



A Research-Based Fat-Loss Checklist



This checklist has been composed to help you understand what current research says about fat loss. While all principles are based on studies with many participants who differ in their backgrounds, these guidelines can help to get you started.

- A combination of diet and physical activity produces the greatest weight loss, followed by diet alone. Physical activity alone is useful for maintaining weight loss (Schaar, Moos-Thiele, & Platen, 2010).
- Exercising *a minimum* of 150 minutes per week is more important than the intensity level (vigorous vs. moderate) and produces greater weight loss than exercising less than 150 minutes per week (Chambliss, 2005). Individuals who exercise more than this, ideally closer to 300 minutes per week (or about an hour per day), experience greater weight loss and better maintenance (Jakcic et al., 2001).
- Eating fewer calories is more important for weight loss than the exact distribution of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats (Ballesteros-Pomar, Calleja-Fernandez, Vidal-Casariago, Urioste-Fondo, & Cano-Rodriguez, 2009; Capel et al., 2008).
- There is little significant difference between eating a very-low-carb ketogenic diet (e.g., Atkins) compared to eating a low-fat diet for weight loss (Bueno, Melo, de Oliveira, & da Rocha Ataide, 2013).
- Lowering dietary fat intake is associated with lower weight, lower BMI (body mass index), and lower waist circumference (Hooper, Abdelhamid, Moore, Douthwaite, Skeaff, & Summerbell, 2012). Low-fat diets have been shown to help prevent weight gain in normal weight individuals, and produce weight loss in overweight individuals (Astrup, 2001).
- Eating more sugar can be fattening, but it's because of eating *extra calories*, not just from eating sugar. Sugar by itself does not necessarily cause weight gain (Saris, 2003; Te Morenga, Mallard, & Mann, 2013).
- Enjoying a daily sweet snack – either chocolate or otherwise – can help to promote weight loss and body composition improvements *as long as it is part of a reduced-calorie diet* (Piehowski, Preston, Miller, & Nickols-Richardson, 2011).
- Artificial sweeteners really can be fattening: studies have found they can lead to increased body weight and obesity (Swithers & Davidson, 2008), and they do *not* help with weight loss or reduce weight gain (Mattes & Popkin, 2009).
- Using 1 or 2 vitamin/mineral-fortified, energy-reduced meal replacement products per day can help individuals to lose more weight than simply eating a reduced calorie diet (Heymsfield, van Mierlo, van der Knaap, Meo, & Frier, 2003).
- Self-monitoring is critical for weight loss. Individuals who monitor their eating and exercise (such as through a food & exercise diary) lose more weight than those who don't (Burke, Wang, & Sevick, 2011; Hollis et al., 2008). Initial research suggests that, for some people, Smartphone apps may be even better than paper diaries (Carter, Burley, Nykjaer, Cade, & Eysenbach, 2013).

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