



## Weight Loss: Avoid These Big Health Mistakes

Here, the most common ways that women sabotage their bodies and our tips for slimming down the healthy way.

### Overindulging on Party Food

Tables full of your favorite finger foods -- rich dips, sweet cakes, and salty chips -- can wreak havoc on your weight loss goals. Unless you keep track of your servings, you risk the chance of taking in hundreds of calories.

**Fix** Grab a single plate, fill it up with goodies, and move away from the table. It isn't necessary to skip dessert or your favorite mini-sandwich as long as you limit your portions. Taking the party away from the table will allow you to enjoy your food and evaluate your actual intake.

EMAIL THIS ARTICLE

PRINT THIS ARTICLE

BOOKMARK + SHARE

### Drinking Too Many Libations

Celebrating over a couple of beers, cocktails, or even sodas can put a real dent in your diet. In some cases, cocktails contain as many calories as an entire meal. A Long Island iced tea contains 780 calories, a margarita comes in second with 740, and a pina colada has 644.

**Fix** When in party mode, add glasses of water to the equation by switching between beer or cocktails with glasses of water. With more water and less alcohol, your skin will glow, you'll be less bloated, and you'll be healthier in the long run. Another reason to love H<sub>2</sub>O? Water aids weight loss -- even mild dehydration can slow your body's metabolism by as much as 3 percent.

### Not Getting Enough Sleep

Scrimping on sleep will not only slow you down during the day, it can also cause irritability and encourage poor eating habits. When you're tired, you're more likely to give into unhealthy food cravings. On top of that, you put yourself at a higher risk of getting sick.

**Fix** Not to be overly obvious, but the number-one fix for lack of sleep is to get more sleep. Women in their 20s and 30s should aim for seven to eight hours of quality sleep per night. To ensure you get proper shut-eye, prepare your body by mandating a bedtime for yourself. A half-hour before bed, create a peaceful, calming environment by changing into comfortable clothing, lighting a candle, and drinking warm decaf or herbal tea or milk.

### Adopting a Crash Diet

Dropping key food groups from your diet, such as carbohydrates, may help you drop water weight in the short-term, but it also deprives the body of energy and nutrients, which can cause breakouts, hair loss, and mood swings. Not exactly flattering. Another disadvantage to losing water weight: You'll deprive your muscles of water, which will lead to a loss in muscle mass and a slower metabolism.

**Fix** Eat a balanced diet and watch your portion sizes. When you have a craving for a sugary treat, satisfy it but keep your serving to a minimum. Use a smaller bowl for your ice cream and a smaller plate for your dessert; you won't be tempted to eat as much. By paying attention to your cravings and eating a balanced diet, you'll feel less deprived and more capable of sticking to healthy eating, which will help you to hit your weight loss goal.

### Over-exercising

Yes, exercise is key to shedding pounds and maintaining an ideal figure. But too much exercise to the point of daily exhaustion can make your body fragile and more prone to injury. An injury can cause an entire host of issues from chronic pain to mood swings and weight gain due to lack of exercise.

**Fix** Exercise three to four times a week for at least 30 minutes at a time. If you haven't worked out in a while or you're just starting out, don't push yourself too hard -- it's important that you get your heart rate up but that you also don't exercise beyond your body's capabilities. As you get stronger, increase the level of intensity but make sure to give yourself a day or two to rest your muscles and give them a chance to rebuild.

-- Tia Albright

Source: Dr. Susan Mitchell, PhD, RD, FADA, author of *Fat is Not Your Fate* and [SusanMitchell.org](http://SusanMitchell.org)