

10 Tips for a Healthier Weekend

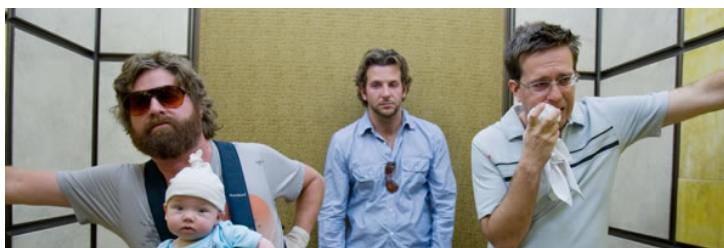
How to Stay on Track 7 Days a Week

-- By Jennipher Walters, Certified Personal Trainer and Fitness Instructor

We all know how it goes. You make good food choices, avoid temptations, and work out every morning only to find that on Friday or Saturday night, your willpower goes out the window. Somehow you begin noshing on chicken fingers and guzzling beer then snoozing through your Spinning class the next morning. Sound familiar?

The weekend sure can pose a challenge to our health and weight-loss goals. Why? Well, during the week, we tend to plan ahead and follow a schedule. We get up, eat breakfast, head to work, eat planned snacks during our breaks, enjoy lunch at the same scheduled time each day, and find ways to squeeze in a little exercise. Many of us even pack a whole day's worth of food and do pretty well at making healthy decisions day to day.

During the weekend, it might seem that all bets are off. Without a set schedule (and more opportunities for temptation) one weekend can easily undo a whole week of healthy habits.



But weekends don't have to be this way. In fact, weekends are a great time to practice healthy behaviors because you usually have more time to do so.

So, how do you change your unhealthy weekend habits? A good start would be to begin incorporating these healthy weekend tips so you can stay healthy—and on track!

1. Squeeze in a longer workout. The best part of the weekend is that you have more free time. So while you might not be able to squeeze in a 30-minute run over lunch during the week, you can use the weekend to go for a longer run at a beautiful park nearby. Or go to the gym to try a new hour-long class. Use the weekend as a time to refresh your workout and get more activity in without feeling rushed.

2. Eat like it's a weekday. When you think about it, it doesn't really make much sense to eat differently on the weekend than you do during the week—especially if your food choices during the week keep you fueled and energized. It can be easy to skip meals on the weekend and then make up for it later by overindulging at dinner. So, make a point to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner while sitting down. Pack snacks for when you're on the go, and follow a schedule just like you would during the week. Your body will thank you!

3. Stick to your usual sleep schedule. Are you someone who has a firm bedtime during the week only to stay up late and sleep in on the weekends? Changing your sleep patterns could throw off your schedule (hard to eat breakfast when you get up at noon!), and could also interfere with weight loss. Just think of all those times you stayed up later than usual, got hungry and ended up eating something unhealthy! Changing your sleep schedule can also make it harder to fall asleep on Sunday night which could set you up for a tired Monday.

4. Get outdoors. Because most of us work indoors during the daylight hours, the weekend provides a nice opportunity to get outside, see the sun and connect with nature. Heading outside can boost your body's production of vitamin D, plus studies show that people are happier when they spend time out in nature. So, get out there and enjoy the great outdoors!

5. Fuel yourself for weekday success. Ask yourself honestly if you pushed yourself too hard with workouts or restricted your food or calories too much during the week. If so, come Friday, your body may be hungry and tired, which can lead to overeating and underexercising on the weekend. Remember to practice moderation every day, eating and exercising in a way that you can sustain

for the long haul—not just a few days or weeks.

6. Limit your drinks. While many of us forgo the soda, beer and wine during the week, we loosen up over the weekend and drink more of our calories. Just remember that the calories in beverages can add up quickly if you're not careful. Go easy on the drinks, or try healthier drink swaps if you just can't forgo that fancy coffee or sweet tea on Saturday! Practice moderation when it comes to alcohol, too. Just because you were "good" during the week doesn't mean that it's OK to make up for that with one night of all-out binge drinking. Here's what you need to know about fitting alcohol into a healthy diet.

7. Plan for relaxation. Most of us are busy during the week and even our weekends seem to become non-stop errands, chores, work and travel. So how do you find time to relax? Take the whole weekend (or at least part of it) to schedule some downtime for at least an hour or two. Whether it's practicing your favorite hobby, seeing a movie with friends or even meditating quietly, do something every weekend that recharges you. You'll not only feel better, but also beat stress (which may also help you drop a few pounds).

8. Break the on-again, off-again diet mentality. If you have a history in yo-yo dieting, make sure that you're not alternating between being "good" and "bad" throughout the course of a week. View the weekend as time for you—not a time to rebel or "cheat" on your diet and exercise plan. Remember that being at a healthy weight is about sustainable healthy lifestyle changes, not just a diet and exercise plan that you can maintain Monday through Friday. Revisit your goals and recommit to making healthy and realistic choices every day that set you up for success in the long term.

9. Weigh in Monday morning. If you need extra help being accountable over the weekend, schedule your weekly weigh-in for Monday morning. Knowing that you'll step on the scale at the start of the week can help you to stay accountable and be more aware of your weekend choices.

10. Plan for the week ahead. What better way to stay healthy on the weekend than by using your extra time to continue to set yourself up for success? Take a Sunday afternoon or evening to plan your meals, hit the grocery store, and do some big batch cooking for the week ahead. That way, when your busy week gets even busier, you'll already be ahead of the curve and able to stay on track! Don't forget about laundering your workout clothes, packing your gym bag, and getting prepared for workouts, too.