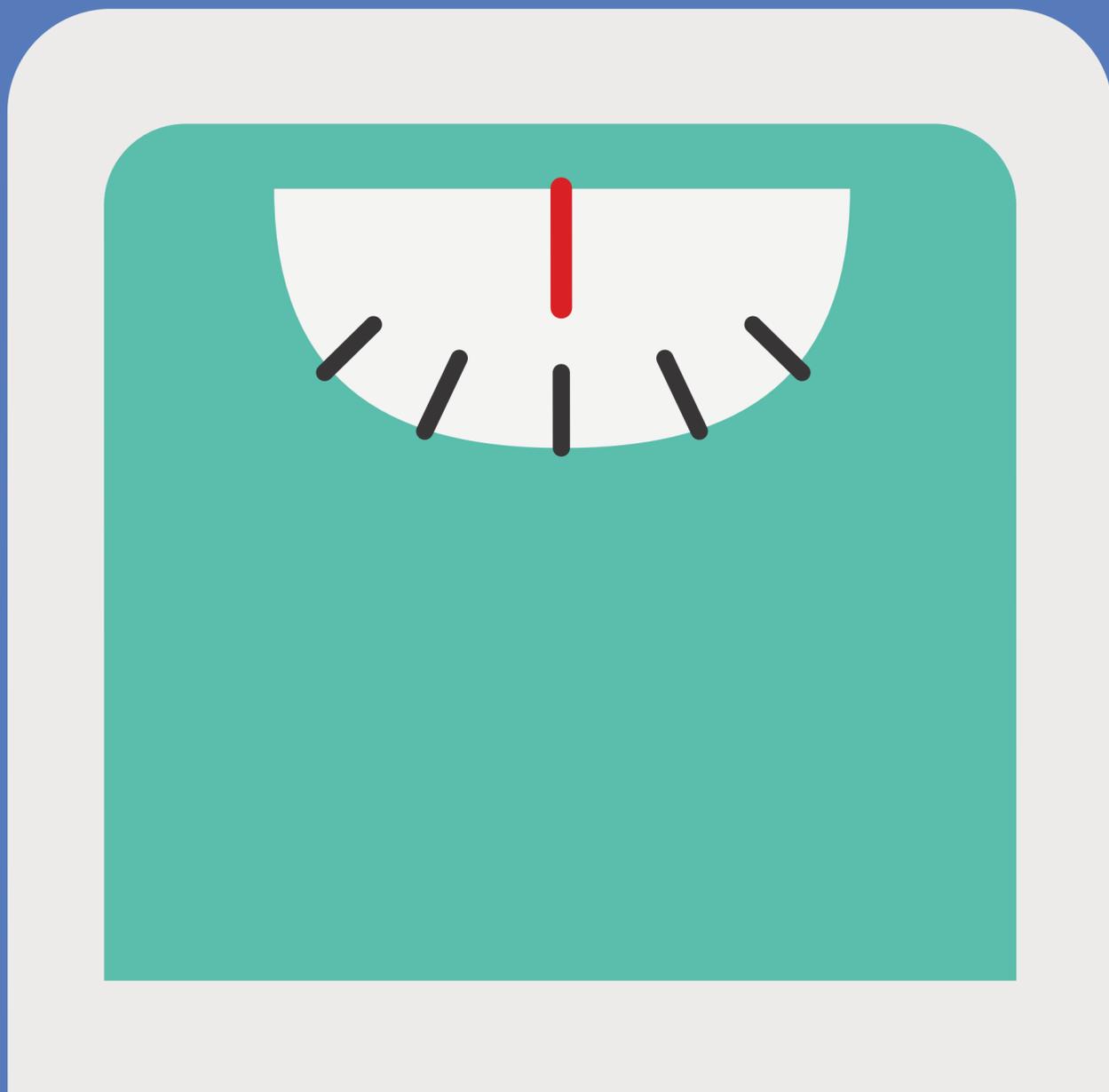


THE RUNNER'S GUIDE TO WEIGHT LOSS

*Overcoming The 10 Most
Common Roadblocks*



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Roadblock



Problem #1: Emotional Eating and Binging

We don't always eat to satisfy hunger. In fact, it's extremely common to turn to food as a way to cope with stress, anxiety, sadness, loneliness and even boredom. Emotional eating can stem all the way back to childhood. Parents often give kids a treat to stop a specific emotion—a cookie to halt crying over a lost toy, a piece of candy to distract from missing mommy or daddy or an ice cream cone to make a bruised knee feel better. We learn from an early age that food can help us cope with uncomfortable emotions like sadness, loneliness, pain or anger. Several different emotions can trigger overeating, yet experts often cite stress as the main reason adults overeat. In fact, countless studies show that individuals select unhealthy, high-fat foods when experiencing stress. Although this common emotion negatively affects men's choices, too, more women report increased food consumption during times of tension than men.

Solution:

The first step to solving emotional eating involves identifying what provokes us to overeat. Once we identify our triggers, we can then find new ways to deal with our uncomfortable feelings. For example, the next time those emotions occur, instead of opening a bag of chips or automatically reaching for a tub of ice cream, try taking a warm bath, calling a friend, making a cup of herbal tea or writing in a journal. If those tactics don't work, go for a short run, do some relaxing yoga, or read a good book. Something as simple as waiting five or 10 minutes to rethink why you're eating can help realign your choices. Emotional eating doesn't have to derail your weight loss goals. A little focus on the reasons behind your actions and finding an enjoyable substitution instead can be just what you need to stay on track.

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Problem #2: Reward Eating

Like emotional eating, reward eating often stems from patterns developed in childhood. Many adults reward children with food—a trip to the ice cream parlor for receiving a good grade, a lollipop for behaving at the doctor’s office or a candy bar for playing nice with a sibling. It’s certainly okay to feel good about completing a task, and it’s great to feel pride after accomplishing a run or workout (you should!); however, rewarding yourself with food may negate the calories you’ve just burned.

Solution:

Do you often feel the need to reward yourself for a good workout? Instead of doing so after each run, give yourself a treat for a larger, cumulative accomplishment. Indulge after reaching your weekly or monthly mileage rather than daily goals. If possible, take food out of the equation. Find other ways to reward yourself—a do-it-at-home facial, a trip to the spa, the purchase of a new pair of running shoes or shorts, etc.

Simply writing down your accomplishments in a training log or journal may give you enough of a boost. If you do feel the need to congratulate yourself with food, however, make sure the reward doesn’t negate the benefits gained from the task. For example, you can allow yourself a double scoop of mint chip ice cream (my favorite) for reaching or surpassing your weekly mileage goal, but don’t reward yourself with such a high-calorie treat for achieving a daily goal; if you do, the calories consumed will likely surpass the calories burned. Instead of eliminating the reward, replace it with a healthy alternative.

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Problem #3: Not Eating Enough

If you've been struggling to lose weight, drastically reducing your caloric intake may seem like a sure-fire way to quickly drop pounds. But not eating enough can actually derail your long-term weight loss goals. Believe it or not, too little food can be just as detrimental as too much food. Limiting your intake to extreme levels can stall your metabolism and make losing weight more difficult.

Solution:

It's true that eating fewer calories than you burn will lead to weight loss, but be careful not to take it too far. Make sure you are consuming a healthy number of calories depending on your activity level. If you're an active individual trying to lose weight, you shouldn't drop below 1,200 calories a day; you may need to consume even more, depending on your running or exercise program's intensity or mileage. If your diet consists of a variety of wholesome foods, and you limit high-calorie junk food, you should easily lose weight on a 1,200 to 1,500 calorie diet.

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Problem #4: Late-Night Snacking

Late-night snacking, if done carefully, may not cause weight gain. In other words, a small, healthy snack or a portioned-controlled indulgence won't necessarily derail your weight loss goals. The problem occurs when late-night snacking gets out of control and too many calories are consumed at an inappropriate hour, which, unfortunately, is often the case. People tend to consume excess snacks out of habit or boredom. Research shows that women often take in almost half of their day's calories during after-dinner snacking. Another study found that more than 30% of people consume 15% of their calories extremely late at night, meaning after 11 p.m.

Solution:

Nighttime snacking doesn't have to hinder your weight loss. If you must snack after dinner, simply make healthy choices, and be sure to add those calories to your daily calculation. When late-night snacking, we tend to reach for high-calorie junk food. Instead, swap out junk for healthier options, and be mindful of your eating. You can limit the number of calories you ingest by simply pausing and asking yourself whether you're eating because you're hungry, bored, stressed or in need of a mindless distraction while watching TV. More often than not, late-night eating stems from habit rather than hunger. If you have a late-night sweet tooth, try to make a new habit of eating a piece of fruit or drinking a naturally decaffeinated herbal tea. It may do just the trick without sabotaging your weight loss.

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Problem #5: Excess Carb Loading

I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but at some point over the last couple decades, carbohydrate loading went from a practice for athletes wanting to maximize their muscle glycogen stores before a challenging endurance event to a common habit of even casual exercisers before or after a lackluster workout. In the past, serious athletes would carb load several days before their event, at the same time tapering their mileage. The combination of the two would allow an athlete's muscle glycogen levels to peak, increasing the available glycogen. Studies show that carb loading can increase endurance by up to 20%. For example, a runner who could typically run 20 miles can now complete 24 before exhaustion sets in. Keep in mind, this doesn't mean that a runner doing three to five miles at a slow pace will benefit equally from carb loading. In fact, the excess carbs may cause excess weight gain for a short-distance runner, therefore hindering overall performance.

Solution:

Unless you're running for 90 or more minutes, carbohydrate loading may not be the answer—especially if you're attempting to lose weight. Carb loading should be reserved for endurance athletes preparing for a prolonged, strenuous event like a half marathon, marathon or Ironman. How do you define endurance? Although many definitions exist, sports endurance typically relates to two or more hours of continuous activity. In most cases, glycogen stores become depleted within 90 minutes of continuous exercise. Since an athlete may begin to experience exhaustion or fatigue from glycogen depletion at that point, ingesting carbs during a run may be beneficial. Only carb load for a prolonged, strenuous event with a duration of two-plus hours, and only use carb replacement during a training run that lasts more than 60 minutes. For runs that are less than an hour in length, your body already has enough stored glycogen.

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Problem #6: Fast Food

According to a study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans consume approximately 11% of their calories from fast food—and even more for overweight and adolescents. But “fast food” no longer only refers to the hamburger joint on the corner. Today, this genre also encompasses the ever-growing array of convenience foods—highly-processed, pre-packaged foods that can be found everywhere from your neighborhood convenience shop to your local grocery store. No doubt, the convenience of such foods becomes more attractive as we become increasingly busy. And, even though, as fitness-minded folks, we may not frequent fast food establishments as often as our non-running counterparts, we still need to assess the amount of convenient, pre-packaged foods we regularly consume at home. Research shows that we spend nearly 90% of our food budget on processed foods. Often, these foods of convenience consist of refined carbohydrates, lack in vitamins and nutrients and contain loads of salt, preservatives and chemicals. Remember, not all calories are created equal.

Solution:

Focus on eliminating fast food and pre-packaged convenience food from your diet. In their place, swap in wholesome options like fruit, vegetables and whole grains. I realize that creating healthy menus can take more time, but planning ahead can drastically reduce the process. Pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and prepare large quantities of bean dips and salsas over the weekend to be portioned out for the entire week. Keep healthy snacks on hand so that the next time you get too busy to do anything but visit the drive-through, you'll have easy access to some healthy alternatives to get you through the day.

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Problem #7: Lack of Sleep

Studies show that people who get less sleep tend to eat more. According to a 2011 study published in the journal *Obesity*, people who stay up later consume almost 250 more calories per day than those who go to bed early. That's an additional 91,250 calories, equivalent to 26 pounds a year!

Solution:

Try going to bed just 15 minutes earlier each night until you regularly retire at a decent hour; also, aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night. If you have trouble falling asleep, try doing some light stretching or meditation before bedtime, or take a warm bath and drink a cup of soothing, naturally-decaffeinated tea like chamomile. Aside from assisting in weight loss, getting adequate sleep brings many health benefits including improved memory, decreased stress, increased creativity, improved athletic performance and reduced anxiety and depression. Simply going to bed early can help you eliminate those late-night calories that often sneak in out of boredom or habit.

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Problem #8: Dehydration

Water is crucial to weight loss. Most of us underestimate the importance of staying well hydrated. In fact, by the time you become thirsty, you may already be dehydrated. But why exactly is water so important? Water plays a vital role in the process of burning calories, and dehydration slows down the fat-burning process. In addition to making it more difficult to lose weight, dehydration can make it difficult to concentrate, and it can increase the frequency of headaches or simply make you feel tired.

Thirst can also often be mistaken for hunger, consequently making you eat more.

Solution:

Staying well hydrated is not only important to weight loss, but it can also enhance mental clarity, slow the aging process, improve digestion, relieve joint pain and help eliminate toxins. The best news? It takes minimal effort. Try keeping a bottle of water with you at all times—in your purse, on your desk or in your car. If you're not fond of the taste (or lack thereof), try flavoring it with a splash of fresh fruit juice, or find a no-calorie or low-calorie flavored water that you enjoy. Just make sure you read labels to avoid any brands that contain excess sugar or artificial sweeteners. It goes without saying, the more you enjoy the taste of your water, the more likely you will be to drink it. This may sound a little extreme, but setting a reminder on your computer or cell phone can also help keep you on top of sipping throughout the day.

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Problem #9: Hidden Calories

People often don't take into consideration calories found in soda. And, sadly, soda is not the only culprit. Excess calories also hide in coffee drinks, alcohol and salad dressings. When it comes to coffee concoctions, just one Starbucks Grande Latte can have 272 calories. Consume one a day, and you're looking at more than 1,900 extra calories a week or 28 extra pounds a year! Calories from alcohol can also add up quickly. Just one margarita or piña colada can contain more than 550 calories. In fact, one 10-ounce Long Island iced tea contains about the same number of calories as a McDonald's Big Mac! At a restaurant, do you try to be "good" by ordering a salad? Make sure that that salad doesn't contain hidden calories, too. A chicken Caesar salad, for example, can pack 650-plus calories, and a typical Cobb salad can have even more. That's more caloric than two slices of pepperoni pizza!

Solution:

If you're trying to lose weight, be as smart about what you drink as what you eat. Not only can hidden calories found in soda, coffee drinks and alcohol accumulate, but studies have shown that some drinks like alcoholic beverages can cause us to eat more, too. Limit your intake of soda, both diet and regular, and if you are going to drink coffee or alcohol, make smart choices. Order coffee drinks in the smallest size offered, and use low-fat or non-fat milk. Stay away from the fancier versions that add high-calorie syrups and other sweeteners. Do the same for alcohol, and replace fancy, calorie-laden cocktails with light beer or wine. Craving a mixed drink? Choose low or non-calorie mixers like club soda or soda water. When ordering a salad, ask for the dressing on the side, and stay away from creamy dressings, as they are usually loaded with excess calories and fat. It may come as a surprise to many, but a salad with blue cheese or ranch dressing can be more caloric than a burger and fries.

Problem #10: Post-Run Snacking

If you're running less than an hour, even a well-intentioned, post-run snack can negate the calories you've just burned. Your snack needs to be commensurate with your exercise duration and intensity; otherwise, the extra calories will begin to pile up and counteract your weight loss efforts.

Solution:

Keep post-workout snacks small and healthy. Yes, you deserve a treat after a hard workout, but make sure that that reward doesn't pack more calories than you've just burned. If you go out for a 90-minute long run, you could use a hearty post-run snack, but if returning from an easy 30-minute jog, a small snack should suffice. In all cases, stay away from refined and highly-processed foods. After a shorter workout, a handful of nuts and dried fruit, half an energy bar, a protein shake or a small piece of fruit may be all you need.



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