



Weight Loss Tips for Athletes

The only way to lose fat weight is to consume fewer calories than the body uses. Athletes who successfully lose weight learn how to apply this concept, while maintaining the energy levels required for training. However, before a fat weight loss diet is attempted, have a body composition analysis done to assess weight loss needs and set reasonable goals. Many athletes believe they need to lose weight because of a number on a scale. However, these athletes can have a high proportion of muscle weight (which weighs more than fat) compared to their fat weight. In such cases weight loss may impair performance.

Reducing calories and increasing physical activity is the healthy way to lose weight. Avoid fad and gimmick diets that promise quick or easy weight loss. The quick weight loss on these diets is usually due to water and muscle loss and often the weight loss is quickly regained. Fad and gimmick diets may give a quick fix, but they can have adverse effects on performance and health.

Tips for Healthy Weight Loss

1. Lose weight at a gradual pace or a loss of _ - 1 pound a week.

This pace allows for fat weight loss without irritability, fatigue, and weakness.

2. Create a 250 - 500 daily calorie deficit for effective long-term weight loss.

This can be done by decreasing daily calorie intake by 250 - 500 calories, increasing physical activity by 250 - 500 calories a day, or by using a combination of a physical activity increase and calorie intake decrease to create a 250-500 daily calorie deficit.

3. Choose a variety of foods from all of the Food Group Types in Sports Food Swaps.

Don't cut out whole Food Groups, instead choose lower calorie foods from each Food Group. For example, choose low fat or skim milk instead of whole milk, choose a skinless chicken breast over prime rib, and choose pretzels over chips.

4. Don't skip meals.

Eating food in small meals and snacks at regular intervals throughout the day, three or more times a day, provides a steady fuel supply to the body and keeps your metabolism

from slowing down. Also, waiting until you're "starved" to eat can lead to binge eating which promotes overeating and makes losing weight more difficult.

5. Don't cut calories too low.

Cutting calories too low can slow metabolism and make it difficult to consume the necessary nutrients essential for performance and health. The lowest recommended calorie intake is your Resting Energy Expenditure (REE) calorie needs. This is the calorie level equal to the calories needed by your body to keep its systems working and its temperature regulated. See Handout #1 "Calorie Need Estimates" to calculate your REE calorie needs.

6. Eat smaller food portions.

Decreasing your portion sizes will help cut caloric intake.

7. Eat slowly.

It takes time for the body to adjust to the food eaten and to send a satiety signal to the brain. Eating slowly also helps prevent overeating by allowing time for this signal to take effect.

8. Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration.

In addition to water, plain ice tea and artificially sweetened drinks can also help reduce daily caloric intake and help to keep you hydrated.

9. Be aware of the calories from all the food and drinks you swallow.

Nibbling on food throughout the day, even if it is just a bite here or there, can contribute substantially to your total

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calorie intake. Beverages, like regular soda, slushes, fruit punches, lattes and other coffees with flavoring and milk, beer, cocktails and other beverages with alcohol and sports drinks, can add up to a lot of extra calorie consumption. Limit high intakes of these high calorie drinks.

10. Don't cut down too much on fat.

Many athletes feel that fat intake is the culprit to unwanted weight gain. Although a diet high in fat can lead to excess calorie intake and weight gain because it contributes to an excessively high calorie intake, a certain amount of fat is necessary to maintain good health and performance. A fat intake of about 25 - 35% of total calories helps keep you feeling more satisfied and helps prevent cravings for more foods.

11. Eat your favorite foods regularly.

If you deny yourself your favorite high calorie foods, you are more likely to crave them and finally binge. Occasionally eating these foods can reduce cravings and binges. Remember, no food is taboo. Every food is okay to eat in moderation.



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