

Plateau Busters

Eat the Right Nutrients at the Right Times

You changed your habits and lost weight steadily, but after awhile, that progress halted. You've been stuck at the same weight for days, weeks, or even months. There's nothing more frustrating than trying your best, feeling like you are doing everything right, yet not making any progress towards your weight loss or fitness goals.

Before you give up, realize that weight loss takes work, and time, and isn't always perfect. But, there are plenty of ways you can re-energize your program (and motivation) to bust through your weight loss plateau.

What is a plateau?

If you've been exercising and cutting calories for several weeks, and you're no longer seeing the same results that you experienced in the beginning, then you've probably hit a plateau. This occurs when your progress comes to a standstill, but not necessarily moving backwards.

Incorporate some or all of the following suggestions to both prevent and overcome a weight loss plateau:

- **Eat enough calories.** Eating too little for your body's needs can actually hinder your weight loss. It's common to think that cutting MORE calories will result in faster weight loss, but that's not the case. Never consume less than 1200 calories per day. Eating less than this (or too little in general) makes your body think it's starving (known as "starvation mode"), so it holds onto every calorie, slowing your metabolism. Increase your calories to fit into your recommended range, and you'll notice a difference.
- **Eat well.** Aim for a wide variety of foods (instead of the same old thing day in and day out) from every basic food group. Try new fruits and vegetables, ethnic cuisines, and a wide range of lean proteins, including non-meat sources like tofu and legumes. All (or most) of your grains should come from whole, unrefined foods like whole-wheat breads and pasta, and brown rice.
- **Eat often.** Eating every three to four hours will help raise and stabilize your metabolism (and energy) to optimal levels. With fewer ups and downs, your hunger will stay in check, and you'll have plenty of energy to finish a tough workout.
- **After a workout, refuel with a balanced snack or meal within 30 minutes to 2 hours.** Consuming both protein and carbohydrates is key since your body is primed to uptake glycogen into the cells to replace the energy you just used up during your workout.
- **Drink up.** Hydration promotes muscle building (powering your metabolism), while dehydration promotes muscle breakdown. So drink up—before, during, and after your workout sessions. The standard "8 cups a day" might not be enough for you, especially if you are exercising regularly.

Source: SparkPeople.com