

SECRETS OF WEIGHT-LOSS PROS

Don't call it a diet. These experts share lifestyle tips



that help keep the pounds off permanently.

By Megan Deem

to nip their hunger quickly. But if you plan ahead, you can have a healthy snack at the ready (one that combines fruits or vegetables with lean protein and fat, like an apple with almond butter). That way, when the clock strikes, you won't find yourself going off the rails.

4 Pace your meals. Many people believe it's healthier to graze throughout the day, but Alpert says it's better to have defined end points to your eating, and to wait at least three hours between meals and snacks in order to give your digestive system time to process

1 Nix artificial sweetener. Sugar's reputation as the white devil is widely documented. But don't think that swapping a regular Coke for a diet version is doing you any favors. "The body reacts hormonally and metabolically to artificial sweeteners just like it does to regular sugar," says Brooke Alpert, a registered dietitian in New York. "Even though they don't have calories, artificial sweeteners still produce negative metabolic effects in the body, such as decreasing satiety, so you need to eat more to feel satisfied."

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2 Consume carbs last. You don't need to forgo the bread basket entirely, but wait until after you've had your vegetables and protein. "We've done a number of studies looking at the order in which diabetic and prediabetic people eat their food," says Louis Aronne, M.D., director of the Comprehensive Weight Control Center at Weill Cornell Medicine and New York-Presbyterian. "What we've shown is that having vegetables and protein before carbs, rather than the other way around, increases the hormones that enhance fullness and reduces [the ones] that amplify hunger." The effect is immediate, and you'll not only feel full faster but also feel fuller for longer.

the food. "Otherwise we're constantly elevating our blood sugar levels, and therefore our insulin levels, which basically tell your body to store fat versus burn it," she says.

3 Watch out for late-day impulses. "No one gains weight before 4 P.M.," says New York psychologist Stephen Gullo. "I call it the 'Cinderella hour.'" Gullo attributes this both to fatigue and to a drop in blood sugar around that time of day. As a result, people make bad choices in an effort

5 Modify your behavior. Once you've changed your eating habits for the better, there's no going back—if you want to maintain your trimmer shape. That means if eating whole foods does the trick for you, you can't revert to processed goodies after you've reached a certain number on the scale. According to nutritional consultant Charles Passler in New York, making the mental shift is essential to keeping weight off. "If you aren't willing to incorporate these changes into your new lifestyle," he explains, "the improvements aren't likely to be long-term." In fact, Passler says, the number-one reason people aren't successful with weight loss is that they haven't fully accepted that they need to change their eating habits permanently—as in forever. ■