

RUNNER'S WORLD

Nutrition & Weight Loss: **Weight Loss**

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The Golden Rules of Weight Loss

Running keeps you fit, healthy, and happy, but to lose real weight, you also have to focus on what you eat.

By Sarah Lorge Butler

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Runners know the miles they log on the pavement, trails, and the treadmill are great for keeping them fit and healthy. High on the list of the sport's many virtues? It is an amazing tool for weight control. But weight loss is a different story. Because you run, you may think you can eat whatever you want and still drop pounds. Unfortunately, that's not true. Running is only half of the equation. You have to look hard at what and how you eat, too.

Leslie Bonci, M.P.H., R.D., pinpoints eight crucial nutrition rules of weight loss in *Run Your Butt Off!*, a new Runner's World book for beginning runners who are coming to the sport to lose weight. (The book also includes a sensible beginner's training plan and tips for runners of all abilities from Runner's World coach Budd Coates, M.S.) Bonci's advice can help any runner who wants to lose weight—whether it's five pounds or 25. She'll show you how to track your food intake, space meals to ward off hunger, and honestly reckon with the calories you consume in a day (brace yourself). These methods were tested by real runners who overhauled their eating habits and shed dozens of pounds over 12 weeks. And if they can do it, so can you.



Buy Run Your Butt Off! to learn how you can run off 10, 20, 30 pounds or more, even if you haven't run a step in years.

RULE 1: TAKE REALLY GOOD NOTES

Writing down everything you eat may sound tedious, but it pays off: Studies have shown that people who log their food intake regularly keep more weight off than those who don't take notes. Bonci recommends recording everything you eat for at least one week (and then doing so again every few weeks after that), making sure to include important details, such as when, where, why, and how much you eat. "Reviewing these details will help you glean important information about your habits," says Bonci, "and highlight ways you can make healthier choices."

Make It Work

"My clients have different systems for keeping a food log," says Bonci. A notebook will do the trick, as will an Excel sheet, or storing details in your iPhone. Bonci suggests recording whether or not you're hungry when you eat and grading the day from 1 to 5 ("1" is a day with unhealthy food, and "5" is a superhealthy day). "This can be a reality check," says Bonci, "like, *I'm not doing so badly after all*, or *My diet is worse than I thought*."

To get an idea of what your log might reveal, review the entries below from test panelist DORENE HELTON. She recorded the first at the program's outset and the second after making changes that added up to a 20-pound weight loss in 12 weeks.

BEFORE

7:30 a.m., *In front of computer*

- Bowl of Special K with 1% milk (173 calories)

- 2 cups of coffee with 1/4 cup 1% milk (31)

11:45, Kitchen table

- Tuna sandwich with mayo, relish, 1 slice cheese, 2 slices wheat bread (470)
- 1 glass 1% milk (105)

2:30 p.m., In car

- Starbucks medium caramel latte with whipped cream (420)

3:30, Kitchen table

- 1/2 apple and water (47)

7:00, Kitchen table

- 8-ounce steak, 1/2 cup mushrooms, 6 asparagus spears (452)
- 6 strawberries (23)
- 1 glass 1% milk (105)

9:00, In front of TV

- 5 crackers (88)

Total: 1,914 calories

Helton used to get a caffeine fix from sugary drinks. Now she has coffee for a fraction of the calories. Helton realized she was mindlessly eating (and taking in unnecessary calories) watching the tube.

AFTER

7:30 a.m., Kitchen table

- Kashi Go Lean Crunch with blueberries (200)
- Cup of coffee with fat-free milk (14)

10:00, Kitchen table

- Medium coffee with fat-free milk (28)

12:30 p.m., Kitchen table

- Turkey sandwich with 2 oz turkey, thin layer of mayo, 1 slice cheese, 2 slices whole-wheat bread (380)
- 4 celery sticks, 4 cherry tomatoes (21)
- 1 banana (105)

4:15, Kitchen table

- Balance Bar and apple (295)

8:45, Kitchen table

- 6-inch Subway sweet onion chicken teriyaki sandwich with lettuce, onion, and sweet peppers (380)
- 1 cup fat-free milk (91)

Total: 1,514 calories

Helton adds antioxidant-rich blueberries to her filling, high-fiber cereal.

On days she doesn't get home until late, she has a high-protein afternoon snack so she doesn't overeat at dinner.

RULE 2: MEASURE WHAT YOU EAT

Get out a cereal bowl. Fill it as you normally would with your favorite brand. Read the label to find out the serving

size and the calories per serving. Look at what's in your bowl. Is it more than a serving? Less? Chances are it's more than you think. Pour it into a measuring cup to find out.

"We measure with our eyes," says Bonci, "and our eyes are terrible judges of portions." Case in point: A study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found people serve themselves up to 53 percent more ice cream when simply given a larger scooper and bowl. And since research shows people eat about 92 percent of whatever is in front of them, it pays to know what an appropriate serving should look like. The only way to know that is to measure what you're eating.

Make It Work

While it may seem like a hassle at first, measuring out food can quickly become part of your daily routine. And after a few weeks of practice, you'll begin to train your eyes and brain to recognize what a serving should look like without having to actually measure. But first, you need the right tools to get started.

KEEP EQUIPMENT HANDY

Leave a set of measuring cups and spoons on your kitchen counter so you remember to use them.

THINK CONVENIENCE

Put a collapsible measuring cup in your favorite breakfast cereal so it's easy to measure during your morning rush.

SNACK SMART

Read the label on snack foods, and divide cookies, crackers, pretzels, and chips into individual servings. Store each in an airtight bag or container.

MAKE YOUR MARK

Read the label on block cheese to find out how many servings are in the package, then score the cheese appropriately.

RULE 3: BEEF UP YOUR PROTEIN INTAKE

Protein is essential for a healthy body; it builds muscle and preserves lean body mass. Every day, runners need at least a half gram of protein per pound of weight. For a 150-pound person, that's 75 grams. Protein also plays a key role in weight loss, says Bonci. It takes longer to digest, so you feel fuller longer, and it helps keep blood-sugar levels steady, so you don't get ravenously hungry and feel the need to overeat.

But it's not just *how much* protein you consume, but *when* you consume it that's important: Studies show you should spread your protein intake throughout the day, eating some at each meal. "Doing so is better for bone health, muscle mass, and satiety—feeling full," Bonci says. "It's more beneficial than eating very little protein during the day, then at night sitting down to a huge piece of meat."

Make It Work

Even if you add protein to every meal, it can still be hard to meet your daily needs. Bonci suggests getting more by adding it to your snacks. "Many snack foods are high in simple carbohydrates that digest quickly and are low in protein," says Bonci, "so they don't keep you full for long." These weight-loss friendly options offer a dose of protein to satisfy your hunger.

- Smoothie with low-fat chocolate milk and whey protein isolate (27 g protein)
- 5.3-ounce container of fat-free Greek yogurt (15 g protein)
- 1/2 cup cottage cheese with vegetables to dip (14 g protein)
- 1/4 cup roasted soy nuts (13 g protein)
- 1/2 cup edamame (11 g protein)
- 1 cup Raisin Bran cereal and 1/2 cup skim milk (9 g protein)
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter on a banana (9 g protein)
- 2 slices reduced-fat cheese with an apple (7 g protein)



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RULE 4: ADD COLOR TO EVERY MEAL

Eat red, yellow, orange, green, or purple food—and Bonci doesn't mean red wine and Lucky Charms. She's talking about packing your diet with fruits and vegetables. They're low-calorie and loaded with vitamins and minerals your body needs to function, keep your immune system up, and maintain strong bones and muscles. They're also rich in fiber, which is key for slimming down. Tufts University researchers have found that people who eat high-fiber diets are less hungry and lose more weight than people who eat less fiber. "It takes longer to process fiber," says Bonci, "so you're full longer."

Make It Work

"Many people have good intentions and buy a bunch of fresh produce," says Bonci. "Then they forget to use it, and find it later rotting in the bottom of their fridge." While fresh is great, it's not the only way to work in fruits and vegetables.

"Frozen, canned, dried, jarred—those are all fine, too," says Bonci, who suggests filling at least one-third of your plate with vegetables. Use these ideas to color every meal, and you'll be on the path toward good health and weight loss.

Breakfast

- Add a sliced banana to cereal.
- Add frozen, defrosted berries to yogurt.
- Have a glass of tomato juice.
- Add jarred salsa to scrambled eggs.
- Top a waffle with canned peaches.

Lunch

- Put extra vegetables like cucumber or shredded carrots on sandwiches.
- Use hummus or refried beans as a spread, instead of mayo or mustard.
- Have raw vegetables in place of chips or pretzels.
- Blend frozen fruit with seltzer for a peppy drink.

Dinner

- Grill vegetable kebabs as well as meat.
- Add dried apricots or golden raisins to rice pilaf.
- Roast vegetables on the weekend and add to salads all week.
- Add frozen vegetables or canned white beans to spaghetti sauce.

RULE 5: STOP GRAZING!

A few years back, "grazing" came into vogue in dieting circles. The idea was that instead of eating three meals a day, you'd eat six or so small meals. The rationale seemed reasonable: You'd never get too hungry, and then you wouldn't eat too much at any one meal. But a study published in 2010 in the journal *Obesity* found that people who eat low-calorie diets feel more satisfied and less hungry when they eat three times a day compared to six times a day, suggesting that mini meals aren't beneficial for appetite control. People also tend to graze on unhealthy foods like crackers or cookies, says Bonci. "Most people don't graze on vegetables or chicken." Eating constantly throughout the day increases salivary secretion, explains Bonci, and the production of digestive enzymes that stimulate the gut. "The appetite switch is always on," she says. "You can't really know if you're hungry or full if you're constantly exposed to food." As Bonci puts it: "Cows graze. People shouldn't."

Make It Work

Divide your calories around three meals and one or two snacks, going at least three hours and up to four or five without eating. The goal is to eat when you're hungry but not starving, which reduces the risk of overeating. It will take a few weeks to find the timing that works best for you, but here are two plans to get started.

Scenario 1

8 a.m. Breakfast
 12 p.m. Lunch
 4 p.m. Snack
 7 p.m. Dinner

Scenario 2

7 a.m. Breakfast
 10 a.m. Small snack
 1:30 p.m. Lunch
 5:30 p.m. Dinner
 9:30 p.m. Snack

RULE 6: ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN

Runners—like anyone else—encounter trouble when there's nothing healthy at home. What's for dinner? Nothing? Might as well do takeout. "You can whack a lot of calories by creating a menu and making a meal plan," says Bonci, "and then shopping ahead of time for the ingredients you need to execute that plan." That doesn't mean you have to be rigid about your menu if, say, you get held up at work. But you should have a sense of what you're going to eat over the next seven days.

Make It Work

Set aside one hour every weekend to map out your meal plan for the coming week. Then create a shopping list for the ingredients you'll need. Stock up on quick-and-healthy staples, such as tomato sauce and whole-wheat pasta for busy days. You'll notice when you take the time to plan meals, one thing will be missing from your grocery cart—junk food. "If you've got produce, dairy, lean meat, and whole grains in there," Bonci says, "then the Cheetos, cookies, and soda become the top-off instead of the major component. There just isn't room for the bad stuff."

A WEEK OF GOOD DINNERS

SUNDAY: Broil marinated skirt steak. Serve with roasted asparagus and brown rice (stir in raisins and pecans).

MONDAY: Slice leftover steak and wrap in a whole-wheat tortilla along with pepper strips and jarred salsa.

TUESDAY: Roast a chicken (or buy one already cooked). Eat half with a baked sweet potato and steamed broccoli.

WEDNESDAY: Cook rigatoni and one bag frozen Italian vegetables. Combine with spaghetti sauce and leftover chicken.

THURSDAY: Bake halibut topped with onion and a can of seasoned, diced tomatoes. Serve with quinoa and salad.

FRIDAY: Cook instant whole-grain brown rice. Top with greens, shrimp, pineapple, and sesame dressing.

SATURDAY: Grill beef and vegetable kebabs. Slice up a baking potato, toss with olive oil and salt. Grill on foil.

RULE 7: SLOW DOWN!

Here's another mealtime experiment for you. Check the clock when you take your first bite of dinner. Look at it again when you're finished eating. How much time has elapsed? Five minutes? Ten? The longer, the better.

Scientists know it takes at least 15 to 20 minutes for nerve endings in the gut to send the signal to the brain that says, "Yup, I'm fed! You can stop eating now!" Wolfing down a meal faster than that can lead to overeating—and that can pack on serious pounds. In fact, a study published in 2008 in the *British Medical Journal* found that people who eat quickly and eat until they feel full are more than three times as likely to be overweight than people who take their time and eat slowly.



Buy Run Your

Make It Work

You have to teach yourself to eat slower, simple as that. It can be a gradual process of increasing the amount of time you take for meals. "If you're used to taking three minutes for breakfast," says Bonci, "slow down and take five, then make it 10. If you consume your lunchtime sandwich in front of the computer in five minutes, stretch it out. Eat half, wait a few minutes, have a few sips of water. Then eat the other half."

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The other benefit of slowing down and concentrating on what you're eating? "You might actually enjoy the experience," says Bonci. "Chew your food, taste it, and savor it rather than inhaling it and getting on to the next thing." Try Bonci's other tips for slowing down your next meal.

SIT DOWN

Don't eat standing at the counter, which makes it easier to get distracted or quickly refill your plate. Sit down at your kitchen or dining-room table.

AVOID FAMILY-STYLE

When food is at arm's length, you're tempted to refill your plate and eat more than you need. Keep it on the stove or counter and away from the table.

DON'T EAT ALONE

It takes longer to eat (and is more fun) when you're talking to other people.

BE WARY OF THE TV

If you're hungry while watching TV, measure out a finite amount of food and put the bag away before you sit down. Don't leave the bag open so you can reach for additional handfuls.

EAT IN LIKE YOU'RE EATING OUT

Mimic restaurant eating at home. Put your salad on the table, eat it, and then serve the main course. It extends the time it takes you to eat.

DON'T DRIVE HUNGRY

Try to go a whole week without consuming anything in the car. You can't be concentrating on the road and your food.

RULE 8: DO NOT RUSH WEIGHT LOSS

In Bonci's experience helping clients lose weight, she's noticed the self-education process takes about 12 weeks. You need three months to train your brain to make a habit of good consumption behaviors. You need three months to get used to reading labels at the grocery store, to learn how to plan your meals and shop, to figure out how to add in more fruits and vegetables.

Quick-fix or fad diets, like those that rely too much on one ingredient (remember the cabbage soup diet?) or exclude nutrients (like fat or carbs), are destined to fail because they're just that—a quick fix. "You want habits that are sustainable for years, not a few days," says Bonci. And it takes time to develop these habits. Remember, you're a work in progress, as an eater and an athlete.

Make It Work

One of the keys to slimming down for good is avoiding some of the common mistakes people make when trying to lose weight quickly. They're usually errors of deprivation: limiting options until your taste buds get bored, or holding yourself to impossible standards. Then when you fall off the wagon, all the bad habits quickly return. So remember to be flexible, and don't be too hard on yourself.

MAKE YOUR FOOD TASTE GOOD

"When people go into diet mode, all they eat is grilled chicken salad day in and out," says Bonci. "Pretty soon their eyes, tongue, and brain start begging for something else—like salty chips or sweet ice cream." She suggests trying foods with different textures, spices, and flavors. The more variety, the less likely you'll experience cravings for less healthy items.

KEEP FINE-TUNING YOUR PLAN

Sometimes an injury throws your upcoming race out the window. So you readjust and come back stronger. Same holds true for your diet. A good way to re-examine your strategy is to restart your food log. You might realize you've been hungrier on tough workout days and need an extra snack. Or you might see you've been rushing through lunch and should slow down.

DON'T GIVE UP

Just because you had an extra cookie, don't fall into the "I've blown it" mind-set. "People set up such rigid guidelines," Bonci says. "Then it's, Uh-oh, I deviated, so I might as well continue eating until I go to bed. Get out of the 'good' or 'bad' mind-set. Maybe it was more than you wanted, but it's not the end of the world. Move on. You'll be far more successful on your path to weight loss."

BOOST THE BURN

Best running workouts to blast more calories

Go Long

The longer you run, the more calories you burn, says *Runner's World* coach Budd Coates, M.S. Add one to your routine every other week. But build up slowly, so your total weekly mileage doesn't jump by more than 10 percent in a week.

Go Faster

Speedwork is a great calorie burner, since you burn more calories per minute, says Coates. Run for 10 minutes at a comfortable pace. Then alternate running hard for one minute and easy for one minute, five times.

Go Up

Hill running takes more effort, so it burns more calories. Find a route with four hills, and run it once a week. Or run hills on the treadmill by adjusting the incline.

Go Double

Coates suggests starting the next part of your routine, like strength training, right after your run to extend the time you're active and burn more calories.

FAT TRAPS

Survive high-calorie situations unscathed

Problem: Happy Hour

Survive It: Alcohol stimulates appetite, so pre-empt that hunger with a snack with protein. Don't linger at the bar if unhealthy foods are within reach. Order low-calorie drinks, like a glass of wine or light beer.

Problem: Afternoon Munchies

Survive It: Is it hunger or boredom? If it's boredom, take a walk to the water fountain for a drink. If it's hunger, plan a healthy snack. Or save half your lunch to eat when you hit your afternoon lull.

Problem: Office Goodies

Survive It: If the cake is for a really special occasion, have a slice. Then make a compromise later. Save the nuts and fruit you brought for tomorrow. And move treats to the fridge so they're out of sight.

Problem: Family Barbecues

Survive It: Bring a healthy dish, like fruit salad. Then enjoy the special foods you don't have regularly. Avoid everyday options, like potato chips—they don't taste different just because you're at a party.

**Dorene Helton**

Age: 47

Height: 5'2"

Residence: Bethlehem, PA

Starting Weight: 193 pounds

Ending Weight: 173 pounds

OLD HABITS

A former teacher and now stay-at-home mom, Helton snacked with her son when he came home from school. During dinner, she'd get up and down from the table multiple times to get things for her family.

NEW OUTLOOK

Now Helton pays more attention to her hunger levels and only snacks if she's hungry. With her family's support, "I also eat more slowly without constant interruptions," which helps her tune in to when she's full.

START SLOW

"When I first started running, I would try to go too fast, which would tire me out really quickly," says Helton. Her advice is to not get caught up in anyone else's pace. "Tune in to what your body is saying," she says.



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**Jennifer Kush**

Age: 27

Height: 5'8"

Residence: Allentown, PA

Starting Weight: 212 pounds

Ending Weight: 190 pounds

OLD HABITS

When Kush began a new job as a lab tech, she started working through lunch and late into the evening. By the time she left work, "I was starving and would stop for fast food during my commute home," she says.

NEW OUTLOOK

Kush realized skipping lunch made her overeat later. Now she plans out meals and takes time for lunch. "I also keep portable, healthy foods in my car," says Kush, "so I'm not tempted to stop for drive-thru."

SKIP THE SCALE

Kush doesn't weigh herself too often. "Every other week or so," she says. Instead, she uses her pants size as a guide. "When I started the program, my pants got so loose, I had to buy a few new pairs in quick succession."

**Harrison Galac**

Age: 24

Height: 5'7"

Residence: St. Clair Shores, MI

Starting Weight: 165 pounds

Ending Weight: 155 pounds

OLD HABITS

Galac, a law student, spent all his time studying, leaving little time for cooking and exercise. The pizzas caught up with him, and in 2010 he hit 200 pounds. He shed 35 on his own. But with 10 left to lose, he plateaued.

NEW OUTLOOK

Galac realized there was a lot of variation between what he ate during the week compared to on weekends when he'd splurge.

"Now I have a few indulgences midweek so I don't feel deprived and can stay more consistent."

SECRET WEAPON

Galac tends to eat quickly and rush through meals, which can lead to overeating and feeling stuffed. So now he eats with chopsticks. "I'm not very good at using them," he says, "so they force me to eat slowly."



Amy Weiss

Age: 35

Height: 5'5"

Residence: Catasauqua, PA

Starting Weight: 163 pounds

Ending Weight: 153 pounds

OLD HABITS

Weiss—a mom of two and college admissions counselor—had a healthy diet but enjoyed sweets a little too regularly. She also knew it was important to eat protein, but the nutrient was often missing from her meals.

NEW OUTLOOK

Weiss still indulges in the sweets she loves—"just less often." She also doubled her protein intake, swapping Greek yogurt for regular and adding more turkey and hummus to sandwiches. "Now I have more energy," says Weiss.

RECRUIT FRIENDS

For Weiss, having a support network made all the difference.

"Running with friends makes it so much easier," says Weiss.

"We're all so busy that it's the only time we have to chat, and it keeps us motivated."