurt
- 2 pieces of fruit

**Lunch**
- Vegetable soup
- Wholemeal pitta
- Grilled chicken, mixed salad with olive oil & lemon juice dressing for filling (a dash of BBQ sauce won’t hurt either)

**Snack**
- Small bag of almonds/cashews and raisins
- Cup of herbal or fruit tea

**Dinner**
- Apple
- Grilled salmon
- Boiled new potatoes
- Steamed broccoli & carrots
- Low fat dressing such as honey and wholegrain mustard

**Evening**
- Small glass of red wine

This menu is ideal. It contains little saturated fat and some good fat, plenty of lean protein, more than 5 portions of fruit and veg, is low in sugar and is based on low energy density foods.

There is even room for a glass of wine occasionally. Obviously, you shouldn’t follow this exact menu every day – you need to eat a variety of foods over the course of a week.
STEP 3 – CREATE YOUR FAT BURNING EXERCISE PLAN

Is it possible to lose weight without exercising? Yes, just as it’s possible to lose weight without making any changes to your diet but increasing your activity levels.

However, there are a number of reasons why following a simple, enjoyable exercise plan is essential. It’s the closest thing to a magic bullet and it’s free!

Why should you exercise rather than just changing your diet alone?

- It increases your life expectancy
- It significantly reduces your risk of heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers
- It improves your mood and sense of well being
- It reduces stress
- It increases your bone density and reduces the risk of osteoporosis
- It promotes a healthy blood pressure and cholesterol profile
- It improves your body shape
- And people who change their diet AND exercise maintain a healthier weight for longer [1]

This last point is particularly relevant. Studies have shown that you are much more likely to reach your target weight and stay at that weight if you exercise as well as changing your eating habits. In fact, over-fat people often consume the same or less than their lean counterparts, proving that excess weight and even obesity are not necessarily the result of gluttony.

Increasing your daily activities, such as taking the stairs or mowing the lawn, is fine and you should aim to do that whenever possible, but unless you are significantly overweight and very unfit, on its own this is unlikely to bring you the results you desire. Assuming you’ve set your goal in Step 1 and have a specific time period in which to accomplish it, you will want to follow a more structured activity plan.

The guidelines and sample plans that follow cater for a range fitness levels and schedules. They are designed to give the greatest returns for your efforts and you’ll be pleased to know they do not rely on hours of cardio every day.
Let’s look first at what is arguably the most effective form of exercise when it comes to shedding the pounds...

**Resistance Training**

For many years, resistance training was considered the polar opposite of what was beneficial for weight loss. Seen as the preserve of hefty bodybuilders and strength athletes, it was ardently avoided by anyone trying to slim down, particularly women.

Yet, today many Fitness Professionals argue that resistance training is more conducive to fat loss than cardiovascular exercise. And there is a growing body of convincing evidence to back up their claims.

Let’s quickly examine why resistance training is so beneficial for both men AND women who wish to lose excess body fat...

**It Minimises the Drop in Metabolic Rate**

When you reduce your caloric intake by eating more healthily, your body automatically reduces your metabolic rate in response. It believes food must be scarce and an inbuilt defence mechanism lowers your energy needs and so limits the effect of a diet. Resistance training, when following a healthy eating plan, minimises this drop in metabolic rate making it easier to lose more fat [2].

**It Minimises Muscle Loss**

When you eat fewer calories than you expend, you are in an energy deficit and fat stores are mobilised to make up the difference. Inevitably however, some muscle tissue is also broken down to be used as energy. Not only is this unfavourable from an aesthetic point of view (even for women), a decrease in lean muscle further lowers your resting metabolic rate. This is one the reasons why people often become fatter over time as a result of dieting – each time they diet they lose lean muscle tissue so their metabolic rate decreases and hence it becomes easier to gain weight afterwards.

Weight training minimises this loss of lean muscle mass [2,3] and it’s one of the most important reasons for following a resistance training routine whilst on a weight reduction plan.
**It Increases Post-Exercise Metabolism**

During any form of exercise your energy requirements increase to meet the demand of that activity. However, your energy needs in the recovery period following an exercise session (called post-exercise metabolism) are also increased. In fact, metabolism can be raised for up to 2 days after an intense exercise session!

Obviously, the more your metabolism is raised and the longer it’s raised for after you’ve finished exercising, the better. Different types of exercise affect post-exercise metabolism differently and training with weights seems to have the most favourable effect.

In other words, after you’ve completed a resistance training session your metabolism stays raised and it does so to a greater extent than cardiovascular exercise [4,5]. Some researchers believe you could burn up to 700 additional calories after you’ve finished a resistance session [6].

**It Increases Your Resting Metabolism**

Pound for pound, muscle requires more energy to sustain itself than fat. This means if two people weigh the same but one person has a greater proportion of lean mass, they will have a higher resting metabolism (all other things being equal). In practical terms, the individual with a higher resting metabolism could eat more or exercise less than their counterpart and maintain the same weight.

**You Lose More Fat And Keep More Muscle**

Studies show that individuals who follow a diet plus a resistance training plan lose about the same amount of weight as individuals who follow a diet plus cardiovascular exercise. However, the resistance training groups invariably lose more fat mass and less healthy, lean mass [2,3,7,8,9].

That not only improves their long-term prospects; it will also have a noticeable effect on their appearance and body shape.

**Resistance Training & Women**

Many women shy away from resistance training for fear it will make them muscle bound and masculine looking. However, it is very difficult for a woman
to gain significant amounts of muscle – enough to make her look in any way masculine.

Studies have shown that although resistance training increases strength in women and brings about all the favourable changes mentioned above, very little muscle mass is gained [10] and can actually **reduce** the circumference of the thighs, waist and hips [11,12,13].

Even when a woman gains a reasonable amount of lean muscle, the reduction of fat tissue offsets any increase in the size of limbs [14]. In effect, resistance training, even with heavy weights, has a “toning” effect in females.

**Resistance Training Has Many More Benefits**

As you’ve seen from the points above, following a resistance training plan is a very effective way to burn fat. It also helps to create favourable changes in your body composition that help you to burn more energy and more fat even when you’re not exercising.

Here are some of the other benefits of resistance training [15]:

- It increases your bone density helping to prevent osteoporosis
- It improves balance and stability
- It improves glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity
- It increases functional strength making day-to-day life easier
- It improves muscular endurance
- It improves body composition and appearance

There are many different variations of resistance training but there are only a few simple guidelines to remember to get maximum benefit with minimum fuss. Here they are…

**Resistance Training Guidelines**

The following guidelines are intended for adults only. While strength training can be beneficial and safe even for young children, it requires a different set of guidelines to adults. Regardless of age, you should seek confirmation from your doctor that it is safe for you to begin a resistance training programme.

**Frequency**

The vast majority of the benefits from resistance training can be obtained in just two or three sessions per week. These should be evenly spaced with at least a day’s rest in between - for example, Mon/Wed/Fri, Tue/Thu/Sat, Mon/Fri, Wed/Sat and so on.
Ideally you should aim to train a muscle group every 2-5 days. Any longer than this and the beneficial changes your body has made from the previous session begin to diminish. Any shorter between working muscle groups and you run the risk of over-training and burnout.

**Intensity**

You can alter the intensity of a resistance training session in a number of ways. You can increase the weight you lift, you can lift the same weight for more repetitions or you can decrease the rest between exercises. Altering each of these alters how your body responds to a weight training session.

**Repetitions**

You may have heard that lifting heavier weights is good for building large muscles, and that lifting lighter weights is best for toning up. However, “toning up” is a bit of a misnomer. A toned body comes from an increase in lean muscle and / or a decrease in body fat.

So which is best for burning fat? Lifting heavy weights for fewer repetitions (6-12) or lifting lighter weights for lots of repetitions (15+)? During a session there is little difference between either format on the number of calories you burn. However, in the hours following the session, your metabolic rate is raised significantly more after lifting heavier weights for fewer repetitions [16]. In simple terms, you get greater returns from every session, without spending any extra time at the gym!

**Sets**

The most effective resistance training session is intense enough to bring about favourable changes in your body composition, but not so intense that it leads to fatigue and burnout. In this respect, more is not necessarily better...

Just one set of 6-12 repetitions per exercise is enough to increase your lean muscle tissue [17] although multiple sets may be optimal [18, 19]. Beyond 3 sets your returns diminish, plus you run the risk of fatigue.

**Recovery**

Reducing the rest periods between each set and each exercise increases the intensity of the session and the number of calories you burn after the session...
has finished. But again we want to balance this against making the session to strenuous.

**Time**

There is no need to spend forever at the gym or on a resistance training session at home. In fact, beyond a certain point you begin to get diminished returns. Aim to complete your session in 45 minutes or less – including a 5-10 minute warm up and cool down.

**Type**

There are various types of resistance training routines and exercises. You can exercise all the major muscle groups in one session or you can split your routine into ‘body parts’ working some body parts on one day and working other body parts on another day.

For fat loss purposes, we’ll stick to a ‘total body’ routine – one that works all muscle groups every session. This keeps things simple and by training just two or three days a week you work each muscle group every 2-5 days.

Of course, there are also many different types of exercises and machines to choose from. You may be confused as to which are best and which equipment is more suitable. A current buzzword in the fitness industry is “core stability” which, refers to training muscles in the core region for improved posture, balance and co-ordination.

Whilst every exercise has its place, we want to focus on those that give us the greatest returns for our efforts. By choosing a minimal number of exercises that work several major muscle groups (called compound exercises), you can get virtually all of the fat burning benefits of weight training without spending hours in the gym every week.
Summary of Guidelines

Based on the guidelines above, here’s what your resistance training sessions should look like:

- No. sessions per week: 2-3
- No. exercises per session: 8-12
- No. sets per exercise: 1-3
- No. repetitions per set: 6-12 (may be slightly more for beginners)
- Rest between sets: 60-120sec
- Rest between exercises: 60-120sec

It goes without saying that you should warm up thoroughly before every resistance training session. Start with 5-10 minutes of light cardiovascular exercise such as brisk walking or cycling. Complete a couple of warm up sets for each exercise (especially the first few exercises) using 50% of the weight you intend to use for each proper set.

Sample Plans

Here are some sample plans for three different fitness levels.

**Beginner Routine**

This sample beginner plan consists of a single routine that is performed 2 days per week (but not on consecutive days). Two versions of each exercise have been given – one using free weights and one using resistance machines.

Lighter weights that allow 12-15 repetitions are used in the beginner routine. Even though slightly heavier weight might be more beneficial for burning calories, it’s important to build up gradually.

Complete this routine for 6-8 weeks before moving on to the intermediate plan:
### Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell bench presses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine chest presses</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell squats</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine leg presses</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell pullovers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine lat pull downs</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crunches*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stability ball crunches*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell shoulder presses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine shoulder presses</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell lunges (each leg)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine leg curls</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell single arm rows (each arm)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine rows</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermans*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Back extensions*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair dips</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine triceps push downs</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumbbell biceps curls (each arm)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Machine preacher curls</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Select a weight that allows you to just about complete the suggested number of repetitions.
- Rest for no more than 90-120 seconds between each set and each exercise.
- When you can lift 2 more repetitions than suggested for any exercise, increase the weight by the smallest increment.
- Do not hold your breath when lifting the weight.
- Use correct technique at all times.

* These exercises are performed without added weight. To increase the intensity you can simply complete more repetitions or add an extra set.

### Intermediate Routine

This sample intermediate plan consists of two routines that are performed alternately 3 days per week (but not on consecutive days). For example, Routine A is performed Monday, Routine B on Wednesday, Routine A on Friday, Routine B on Monday and so on.

A slightly heavier resistance is also used compared to the beginner routine allowing 8-10 repetitions to be completed instead of 12-15.

You can use a machine alternative to the free weights exercises below, however free weights also work smaller stabilizing muscles that may be neglected with machine exercises.

Complete this routine for 6-8 weeks before moving on to the intermediate plan:
Routine A (Upper Body Emphasis)

Dumbbell bench presses OR Machine chest presses 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Machine lat pull downs 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Barbell front squats OR Machine leg presses 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell shoulder presses OR Machine shoulder presses 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell single arm rows (each arm) OR Machine rows 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell lunges (each leg) 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Bench dips 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell biceps curls (each arm) OR Machine preacher curls 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Twisting crunches* 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Leg-hip raises 2 - 3 sets x 10-15 sec

Routine B (Lower Body Emphasis)

Barbell front squats OR Machine leg presses 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Machine narrow grip lat pull downs 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell deadlifts OR Barbell deadlifts 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell incline bench presses OR Machine incline chest presses 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell single leg split squats (each leg) 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell single arm rows (each arm) OR Machine rows 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Machine leg curls 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Dumbbell lateral raises 2 - 3 sets x 8-10 reps
Incline crunches 2 - 3 sets x 10-15 reps
Supermans* OR Back extensions* 2 - 3 sets x 10-15 reps

- Select a weight that allows you to just about complete the suggested number of repetitions.
- Rest for no more than 90-120 seconds between each exercise.
- When you can lift 2 more repetitions than suggested for any exercise, increase the weight by the smallest increment.
- Do not hold your breath when lifting the weight.
- Use correct technique at all times.

* These exercises are performed without added weight. To increase the intensity you can simply complete more repetitions, hold for longer or add an extra set.

Advanced Routine

This sample advanced plan consists of two routines that are performed alternately 3 days per week (but not on consecutive days). For example, Routine A is performed Monday, Routine B on Wednesday, Routine A on Friday, Routine B on Monday and so on.
The advanced plan uses **supersets**. A superset simply consists of two exercises performed back-to-back without rest. The exercises work different muscle groups, which allows more work to be done in less time. This routine also incorporates heavier weights that with fewer repetitions (6-8).

You can use a machine alternative to the free weights exercises below, however free weights work smaller stabilizing muscles that may be neglected with machine exercises.

**Routine A (Upper Body Emphasis)**

**Dumbbell bench presses** OR **Machine chest presses**
- 8-12 reps followed by
- Rest for 60-90 sec and
- Repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**Machine lat pull downs**
- 8-12 reps

**Barbell front squats** OR **Machine leg presses**
- 3 sets x 6-8 reps

**Dumbbell shoulder presses** OR **Machine shoulder presses**
- 8-12 reps followed by
- Rest for 60-90 sec and
- Repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**Dumbbell single arm rows** OR **Machine rows**
- 8-12 reps

**Dumbbell deadlifts** OR **Barbell deadlifts**
- 3 sets x 6-8 reps

**Parallel bar dips**

**Dumbbell biceps curls** (each arm) OR **Machine preacher curls**
- 8-12 reps followed by
- Rest for 60-90 sec and
- Repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**V Ups**
- 3 sets x 10-15 reps

**Twisting crunches**
- 3 sets x 12-20 sec
Routine B (Lower Body Emphasis)

**Barbell front squats** OR **Machine leg presses**
8-12 reps followed by
8-12 reps
Rest for 60-90 sec and
repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**Dumbbell deadlifts** OR **Barbell deadlifts**

**Machine narrow grip lat pull downs**
3 sets x 6-8 reps

**Machine leg curls**
8-12 reps followed by
8-12 reps
Rest for 60-90 sec and
repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**Machine leg extensions**

**Dumbbell incline bench presses** OR **Machine incline chest presses**
3 sets x 6-8 reps

**Dumbbell single leg split squats (each leg)**
8-12 reps followed by
8-12 reps
Rest for 60-90 sec and
repeat for a total of 2-3 sets

**Dumbbell lateral raises**

**Dumbbell single arm rows** OR **Machine rows**
3 sets x 6-8 reps

**Hanging leg raises**
3 sets x 10-15 reps

**Supermans** OR **Back extensions**
3 sets x 10-15 reps

- Select a weight that allows you to just about complete the suggested number of repetitions.
- Rest for no more than 60-90 seconds between each exercise.
- When you can lift 2 more repetitions than suggested for any exercise, increase the weight by the smallest increment.
- Do not hold your breath when lifting the weight.
- Use correct technique at all times.

* These exercises are performed without added weight. To increase the intensity you can simply complete more repetitions or add an extra set.

**Take A Week Off**

Resistance training can and should be fairly intense. This will help you to burn more calories both during and after each session. Because of this, it’s important to take regular breaks to keep yourself fresh and motivated. Every
fourth week, deliberately choose lighter weights. Keep the number of repetitions the same and perhaps reduce down to one set if you are doing two.

Every 8-12 weeks consider changing your routine. The basic format can stay the same but select different exercises for a change of pace and to make sure no muscle groups get neglected.

**CV Exercise**

Cardiovascular exercise raises the heart rate for a sustained period of time and uses large muscle groups in a rhythmic motion. Cardiovascular exercise can be low intensity completed at a steady pace - known as aerobic exercise. It can also consist of short bouts of intense exercise interspersed with recovery periods – known as interval training.

**Aerobic Training**

Traditionally, low intensity aerobic exercise has been promoted as best for burning fat. You may have heard of the "fat burning zone" which is depicted on many exercise machines in gyms. It suggests that exercising at a low heart rate burns the most fat and that anything too intense burns carbohydrate instead.

However, the fat burning zone can be a bit misleading. While it's true that you burn a greater percentage of fat at lower intensities, what is more important is the number of calories you burn overall – not what percentage comes from fat.

Many people who try diligently to lose weight through aerobic exercise (such as steady running, cycling or swimming) often get disheartened. They claim that despite three or more sessions on the treadmill or cross trainer each week, it's made scant difference to their weight. It seems that there is some convincing evidence to back them up...

Numerous studies show that moderate amounts of aerobic exercise has little effect on weight loss [20,21,22,23,24,25,26]. In fact, diet plus aerobic exercise is not much better than diet alone [20,22,24].

If that's not disheartening enough, it appears that unlike resistance training aerobic exercise decreases lean muscle tissue, especially
when on a reduced calorie diet [22,27]. In Step 2 we looked at why a drop in lean muscle tissue isn’t favourable, even for women, when trying to lose weight and enjoy long-term success.

**Interval Training**

High intensity interval training has become more and more popular in recent years. It consists of short bouts of intense activity interspersed without frequent recovery periods. A good example of interval training is Spinning®, which is a very popular group class available in most gyms today.

Advocates of interval training promote it as a more effective way to burn fat in less time compared to aerobic exercise. Some claims have gone as far as to suggest it is nine times more effective.

The main reason for these claims is that interval training leads to a greater increase in your metabolic rate after the session compared to moderate intensity exercise [28]. In simple terms, you burn more calories in the hours after a short interval training session compared with a longer aerobic session.

One study showed that a group of people following an interval training programme lost three times more fat than a group following an aerobic training plan [29]. Another study found that interval training lead to an average fat loss of 2.3kg (5lbs) compared to no fat loss at all in the aerobic training group. Interval training also had a much greater effect on cardiovascular fitness – aerobic exercise made little difference [30]. A third study reported similar results [31].

While these results sound impressive, the studies do have their limitations and there is not enough research yet to say that interval training really is “nine times better” than aerobic exercise. But it does seem to be a more time efficient way to lose weight and may be significantly more effective at reducing the risk of coronary heart disease [32].

**Cardiovascular Training Guidelines**

Both aerobic and interval training have their place in an effective fat loss programme. Even if aerobic exercise doesn’t have a great impact on weight loss on its own, it has many health benefits that shouldn’t be ignored. And because interval training can be very demanding, aerobic exercise is useful for beginners and as a change of pace to prevent over-training.
Frequency

From a health point of view, ideally you should do something each day that raises your heart rate for 20 minutes or more. From a weight loss point of view, this should come from a combination of resistance and cardiovascular exercise i.e. 2-3 resistance sessions plus 2-3 cardiovascular sessions. If you’re pushed for time, resistance and cardiovascular exercise can be combined into a single session (with resistance training preferably completed first).

Intensity

The greater the intensity of cardiovascular exercise, the greater the effect it will have on your ability to lose weight and fat. However, this must be balanced with your starting level of fitness and take the rest of your programme into consideration.

To determine the intensity of aerobic exercise sessions use a percentage of your maximum heart rate. Your maximum heart rate can be predicted with the following formula:

\[ \text{208} - (\text{Age} \times 0.7) \]

For example, a 40-year-old would have a predicted maximum heart rate of:

\[ 208 - (40 \times 0.7) = 208 - 28 = 180 \text{ beats per minute (bpm)} \]

This figure (180 in this case) is multiplied by 60-70% for a training “zone”:

\[ 180 \times 0.6 = 108 \text{ bpm} \]
\[ 180 \times 0.7 = 126 \text{ bpm} \]

If you don’t have access to a heart rate monitor you can use a scale of perceived exertion. Very simply, on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is a gentle stroll in the park and 10 is an all-out sprint or effort), aim for a 6-7.

Beginners, not used to exercising, should stick entirely to aerobic exercise for at least 6 weeks before incorporating interval training. They should start off at about 60-70% maximal heart rate (6-7 on the exertion scale). More advanced
exercisers can aim to work at 70-80% of their maximum heart rate for aerobic sessions.

We'll use rate of perceived exertion to gauge the intensity of interval training sessions (see the sample plans below).

**Time**

Cardiovascular exercise can be limited to 20-45 minutes in duration. Interval training tends to be shorter (less than 30 minutes). Beginners should start with 20-minute sessions and gradually increase the intensity. Once the intensity cannot be increased any further, the duration can be increased by 5 minutes every week or two.

**Type**

There are many types of suitable cardiovascular exercise – jogging, brisk walking, cycling, swimming, aerobic classes, Spinning® classes, tennis, badminton and so on. Interval training on the other hand lends itself well to running, cycling, swimming and rowing.

**Sample Plans**

Here are some sample cardiovascular training plans for three different levels of fitness:

**Beginner Routine**

This beginner cardiovascular routine should be completed at least three times per week. It uses only aerobic exercise (no interval training), which will help to build a base of fitness before interval training can be added. You can use any form of exercise you wish or combine several machines at the gym:

**Aerobic Training Session (3 x Week)**

- Warm up: 5 - 10min at 50% max heart rate (4-5 out of 10)
- CV exercise: 20-45min at 60-75% max heart rate (6-7.5 out of 10)
- Cool down: 5 - 10min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

**Progression**

The starting intensity should be approximately 60-70% maximum heart rate. As you become fitter, increase the intensity i.e. 75% for 20 minutes. Above this intensity it becomes difficult to sustain exercise for 20 minutes or more, so instead gradually increase the time by 5 minutes or so each week.
Complete this beginner cardiovascular programme for 6-8 weeks before moving on to the intermediate routine.

**Intermediate Routine**

This intermediate routine combines aerobic and interval sessions. It’s based on 3 sessions per week - 2 interval and 1 aerobic. Heart rate becomes unpredictable with interval training and isn’t much use to measure intensity. Instead, we’ll use a rating of perceived exertion on a 1 to 10 scale (where 1 is a gentle stroll in the park and 10 is an all-out sprint).

The ‘work’ intervals should be completed at a level 7 or 8, the recovery periods at a level 3 or 4. Interval sessions are best completed on stationary bikes, cross trainers, stair steppers, rowing machines and when running.

**Note:** If using a treadmill, it’s not advised to run at a high speed unless you have someone else adjusting the speed. Instead, use the incline facility so that running at slower speeds still elicits a perceived exertion of 7-8.

**Session 1 (Interval Training)**
- Warm up: 5 min at RPE 4-5 out of 10
- Work interval: 120sec at RPE 7-8 out of 10
- Recovery period: 120sec at RPE 3-4 out of 10
- Alternate between work and recovery intervals and complete a total of 5-8 intervals
- Cool Down: 5 min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

**Session 2 (Aerobic Training)**
- Warm up: 5 - 10min at 50% max heart rate (4-5 out of 10)
- CV exercise: 20-45min at 60-75% max heart rate (6-7.5 out of 10)
- Cool down: 5 - 10min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

**Session 3**
- Warm up: 5 min at RPE 4-5 out of 10
- Work interval: 60sec at RPE 8 out of 10
- Recovery period: 60sec at RPE
- Alternate between work and recovery intervals and complete a total of 8-10 intervals
- Cool down: 5 min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)
Advanced Routine

The advanced routine is similar to the intermediate routine, however the interval times are shorter and more intense.

Session 1 (Interval Training)
- Warm up: 5 min at RPE 4-5 out of 10
- Work interval: 60sec at RPE 8 out of 10
- Recovery period: 60sec at RPE 3-4 out of 10
- Alternate between work and recovery intervals and complete a total of 8-10 intervals
- Cool Down: 5 min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

Session 2 (Aerobic Training)
- Warm up: 5 - 10min at 50% max heart rate (4-5 out of 10)
- CV exercise: 20-45min at 60-75% max heart rate (6-7.5 out of 10)
- Cool down: 5 - 10min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

Session 3
- Warm up: 5 min at RPE 4-5 out of 10
- Work interval: 30sec at RPE 8-9 out of 10
- Recovery period: 30sec at RPE
- Alternate between work and recovery intervals and complete a total of 12-15 intervals
- Cool down: 5 min at 40% max heart rate (3-4 out of 10)

Progression

You can progress the aerobic training session in the same way as the beginner routine – by first increasing the intensity and then the duration.

Rather than altering the intensity of the interval sessions, add an extra work/rest interval. Have a recovery week, every 3-4 weeks by replacing the interval sessions with aerobic training sessions.

Combining Resistance & Cardiovascular Exercise

A combination of aerobic exercise and resistance exercise seems to be more effective than one alone [6,33,34,35]. Don’t worry, this doesn’t mean you have to do double the amount of exercise, it simply means your weekly exercise routine should ideally mix and match the two types of exercise.

And when you combine both resistance and cardiovascular exercise into one session, it can still be completed in under an hour. Here are some ideas for 3-day, 4-day, 5-day and 6-day per week routines:
### 3 Days Per Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Resistance session followed by CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Resistance session followed by CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Rest</td>
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### 4 Days Per Week

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Resistance session followed by CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Resistance session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Resistance session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Rest</td>
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</table>
### 5 Days Per Week

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Resistance session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>CV session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>Resistance session followed by CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>CV session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Resistance session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
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### 6 Days Per Week

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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>CV session</td>
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<td>Resistance session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>CV session</td>
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STEP 4 – QUICK TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Tip #1 – Set A Target Date And Think No Further

This was mentioned in “Step 1 – What's Your Goal?” but it’s so important that it’s worth revisiting.

The majority of people who begin a weight loss programme start with the best of intentions and heaps of motivation. But when it's seen an indefinite plan, or a “permanent lifestyle” without any fixed end-date in mind, that motivation will disappear sooner or later.

By setting a goal with a completion date firmly fixed in mind, you can muster the will power to break through any barriers much more easily. By telling yourself it’s not forever, that you can “quit” your plan after you target your goal date, there's a good chance you’ll reach it.

When, and only when, you complete your goal should you think about what to do next. For now, trust that you will have a different frame of mind and a different association towards exercise and healthy eating when you reach that time. And from that place, the decision to carry on may be more appealing than quitting.

Tip #2 - Keep a Food Diary

Keeping a food diary is not the same as counting calories. There is absolutely no need to weigh food or even write down portion sizes. The aim is to take your unconscious eating patterns and document them on paper. Why does this help?

With just a few weeks worth of diary notes you will be able to see when and where you are most likely to slip up. It may be late at night. It may be at the weekend. Or it could be when you’re with a certain person or group of people. When you see things on paper, objectively, it’s much easier to come up with contingency plans to deal with those situations in future.
Tip #3 – Empty Your Cupboards

This may sound overly simplistic and you may have heard many times before, but emptying your cupboards and refrigerator of junk food and sugary snacks will reduce the number of temptations you must deal with.

Tip #4 – Do A Twice Weekly Shop

If you’re the kind of person that shops on an as and when basis you may benefit from this considerably.

The times when you feel tired or rushed are when you are most likely to skip meals, snack on sugary foods and order fast food takeaways. But if you always have a supply of healthy ingredients and snacks to hand that temptation becomes less compelling.

If you do one shop a week, much of the fresh produce will only last for the first 3-4 days. Doing a shop in mid-week will allow you to stock up on fresh foods that will last the entire week.

For the duration of your plan at least, you may want to consider doing your grocery shopping online at somewhere like Tesco.com. You avoid the many of the strategically placed temptations in the shopping aisles and it makes life as easy as possible until you get into a settled routine.

Tip #5 – Chew Your Food

Many of us eat so quickly that we’ve overeaten before we know it. Chewing well helps you to draw the nutrients out of the food. Your saliva has a chance to break the food down so that you can absorb those nutrients.

This is actually the very first step in the digestive process as your body gets the correct digestive fluids ready to help you assimilate the food. Your brain also is better able to register satisfaction from the meal.

Tip #6 – Plan Ahead

There will be times and occasions when you are more likely to overindulge in others. There will also be more times when you are more likely to skip your exercise sessions. Planning ahead for these times so you can deal with them easily and conveniently will significantly increase your chances of success.
• Think up some quick and convenient snacks that you can grab when you’re in a rush. Why not make up small bags of mixed nuts and raisins at the weekend that you can take to work or on a day out when you don’t have time to prepare. You may even want to buy some low sugar, high protein snack bars just to have in for emergencies.

• Make double the amount at meals and freeze the leftovers. This is a real time saver and nothing is more convenient than popping a frozen, nutritious meal in the microwave for a few minutes.

• Create a bodyweight circuit training routine that can be completed anywhere without any equipment. Done properly a 10-15 minute routine can provide a highly effective fat burning workout.

• When you simply cannot make a healthy choice use it as an opportunity to have a “cheat meal” (see rule #6 in Step 1).

• If you are going out for a meal or party and you know there’s a good chance you will be tempted to overindulge, eat a piece of fruit or two before leaving. This will curb your appetite and you’re much less likely to get carried away.
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REFERENCES FOR STEP 3 - EXERCISE


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