

# What's Your diet downfall?

**Candy, carbs, nighttime noshing—whatever your guilty pleasure, our no-fail strategies will finally fast-track your weight loss.**

**By Jan Sheehan  
Photographs by Bonnie Holland**

**Slow and steady wins the weight-loss race, right?** Not according to a new study from the University of Florida, which found that people on plans that gave them a speedy initial drop were five times more likely to be 10 percent slimmer 18 months later than those who didn't accelerate their diet. "Not seeing results soon enough is the number-one reason women give up on weight-loss plans," notes Patricia Bannan, R.D., author of *Eat Right When Time Is Tight*.

Whoa there! Don't resign yourself to using the latest cleanse or juice fast just yet. Superrestrictive diets lack the nutrients you

need, leaving you sluggish, weak and starving. So what's the happy medium? A plan that targets your biggest diet downfall, allowing you to get slim quickly but safely. Try these easy, no-hunger strategies to outsmart every craving, and watch the postholiday pudg melt away in record time.

**Diet derailer**

**You're a carbs queen.**

Maybe man cannot live by bread alone, but woman can. Carbalicious potatoes, pasta and rolls raise levels of serotonin, a feel-good brain chemical, says Elizabeth Somer, R.D., author of *Eat Your Way to Sexy*. The catch is that refined carbs, which are

often full of empty calories, can actually slow your metabolism, studies suggest.

**To stop carbo-loading and fast-track your weight loss:**

**Power up your diet.** Protein requires more energy to digest than carbs do and builds lean muscle, so it gets your internal engine humming. In fact, Danish researchers found that subbing protein for one-eighth of the carbs you typically eat in a day allowed dieters to better maintain a recent weight loss. Aim for at least 50 grams daily—more if you're a vigorous exerciser, says Heather Bauer, R.D., founder of Nu-Train, a nutrition counseling service in New York City. Eat eggs, lean meat, poultry, fish or nonfat dairy with

meals and snacks, Bannan suggests.

**Be picky.** Opt for whole-grain bread and pasta, which have more vitamins, minerals and ab-flattening fiber than refined carbs do. In a study from Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, people who ate more fiber had less of the dangerous belly fat that has been linked to diabetes and heart disease than those who ate less fiber.

**Time it right.** Help yourself to healthy carbs, like oatmeal or whole-grain toast, in the morning and scale back at lunch and dinner. "You'll burn off the calories better and faster during the day than you will at night, when you're not as active," Bannan says. You'll also be

Chuck the refined carbs and eat more protein to help rev up your metabolism.



less likely to give into cravings, because an a.m. meal sets you up to make smart choices all day.

**QUICK TIP**

Open the blinds as soon as you wake up. Exposure to sunlight boosts serotonin levels, which may curb your appetite, according to research.

**Diet derailer**

**You're a junk-food junkie.**

Your Cookie Monster habits may not be your fault; studies indicate that such foods as chips and candy may be addictive. "They are full of fat, sugar and salt, all of which stimulate your brain to release chemicals that make you want to eat more," Bauer says.

**To ditch the habit and shed pounds sooner:**

**Budget sweets.** Reduce the amount of junk food you commonly eat in a week by two portions. Every two weeks, slash a few more from your junk-food allotment. "If you slowly wean yourself off these foods, you won't feel deprived," says Ruth Frechman, R.D., a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

**Make smart swaps.** Find healthy stand-ins for your fave foods. Replace ice cream with low-fat fro-yo, chips and dip with veggies and hummus, and french fries with baked sweet-potato fries, Bauer says.

**Turn on your diet GPS.** Modify your daily commute to remove triggers that trip you up. "When I get off the subway at my usual stop, I'm enticed by cupcake stores and pizza places," Bauer says. "But if I get off at the next stop, there are no restaurants, so I don't even think about food." Similarly, take the highway to work

instead of the local road with fast-food joints galore.

**QUICK TIP**

Banish junk-food bloat by eating bananas. They're rich in potassium, which allows the body to flush out excess sodium, giving you a flatter belly.

**Diet derailer**

**You're a chocoholic.**

Girl, you've got company: Chocolate is the food women crave most. "It contains hundreds of compounds that tweak our brain chemistry to make us feel good," Somer says.

**To tame your sweet tooth while speeding your slim-down:**

A balanced breakfast of eggs, whole-grain toast and fruit will curb your hunger all day—and night.

**Go natural.** Add at least one fruit or vegetable that has a sweet flavor—beets, corn or sweet potatoes—to every meal and snack and you'll be less likely to yearn for chocolaty treats. For dessert, top sliced mango with low-fat Greek yogurt and a sprinkling of walnuts. "Mango is sweeter than many other fruits, and its creamy consistency makes it seem indulgent," Bannan says.

**Take a hike.** When the Snickers bar

in the office vending machine calls your name, lace up your sneaks. A study in the journal *Appetite* found that a 15-minute stroll reduced chocolate cravings significantly.

**Be a connoisseur.** Shell out for the good stuff. "One ounce of high-quality chocolate is more satisfying than the less expensive kind, which isn't as rich and flavorful," Somer says. Enjoy it along with a bowl of fiber-packed strawberries, and you'll feel full in no time.

**QUICK TIP**

Sleep 30 minutes more a night. "Extra zzz's will give you energy to power through your day without a sugary pick-me-up," says Donna Arand, Ph.D., clinical director of the Kettering Sleep Disorders Center in Dayton, Ohio.

**Diet derailer**

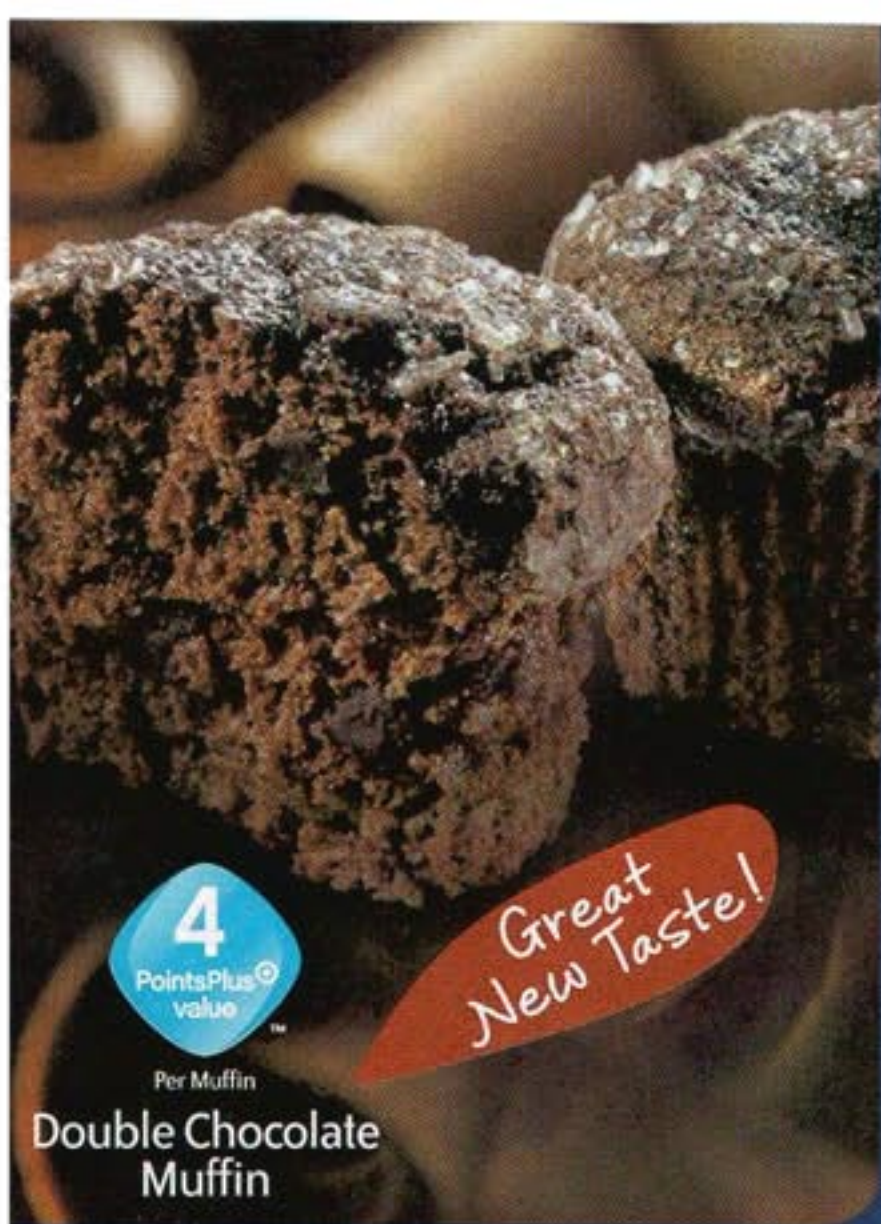
**You snack at night.**

You're good all day, and then—wham!—that pint of Ben & Jerry's is history. Thirty-one percent of women surveyed by FITNESS said they munch more after dinner than at any other time.

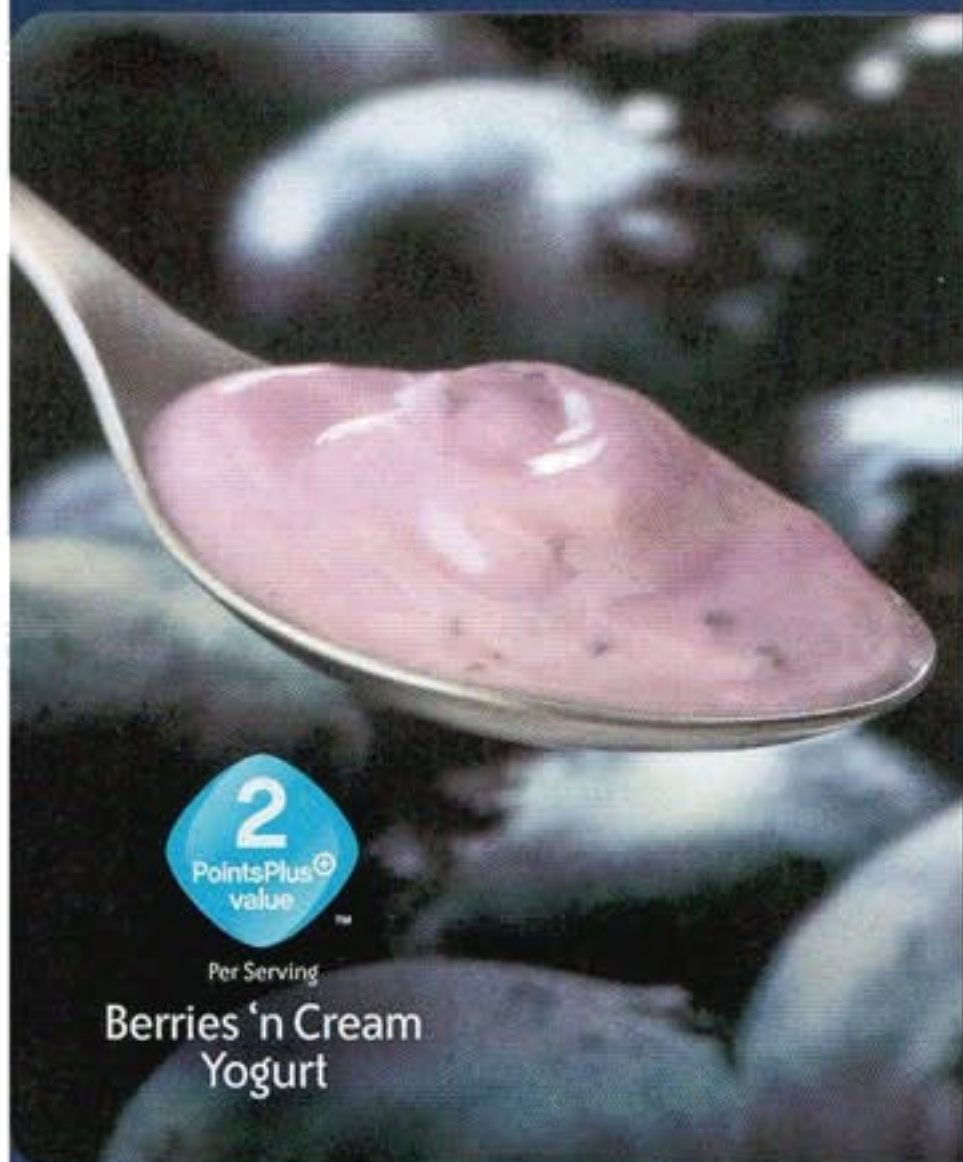
**To stop raiding the pantry and start dropping:**

**Take a crack at eggs.** Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day; skipping it can create a vicious cycle. "If you don't fuel your body properly, you'll be nibbling on everything in sight by the time 9:00 p.m. rolls around," Bannan says. A balanced a.m. meal of eggs, whole-grain toast and fruit will curb your hunger all day—and night.

**Delay dinner.** "If you normally have your evening meal at 6:00 p.m., push it back to 8:00 or 9:00," Bauer



4 PointsPlus<sup>®</sup> value  
Per Muffin  
Double Chocolate Muffin



2 PointsPlus<sup>®</sup> value  
Per Serving  
Berries 'n Cream Yogurt

# Positively.

Some are chocolaty.

Some are creamy.

But they all bring something positive to your table – like calcium and fiber. And, yes, they positively taste as good as they look.



**WeightWatchers**

[facebook.com/weightwatcherssupermarketfoods](https://www.facebook.com/weightwatcherssupermarketfoods)

WEIGHT WATCHERS on foods and beverages is the registered trademark of WW Foods, LLC. WEIGHT WATCHERS for services and PointsPlus are the registered trademarks of Weight Watchers International, Inc. Trademarks are used under license. ©2012 Weight Watchers International, Inc. All rights reserved. Selection may vary by store.

## eat right

Stop snacking in front of the TV. Every mindless bite you take equals about 25 calories.

suggests. Eat a piece of fruit when you get home, exercise and then start supper. You shouldn't feel hungry again until the next morning.

**Switch your kitch.** Put healthy foods front and center in your fridge so that they're the first things you see. Good choices include low-fat Greek yogurt and cottage cheese, berries, baby carrots and hummus. When you snack, force yourself to eat at the table rather than in front of the TV or computer. "As a rule, every mindless bite you take is 25 calories," Somer says.

### QUICK TIP

Sushi made with brown rice is a superior supper. Seaweed contains a special fiber that may reduce the amount of fat your body absorbs by as much as 75 percent.

### Diet derailer

**You're an emotional eater.**

You use food to cope with your feelings—and we're not talking broccoli. "Most emotional eaters reach for high-fat, sugary foods that give them pleasure and distract them from their negative emotions," says Judith Beck, Ph.D., a cognitive behavior therapy expert specializing

in weight loss and the author of *The Beck Diet Solution*. "They think that eating these foods is the only way they can de-stress or boost their mood."

**To feel better without comfort food and lose weight fast:**

**Soothe your inner cranky-pants.**

Keep a diary to ID your pig-out triggers. "In one column, list what you're eating; in another, write down how you're feeling; and in a third, rate your hunger on a scale from one to five," suggests Valerie Berkowitz, R.D., coauthor of *The Stubborn Fat Fix*. Once you see which emotions prompt your binges, find new coping strategies, like calling a friend or taking a bike ride.

**Use the buddy system.** You probably have a pal who handles disappointments without chowing down on cheesecake. Follow her example, Beck suggests. After a breakup or a rough week at work, does she go for a run to raise her spirits? Brainstorm new strategies to help her get ahead? "Observe what she does, and try to adopt her techniques," Beck advises.

**Rethink rewards.** In most cultures, celebratory occasions revolve around food. Instead, give yourself a calorie-free pat on the back: Schedule a visit with your college roomie or get a massage. When you stop seeing food as your prize for a job well done, the pounds will start to disappear. ■

### QUICK TIP

Carry an index card that lists the reasons you want to lose weight, and whenever temptation strikes, refer to it. "When you read something you've written out, you're more likely to stick with it," Beck says.