



Want to shift a few kilos, and keep them off? Here's how...

by Sally Anderson Sports Dietitian-Nutritionist

1. Learn the difference between 'flexible restriction' and 'rigid restriction'.

The former will result in weight loss, while the latter tends to result in a yo-yoing body weight, as there is only so long we can stick with a 'diet' before we break it. Allow yourself occasional treats as you start your weight loss journey.

2. Practise the best exercise you can to lose weight: the two-handed push-up, away from the table!

Stop eating when you are no longer hungry, and in about 20 minutes you will feel completely satisfied. Do you really need something else after dinner? Or is this simply a habit? If you are not physically hungry, you do not need another round of food.

3. Start reading ingredient lists.

The closer your food is to how it was when it came out of the ground or off the tree, the better it is for you. Rather than paying attention to the numbers on the food label, take a look at the ingredient list. This will tell you how processed a food is. When a food manufacturer 'processes' a food, it is likely that they add extra sugars and fats that you would not add yourself if you were creating the food. This adds unnecessary calories, and robs your food of healthy nutrients as it undergoes the processing. The fewer ingredients on that list, and the fewer numbers (that is, preservatives, additives) that appear in the ingredient list, the better the food is for you.

4. Make a habit of moving it to lose it!

Australian health authorities recommend 30 minutes of activity on most days (that is, five to six days per week). This however, is the amount required to maintain a healthy weight. To lose weight, it is likely that you will need to be doing more than this. The amount you need to do depends on many factors, including how much you have to lose, your current regime and your exercise history, and of course, and any injuries that need accounting for. Consult your sports dietitian/exercise physiologist to find out what will work for you.

5. Sleep it off.

As crazy as this idea sounds, it is likely that if you sleep more, your weight will come off more easily! Medical researchers have established a clear link between sleep and body weight. How so? Let's take a few steps back and look at what our hormones do.

- **Leptin** is a hormone produced in your fat cells, and it sends a signal to the brain when you are full
- **Ghrelin** is another hormone, produced in the gastrointestinal tract, that stimulates your appetite

When you do not get enough sleep, leptin levels drop, which means you do not feel as satisfied after you eat. Lack of sleep also causes ghrelin levels to rise, which means your appetite is stimulated, and you want more food. This makes for a dangerous 'overeating' environment.

If you want to shed some kilos, logging a few extra hours of sleep is not a bad idea, particularly if you currently get less than six hours of sleep a night. Most people need seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Some more, some less. But try it! You may just discover that you are not as hungry, or that you have fewer cravings for sugary, calorie-dense foods.

6. Ask an expert.

Having a meal plan that is designed for your unique needs is invaluable. Have you ever followed a magazine diet but found it hard to stick to for longer than a few weeks? This is common, but it keeps the dieting industry on its feet. You can beat it by seeking advice for you. A sports dietitian can account for your training and officiating and other work/life commitments and tailor a meal plan to your world. This gives you the best chance at success.