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# SIMPLE, HEALTHY EATING STRATEGIES

## BREAKING BAD HABITS THAT PACK ON THE POUNDS

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**W**e live in a time of huge portions, cheap food and timesaving technology. We're burning fewer calories, sitting for hours at our desks, in front of computers and in traffic. It's so easy to overeat and even best intentions get in the way of getting regular activity. This isn't just an American problem – global obesity and type 2 diabetes rates are soaring. With barely enough time for our families and friends, how is it possible to take charge of our foods and work in activity?

We can take it one meal at a time, one food at a time, one walk at a time and one day at a time. We can make choices that work for us. When you see thin people, do you assume that they are that way naturally? Or are they making smart choices most of the time, every day, so that their weight control becomes second nature? People who make mindful eating second nature may appear naturally thin, but they're paying attention to what they're eating – and how much they're eating and when. They usually stop eating when they're full, although there are times when they may overeat – that's natural too. They eat what they want – but how much they eat is usually just enough.

Thin doesn't come from having a "skinny gene." Almost always, thin people practice thin behaviors.

For example, they consistently monitor their weigh. Not necessarily by stepping on the scale – they may use their favorite jeans or skirt to keep track of their waist size. (Weight is just a number on the scale and won't measure your fitness; for example, a muscular person can weigh more than average, and be very physically fit.) When thin people gain unwanted inches, they take steps to reclaim their physique, not by dieting, but instead by cutting back and adding in: eating fewer servings of bread or pasta, eating more fruits and vegetables and adding more activity. It's not magic – just consistency, with activity.

Overeating is a habit, a learned behavior, and becomes ingrained and expected. Large portions become normal and we are constantly reminded that the larger size is a bargain, that "upgrading" your order saves money and that for just a few cents, your order can be a "biggie." "All you can eat" has become "eat all you can." Fast food eaters consistently underestimate large or super-sized meals by 500 calories. Do that just once a week and you'll gain almost eight pounds a year.

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GAIN A POUND OR LOSE ONE?

Theoretically, consume an extra 3,500 calories per week to gain an extra pound on your hips or thighs or belly. It's all too easy to do, but by eating mindfully and deliberately making healthy choices, you too can make weight control second nature.

### SMART STRATEGIES FOR WEIGHT CONTROL

*Don't add fat to your food.* Notice I didn't say don't eat fat, and I don't mean that fat is a bad food, but those extra fats that appear on the table – the tub of butter or

olive oil for dipping bread and sour cream on your baked potato – each adds an extra 100 calories per scant level tablespoon (and no one uses a level tablespoon!). Instead, substitute tomato salsa on that potato, and if the bread isn't good enough without butter, skip it. Save about 200 calories per meal—equivalent to about eight to ten pounds per year

*Cut out sweetened drinks.* Period. That goes for sweet tea, lemonade and even fruit juice. It's the quickest way to get a lot of calories that I know – and it doesn't fill you up or satisfy your appetite; in fact, it may stimulate it. One 12-ounce soda has 150 calories. Substitute water, seltzer and herbal teas. Opt for one or two diet beverages if you choose. In one year, you'll reduce calories equivalent to 16 pounds



*Start right.* Instead of sugary pastries or oily bran muffins, save hundreds of calories and get a better head start by choosing a high fiber, low sugar cereal (like Kashi GoLean), nonfat milk and a cup of berries. The calorie difference is huge! Save more than 200 calories daily, equivalent to 20 pounds weight loss yearly.

*Snacking strategies.* Split your meals into smaller, more frequent meals and lose weight automatically by not adding calories at all – you're just eating

differently. This eating strategy helps keep you energized; since you're not hungry, it's easier to resist temptation.

*Finger foods.* If it's advertised as not easily stopped at "just one" then you know it's going to add up. Shelled nuts are irresistible – and just one handful means more than 500, even 600, calories. Since nuts are very nutritious – high in protein, magnesium, vitamin E and other essential nutrients – keep their clothes on and only eat unshelled nuts. A cup of peanuts in the shell has about 200 calories and you take longer to eat them. Save hundreds of calories and earn your snacks by shelling your own nuts.

*Switch.* Just switching from whole milk to nonfat saves about 60 calories per glass, reducing calories equivalent to about six pounds a year. Each time you choose (and dairy is a good idea for most), choose a non- or low fat product. By age two, kids should be drinking and eating nonfat or 1% fat dairy. Choose low or nonfat versions of milk, sour cream, yogurt and cheese. Low fat buttermilk makes a good substitute for whole milk in many of your favorite recipes.

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Registered and licensed dietitian Susan L. Burke, MS, CDE, is the author of *Making Weight Control Second Nature: Living Thin Naturally*, which offers a wealth of practical information, tips and strategies for people who are serious about taking control of their health, fad-free, for life. She may be reached online at [www.SusanBurkeMarch.com](http://www.SusanBurkeMarch.com).