

# 10 Fitness Mistakes

## Mistakes

A fitness instructor with a beard and short brown hair, wearing a blue athletic t-shirt and a black lanyard, is smiling and holding a tablet computer. He is standing in a gym with a rack of dumbbells and a person lying on a bench in the background.

Discover 10 Critical Mistakes That  
Are Actually Keeping You Unfit

## Introduction

There's no doubt that losing weight can be difficult. It is estimated that 80% of people on diets fail and of those who do succeed, 40% will gain the weight back within a year. With numbers like these it's no wonder modern society's obesity epidemic shows no signs of slowing down.

Losing weight does appear difficult, but this is only because there is so much information out there that it's difficult to discern truth from fad or even from advertisement.

With so much advice on what to do, it may be a more prudent approach to define the problem as a list of things NOT to do.

The great artist Michelangelo, once said of sculpting David: "the form has always been there, I had only to remove the rock around it".

And so it can be said of weight loss, both literally and when looking for an effective strategy.

So here are the top 10 most common weight loss mistakes you need to stop doing now!

## **Mistake #1: Skipping Breakfast**

Breakfast is often called “the most important meal of the day”, and that’s because it is. Not only is breakfast nutritionally important, in that providing your body with a supply of healthy nutrients first thing in the morning promotes good general health and optimal physical and mental performance throughout the day, but putting some coal in the furnace upon waking up kick-starts your basal metabolic rate, helping you burn more calories throughout the day, regardless of activity.

## **Mistake #2: Using Artificial Sweeteners**

Artificial sweeteners like Splenda, Sweet N’Low, and Equal promise the taste benefits of sugar without any of the caloric burden. That’s a sweet deal, right? The average person uses up to 500 packets of artificial sweeteners per year! Artificial sweeteners may not carry any of the caloric consequences that real sugar does but they are not without costs.

Research is showing that these reportedly harmless sugar substitutes may be linked to diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and even weight gain. That’s right! Those calorie-free packets of guilt-free goodness you dump indiscriminately into your coffee to help you lose weight may actually be keeping you from doing so (and also causing other health issues).

How you ask? Well your body doesn’t actually use any of the food you eat for energy directly. It must convert all nutrients destined for use as fuel to glucose, a sugar that is the fundamental fuel that your body uses to create energy (like gasoline in your car). In order to

regulate how much of the glucose floating around your bloodstream actually gets converted to energy, your body uses a molecule called insulin to “open up” your cells to receive glucose and other nutrients.

Insulin (secreted by the pancreas) is mostly stimulated by the presence of sugar in the bloodstream but it can also be stimulated by the mere act of tasting something sweet. I think you know where I’m going with this. Artificial sweeteners stimulate insulin production in the bloodstream but provide no actual sugar to be absorbed! This totally confuses the crap out of your body and leads to all kinds of metabolic problems including diabetes.

But your body is pretty smart, it picks up on this whole insulin with no sugar thing and starts to adapt by making you more sensitive to it. Then when you do eat some real sugar, your body will compensate, leading to production of more energy than you need, the excess being stored as fat.

So avoid using artificial sweeteners now!

### **Mistake #3: Going Hungry**

Despite the deadly obesity epidemic in modern society, we have it pretty good. They say if you eat three meals per day you are better off than 90% of the world’s population. You’re also better off than almost 100% of all the people who have ever lived in history! Even a monarch living in the 16th century was susceptible to drought, famine, and disease, had no access to medical care, and no Netflix! It was pretty bad. We’re at the apex of convenience here in this day and age, and we should be grateful. Unfortunately, our bodies never prepared for the best.

Our genes have run the evolutionary gauntlet of metabolic adversity and come out as incredibly efficient at energy conservation. In case you missed it, energy conservation means storing fat. Your body is constantly preparing for famine whether you want it to or not. Skipping meals and letting yourself go hungry is like telling your body that “the food has run out and to prepare for boot and shoelace stew for the next 10 months!” This leads to a cascade of physiological changes involving a number of hormones that not only lockdown stored body fat but create an environment where more fat is stored when you do finally eat. And I don’t know about you, but hunger tends to be the leading cause of some pretty bad decision making when it comes to nutrition. Taco Bell has never felt like a good idea when I was full.

## **Mistake #4: Consuming Liquid Calories**

When we think calories, we often think of food; solid food. But often times a significant portion of calories we take in (especially those known as “empty” calories or those having no nutritional value) come from liquid sources like soda, juices, and so-called “sports drinks”. To make matters worse, these calories almost always come in the form of high-glycemic sugars like high-fructose corn syrup.

The glycemic index is a scale measuring the impact a given food has on insulin levels. You remember insulin? The chemical that “opens up” your cells to accept nutrients? Sugars like high-fructose corn syrup cause your insulin levels to spike significantly in a short amount of time. This leads to abrupt surges in energy production and unless you’re engaging in an energy-demanding activity during the time the energy is being produced, nearly all of it will be in excess and

consequently stored as fat. It is best to avoid all sugary drinks and their diet counterparts (see mistake #2).

## **Mistake #5: Counting Calories**

Counting calories seems like it would make sense and it does to some extent. Your body needs X amount of calories per day and uses Y amount of calories per day. The difference between the two as an excess or deficit will determine whether you gain or lose weight. After all, where would any extra energy come from? It's not like your body can somehow break the laws of physics!

This leads to the thinking that all you have to do is figure out how many calories you need, take in less, and you'll definitely lose weight! That's just science! Well your body is quite the chemist! We wouldn't have survived as a species had our bodies been so simple and rigid in the ways it created energy. Our bodies are incredibly versatile and dynamic. Losing weight means going against millions of years of evolution so you'd better be as clever and versatile as your body if you're going to succeed.

An extreme caloric deficit will definitely cause weight loss but before your body taps into those precious fat reserves, it will begin metabolizing anything it can for non-subcutaneous fat (fat stored not under your skin but around your organs - you need that stuff) and protein stored throughout your body which is - well - you. That's right, your body will cannibalize itself to keep you alive! This is the extreme case, of course. A moderate caloric deficit would cause weight loss as well, but the sources of those calories and their proportions will determine if and how much weight you will lose. To

sum it up, forget about calories. Focus on good nutrition and the calories will work themselves out.

## **Mistake #6: Too Much Cardio**

A common piece of advice given to people looking to shed some weight is to “do a lot of cardio”. Cardiovascular exercise has become the quintessential poster-child for the person getting in shape. The images of sweat, increased body temperature and heavy breathing just seem like they somehow “burn” or “melt” fat. But this is a misnomer that leads to a lot of misconception about how cardiovascular exercise contributes to weight loss.

Fat is not candle wax. It is not melted in the presence of heat. Cardiovascular exercise “burns” fat by two mechanisms: 1) the contribution to a caloric deficit (see #5) and 2) using stored body fat as fuel during exercise via the Krebs Cycle.

Without getting into the complex chemical reaction that make it up, the Krebs Cycle is a metabolic pathway designed to provide longer-lasting energy in situations of moderate physical exertion. It is true that during the Krebs Cycle, a greater percentage of energy used at the moment will come from stored body fat. But the percentage is nonetheless relatively low compared to the other sources like glucose and muscle glycogen.

The body has many systems in place to deliver energy in high-stress situations and the Krebs Cycle is just one of them. Also, the Krebs Cycle doesn't even kick in until about 20 minutes of consistent activity.

Cardiovascular exercise is just that; a form of exercise for your heart and lungs, which is both great and necessary given that the leading cause of death in most modern countries is not obesity but heart disease. Still, cardio is not a viable means of fat loss. It never has been. It only appears that way because people who engage in lots of it often practice good nutrition.

## **Mistake #7: Consuming Too Many Condiments**

Like sugary drinks, dressings and condiments can carry a lot of hidden calories in the form of sugar and saturated fat as well.

Ketchup is perhaps the most widely used condiment and is also one of the most harmful. Ketchup is mostly high-fructose corn syrup, the same sweetener used in soda and many other processed foods. Its high-glycemic value has a significant impact on insulin levels and therefore blood sugar. As mentioned before, this surplus energy results in a metabolic environment that favors and promotes fat storage. As far as your body is concerned, you might as well be pouring sugar on your burger and fries.

Other sauces and condiments come with similar problems. Like ketchup, BBQ sauce is mostly sugar, and many salad dressings are dense with saturated fat and tons of excess calories.

So limit the use of these and many other condiments as part of a well-balanced diet.

## **Mistake #8: Binging on Fruit**

Fruit is pretty much the poster child for a healthy diet. Ask anyone to name a healthy food and “fruit” will seldom go unmentioned. Fruits contain an array of essential vitamins and minerals, a good amount of fiber, and tons of natural sugar!

"Wait. What's that part about sugar? Oh, but it's natural; nothing to worry about!"

Well unfortunately, just because fruits grow on a tree, doesn't mean they want you to have abs. Fruits contain a type of sugar called "Fructose". Fructose doesn't have as high an impact on blood sugar levels as high-fructose corn syrup (the latter being a highly refined version) but it does have an impact similar to plain table sugar.

There is nothing special or magical about fruit. Yes, they contain vitamins and minerals. Yes, they have some fiber. And, yes, they are natural and a great alternative to soda and candy bars. But if your goal is to lose weight, fruits contain too much sugar for their benefits to outweigh their metabolic cost. Your lunch of cantelope slices may be contributing to your weight loss by being low in calories and being in place of something less healthy, but it is undermining your weight loss by delivering a high dose of simple sugars to your bloodstream. Fruit must be treated like a snack. Nature's candy is still, in fact, candy.

## **Mistake #9: Quitting Too Soon**

Nutrition aside, losing weight involves a lot of other factors. It's not easy to consistently maintain a strict diet with so many amazing foods at your fingertips all day everyday. Our minds and bodies are simply not set up to handle the plethora of food that's available to us today.

Losing weight can be a much more difficult psychological struggle than a physiological one and many people simply give up too soon. You must remain cognizant of the fact that losing weight runs in the face of millions of years of human evolution. You are going against the very code written into your DNA!

Depending on how much weight you have to lose and to what extent you want to lose it, losing weight may be very relatively quick and easy or difficult and slow-going. But your body will adapt to even this new stress and eventually realign its metabolism to support your efforts.

You will become psychologically accustomed to your new eating habits and will no longer crave the foods you did before. This shift in thinking and physiology does not take place immediately but gradually over time. Usually between 6-8 weeks is long enough for you to become accustomed to your new diet so stick with it for at least that long.

## **Mistake #10: Not Seeking Professional Help**

While there is a lot of information available out there on the topic of weight loss, figuring out what works and what doesn't can be a daunting proposition. You should not attempt it alone.

Someone knowledgeable in the field of fitness and nutrition would be an indispensable ally if you're going to lose those extra pounds and keep them off.

When it comes to health, hiring a personal trainer may be one of the best investments you can make!

So if you want to get started on your weight loss journey, or even if you're just trying to go to the next level with your fitness, then give us a call or visit our website today!