

# Making Your Diet Manageable



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It's a well established scientific fact, that in order to lose weight, we need to be in a negative energy balance, also known as a Calorie deficit. This means that we need to put less energy from food and drink into our bodies than the amount of energy our bodies are using each day.

When we put ourselves into a Calorie deficit, either by reducing our Caloric intake (dieting), or by increasing our energy expenditure, or a combination of both, our bodies will start mobilising our fat from our fat cells and start to use that fat for fuel. The greater the Calorie deficit, the faster fat loss will occur.

## **Challenging the Concept of Sustainability**

We hear a lot of talk about sustainability with regards to diets, and while it's true that we need to adopt a strategy that isn't too extreme, the only diet that is truly sustainable is a diet where we are at a maintenance energy intake. Therefore, any diet that is geared towards weight loss, is by definition unsustainable, because you can't keep losing weight forever.

Once we accept this fact, we can prepare ourselves mentally for the journey, and look at ways to make the experience more manageable. But most importantly, we can see an end in sight. If we know there is an end to something that we are finding challenging, we are more likely to persist, and we may also find the challenge less stressful.

The goal of a weight loss diet is for us to reach a healthy body weight, and the goal after reaching a healthy body weight is to maintain that healthy body weight. The reality is that a maintenance diet is the only truly sustainable diet. Periods of gaining or losing weight can only be sustained for so long before we end up sick or in an early grave.

## Making Diets Manageable

### 1. Figure Out When You Are Most and Least Hungry

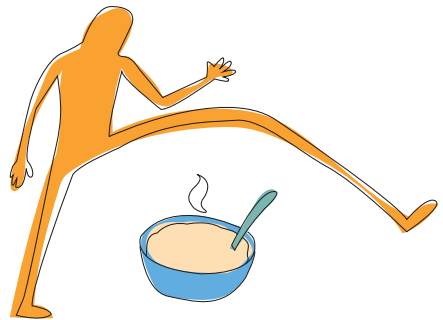
One of the hallmarks of a manageable diet is a diet that fits our lifestyle. If there is a certain time of the day when we naturally find ourselves eating more, it makes sense to distribute our food across the day in such a way that affords us the ability to eat a bit more at that time. When we do this, we are applying the least restriction at the time when we are less likely to be able to handle restriction. Equally, there is usually a time of the day when we are less hungry and it makes obvious sense to distribute our food away from this time. Most people find that when they are busy and engaged in work or other tasks, they don't even think about food. For a lot of people this time is the morning and for that reason skipping breakfast is a common strategy to lower daily energy intake.

#### **Skipping Breakfast**

Myths abound in the health and fitness industry, and while for some people, breakfast seems like the most important meal of the day, that isn't true for everyone. And it certainly wasn't true thousands of years ago when what determined when humans ate was whether or not they had food. In the grand scheme of things, breakfast, lunch and dinner are recent phenomena in human history. Thinking outside the box of traditional meal times opens up new possibilities to make our diets

work better for us and our unique situations. I'm not saying we need to start walking around in animal skins, but skipping breakfast could be a way for you to enjoy a larger meal later on in the day, at a time when you find yourself eating more. Especially if that breakfast is low in protein and high in sugar, which is a recipe to start a blood sugar rollercoaster and increased hunger.

When we do skip breakfast, our bodies will be able to use its fat stores for fuel and this can take a bit of getting used to. It's not for everyone, but it's also not an all or nothing situation. Some people are less hungry at breakfast time but still like to have something light. A high protein smoothie or a small omelette are great options in this case.



### **The Issue of Skipping Breakfast**

The number one issue people who skip breakfast run into is over-compensatory eating. Picture someone at the vending machine at work at 11am. They've skipped breakfast and have been ok until now, but suddenly they are hungry and they haven't got any food with them. This person is now in a vulnerable position, hungry, with the smell of coffee and biscuits wafting around the office. Unless they have a healthy, tasty snack prepared, this might end result in them scoffing biscuits!



This happens due a lack of planning. If you are going to skip breakfast, have a plan in place. Whether your first meal is at a mid-morning break, or lunchtime, make sure you know what you are going to have. This keeps you in control and minimises the risk of over-compensatory eating.

### **Enjoying a Larger Dinner**

We've already touched on the concept of over-compensatory eating, but if there is ever a time when people over eat, it's dinner time. Again, this is usually due to a lack of planning. So, let's look at how to get this right.

If you are less hungry in the day because you're busy with work, and you also like to enjoy decent portions of your favourite meals in the evenings. Having a larger dinner is a viable strategy that works for many people.

## How to Feel Fuller (Satiety Mechanisms)

Let's take a look at the factors involved in satiety...

### Short-term

**Psychological factors**, including taste, smell and texture.

**Mechanical factors**, such as the process of swallowing and gastric distension (stomach feeling full).

Essentially, the short term factors boil down to the volume of food and the tastes, smells and textures.



### Long-term

This is far more complex and involves chemoreception of peptides and hormones produced by the gastrointestinal system, the brain and fat cells. Just a few of these include; leptin, ghrelin, peptide YY, cholecystokinin, glucagon-like peptide-1, neuropeptide Y, adiponectin, and leptin.

The macronutrient composition of the meal really matters here and protein has a particularly positive effect on promoting satiety.

## 2. Eat Protein with Every Meal

Studies show that out of all of the macronutrients, protein is the most satiating, meaning that it has the greatest effect on suppressing our appetite (1).

It therefore makes sense for us to prioritise our intake of protein.

The majority of our meals should contain a good protein source, ideally 3 times a day. Whole food sources of protein are more filling and should be prioritised over supplements, but supplements can definitely play a role in helping us to increase our protein intake, especially if we are finding that challenging.

### Sources of Protein (per 100g):

<b>Chicken breast - 23g protein</b>	<b>Smoked mackerel - 20g</b>
<b>Turkey breast - 24g protein</b>	<b>Sardines - 22g</b>
<b>2% fat turkey mince - 25g</b>	<b>Rib-eye steak - 19g</b>
<b>5% fat beef mince - 21g</b>	<b>Lamb - 18g</b>
<b>Fillet steak - 21g</b>	<b>Eggs - 6g each egg</b>
<b>Beef stir fry strips - 21g</b>	<b>Chicken thigh (boneless skinless) - 18g</b>
<b>0% fat Greek yoghurt (Fage/Skyr) - 10g</b>	<b>Chicken drumsticks - 11g each</b>
<b>Cod - 18g</b>	<b>Tofu 7g</b>
<b>Prawns - 19g</b>	<b>Red lentils (raw) 24g, (cooked) 8g</b>
<b>Diced pork - 21g</b>	<b>Kidney beans (cooked) 9g</b>
<b>Beef liver - 21g</b>	<b>Quorn - 15g</b>
<b>Salmon - 19g</b>	<b>Soya mince (dry) - 50g</b>



**Supplements** (per 30g):

**Whey protein - 24g**

**Rice protein - 18g**

**Pea protein - 24g**

**Soy protein - 27g**

**Collagen - 24g**

### 3. Fruits and Vegetables

The benefits of fruit and vegetables are well known. They contain vitamins, minerals, water and fibre, which can help us feel physically full. Think about an orange. It smells good, tastes sweet, and it's juicy and satisfying to eat. It help us hit many of those psychological and mechanical factors contributing towards satiety.



#### **Protein and Vegetables/Fruits: A Tag Team to Fight Hunger**

As we have learned, both protein and vegetables can both help keep hunger at bay. Therefore, if we focus on consuming both at each meal, or at least for the majority of our meals, we can naturally make our diets much more manageable vs just focusing on Calories alone.

Smoothies, salads and soups can help you get a combination of protein and vegetables and fruit.

### **Why do we crave Sweet, Salty and Fatty Foods?**

Historically, energy-dense food gave us the best chances of survival. The problem now is that survival is no longer an issue. We are surrounded by high energy foods and we definitely don't need to go out of our way to find them anymore.

Food manufacturers know that humans are wired to seek out high energy foods, and they capitalise on this instinctual drive by making what are sometimes referred to as 'hyper-palatable' foods. These are foods that are really easy to overeat.

Think about a Pringle, it's crunchy, salty and it's shaped in a way that maximises surface contact with your tongue. The slogan even contains a powerful suggestion ("Once you pop, you can't stop!").

If your sole aim was to maximise your profits from selling a food, you'd want your customers to:

1. Consume more of that food.
2. Consume it as often as possible.

The good news is that when we obtain the majority of our Calories from whole foods, our appetites tend to be well regulated. This means that we can still enjoy our favourite chocolate, kettle chips or whatever you enjoy in moderation. A tip to make it harder not to overeat these 'treat foods' is to make sure you are relatively full from eating high quality whole foods before hand. That's part of the reason why we tell our children to eat their dinner before dessert.



#### 4. Don't Go Shopping on an Empty Stomach

The age-old advice of not going shopping when hungry is excellent advice. You are much less likely to buy things you perhaps shouldn't. The same applies to shopping online, do it after dinner.

#### 5. Fill Up Before the Buffet

Imagine it's been 6 hours since you ate anything and you arrive at a party. There is a buffet and free drinks available. What's like to happen?

Now imagine you had a high protein meal or snack before you went. It's very likely that your appetite will be regulated better and instead of gorging and overdoing it, you'll still be able to enjoy the experience without the regret of having overeaten.

#### 6. Staying Hydrated

Staying well hydrated is important for many reasons, but of particular interest to those of us looking to lose weight, is that proper fluid intake can lead to eating less. Sometimes we can think we are hungry when we are actually just dehydrated. If you think that might be the case, drink a glass or two of water and wait a few minutes. Sometimes you will find that you're no longer hungry, and if you still want to eat, it's likely that you'll eat less. Being dehydrated can also contribute towards our overall stress levels. That isn't a good thing, because people often make poor food choices when stressed.

#### 7. Don't Drink Your Calories (minimise liquid Calories)

Liquid Calories don't provide much satiety and therefore should be minimised.

## 8. Planned Periods of Maintenance/Diet Breaks

Weight loss diets are unsustainable. Knowing when we will have the opportunity to eat a little bit more can help prepare us mentally for the mission ahead. Periods of planned maintenance, also known as diet breaks, can reduce physical fatigue, mental fatigue, decrease hunger, increase exercise performance and help us to maintain motivation to each our goals over the long-term.

There is no set amount of time that a diet break should last, although there likely won't be any benefits when taken for less than one week. A two week period would provide a more robust 'reset'.

Diet breaks should be considered at regular 6-14 week intervals during long weight loss phases.

Once the desired bodyweight or composition has been achieved, a maintenance diet is started to help keep those results.

## 9. Refeeds or Cheat Meals

The idea of a refeed is to provide the body with more fuel, usually carbohydrates, to limit dips in performance caused by depleted energy reserves. A cheat meal is simply an opportunity to indulge in some fun foods. Cheat meals are more likely to only offer psychological and adherence benefits, whereas refeeds are aimed at the 'refuelling' of the muscle and liver glycogen. Both are viable strategies.

### Reference

1. <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijjpep/2010/710852/>