

Lighten Up!

A no-brain, no-pain guide to safe, speedy weight loss.

Admit it, you've been slacking off the past few months. You swore you'd stick to your workout routine, but you haven't seen the inside of a gym since the day after you made your New Year's resolution, and you're struggling to squeeze into your once-roomy jeans. There's no way you can drop ten pounds in a week (not without cutting off a limb anyway). But you can look and feel like you did, and that's what counts. We've got a few tricks to help you beat the bloat and look a little slimmer around the middle—even if the only sit-ups you do entail reaching for the remote.

Drink up



Don't skimp on H₂O—a little water weight is nothing compared to the benefits you'll reap from drinking at least eight cups a day. When you're dehydrated, salt gets trapped in your tissues and makes you retain fluids. Drinking water—or eating water-rich fruits like melons and grapes—will flush out excess sodium, kick-start your digestive system, and curb your hunger.

Nix the salt



High-sodium foods like pretzels, chips, cold cuts, and pizza will not only make you retain water, but most salty foods are also loaded with fat or carbs. If you've already binged and need some immediate relief, eat a banana or drink a glass of OJ—potassium can help flush out sodium.

Avoid white powders



You know that cakes, cookies, and four-dollar frappuccinos are full of refined sugar, but it's also lurking in white bread, cereal, and salad dressing. Refined sugars break down into glucose at warp speed, so you get a quick burst of energy followed by a crash, making you crave *more* sugar. Look for whole-grain pastas and breads. And remember, sweets aren't the only culprits—keep an eye on your beverages. A can of Red Bull contains 25 grams of sugar, and a bottle of Snapple Lemon Iced Tea has 46—that's like a Snickers in a bottle.

Rough it



Fiber helps the pipes flow smoothly. You'll find a healthy dose in most fruits and vegetables, but beans may be your best choice. They're packed with protein, which helps you feel fuller longer, so you won't be running to the vending machine an hour after lunch.

Take it slow



When you inhale your food, you inhale air, too. Unless you want a balloon belly, take smaller bites. Try putting your fork down while you chew—it will help you eat more slowly. You'll also enjoy your meal more, feel full faster, and consume fewer calories.