WHY CAN’T I LOSE WEIGHT? 5 Weight Loss Roadblocks That May be Hindering Your Progress

Do you feel like you’re doing everything right when it comes to eating healthy and exercising, but you just don’t see a difference on the scale? Take a look at these common weight loss mistakes to see if some simple changes can help those pounds melt off.

1. Too much splurging on the weekends
   Sometimes people feel entitled to indulge on the weekend, after a week of clean, healthy eating; but weekend after weekend, those calories can add up, making it difficult to see a steady drop in the number on the scale. See number two below!
   Instead: Allow yourself a small treat on the weekends – moderation is the key. Or perhaps purposefully include a modest “indulgence” (~120-130 calories) every other day throughout the week to prevent feelings of deprivation or entitlement on the weekends. (Try Diana’s Bananas-Banana Babies Dark Chocolate – in the frozen treat section)

2. Alcohol
   At 7 calories per gram with no real nutritional value, too much alcohol can thwart even the best weight loss efforts. And those 7 calories are only in the alcohol – the beverages that contain the alcohol contain more (usually empty) calories. A single margarita can range from 450-750 calories; a 5 oz glass of wine is typically 100-120 calories, and a 12 oz beer will provide you with 95-175 calories. In addition, sometimes after a drink or two, people are less likely to maintain their tenacity to their weight loss goals – and find themselves making less than optimal food choices.
   Instead: If you drink alcohol (even in moderate amounts) and feel like you are doing everything else right, stop the alcohol (this is a no brainer) for a month, and see if you notice a difference on the scale. Alternately, set limits on your alcohol intake; ie. “no alcohol during the week – no more than 3 drinks/weekend” and/or be sure you are choosing lower calorie alcoholic beverages – light beer, wine spritzers, distilled spirits “on the rocks”, mixed with water, club soda or diet soda.

3. Too much cardio; not enough resistance training (and vice versa)
   Cardio burns calories – and you need to burn more calories than you eat to lose weight – so duh - cardio workouts are super-important for weight loss – but TOO MUCH cardio can leave you REALLY hungry an hour or so later, leading to you to eat all the calories you just burned and/or can leave you feeling run-down and tired later on in your day. Resistance exercise is an important part of weight loss too – here’s why: consistent resistance exercise (free weights, weight machines, push-ups, sit-ups, resistance bands) allows you to build your muscle mass – and muscle is more metabolically active tissue than fat tissue. The more muscle you have, the more calories your body burns – even at rest. The opposite can be a problem too – you may feel exhausted and sore after a 30-min ab workout, but you have to remember that you likely spent a good portion of that ½ hour LYING
DOWN. Even though your abs are on fire, you didn’t actually burn THAT many calories.
Instead: Include a balance of cardio and resistance training in your exercise regime to promote healthy weight loss. Campus Rec’s personal trainers can help you find the perfect balance. More info is here: https://campusrec.utsa.edu/fitness-wellness/activities/personal-training

4. Large portions of healthy foods
You’ve done your research and know that you need to include healthy fats in your diet – they support a healthy cardiovascular system among other health benefits and can make food more satisfying, allowing you to feel full longer. All fats have 9 calories per gram, no matter the source – so, a drizzle here and a drizzle there of heart healthy olive oil can be good for you – but the calories, at 120 per tablespoon, add up fast. Same goes for avocado, which can have around 120 calories per ¼ avocado. And while a trail mix with nuts, seeds, dried fruits and even a little chocolate is a healthier alternative than chips, the small snack-size bag of HEB trail mix has 100 calories MORE than the lunch-size snack bags of HEB Ranch corn chips.
Instead: When you eat fat, make sure it’s a healthy source of fat, but do so in moderation. Just because it’s healthy, doesn’t mean you can eat it in unlimited amounts.

5. Not enough rest/sleep
You’re essentially triggered to eat more when you aren’t getting enough sleep – here’s why: when you are sleep-deprived, your body tends to release more ghrelin – the hormone responsible for telling us it’s time to eat (the “hunger hormone”) and less leptin, the hormone that says, “hey, you’ve had enough. Stop eating already.” In addition, a rise in cortisol that can come with sleep deprivation can signal your body to store any extra calories (i.e. stored calories = fat), rather than burn them off immediately for energy. And we all know how weight loss efforts can go downhill when you’re tired; you may be more likely to depend on the caffeine from a soda (150 calories/can) or a calorie-laden coffee beverage (250 calories in Starbucks venti latte) in the morning if you’re extra sleepy. Maybe you’re too tired to fit in your afternoon workout. Or too tired to make dinner and end up with greasy take-out instead. And remember to take some breaks from exercise as well – you aren’t actually building muscle mass WHILE you are working out; in fact, you’re tearing muscle fibers down. The muscle-BUILDING happens during the recovery/rest time after you work out. Without enough rest, your body can’t build that calorie/fat-burning lean body mass.
Instead: Make time in your schedule for adequate sleep; most young adults need 7-10 hours, and take a break from the trails/gym a day or so each week as well. It’s fine to stretch and be generally active every day, but too many intense back-to-back workouts can impede your progress.
For more information about healthy, sustainable ways to lose weight or any other nutrition-related matter, be sure to set up a nutrition assessment with Campus Recreation’s registered dietitian nutritionist, Annie Bell. Appointments are individualized to address your needs, questions, and concerns and last about an hour – oh, and they’re free! Full instructions on how to register for your appointment are here: https://campusrec.utsa.edu/nutritionregistration