

# shape up faster— with food

A plan (and delicious recipes) to help you lose pounds and build muscle

BY HEATHER RAMSDELL

So you've finally committed to a new exercise regimen and are getting into great physical shape. Congratulations. But don't assume that those extra calories you're burning mean you can now gorge on Gummi Bears and chug back chocolate shakes. "Exercise will definitely help you *maintain* your weight loss, but if you are still trying to lose, you've got to keep calories in check and change what you are eating," says New York University nutritionist Lisa Young, PhD, RD, author of *The Portion Teller*.

In other words, if slimming down is your goal, you need to rethink your eating habits, pronto. Here are three easy-to-follow weight loss guidelines—*not* a punishing diet—that you should adhere to while you're trying to shave off unwanted pounds. The plan is designed to boost your metabolism and work *with* your changing body so you can firm up, lose belly fat, get back into proportion, and drop weight—fast. Simple, delicious recipes show how easy it is to incorporate these new habits into your life.

This plan's first principle is **portion control**, a key factor in curbing calorie intake. Two Cornell University studies on college students found that Americans tend to eat most of what we're served at a meal, regardless of how much it is. (You probably already knew

that.) Moreover, the authors found that we don't compensate for our clean-plate-club habits by eating less later on. The results add to the growing evidence that overeating is often an unconscious habit. This plan's modest (but satisfying) serving sizes will help by automatically limiting what you take in. "Unless you are eating lettuce without dressing or steamed veggies, you have to watch your portions and ask yourself during a meal, *Do I really need to finish all this?*" says Young. For guidance on portion sizes, visit [www.prevention.com/portion](http://www.prevention.com/portion).

The second principle is to **add fats back into your diet**. Yes, healthy fats are good for your heart and overall health. But they're critical to weight loss,

too. New research from Washington University in St. Louis suggests that dietary fat triggers gene activity in the liver, which spurs metabolism. Body fat stores alone (like the jiggly stuff hanging around your thighs and belly) failed to set these activities in motion.

Yummy ways to bolster healthy fats in your diet include: drizzling (not pouring) a little extra virgin olive oil on pasta or bread; adding half a chopped avocado or a small fistful of nuts to a tossed salad; and eating olives as snacks. "You *do* need fat in your diet, in moderation, but the healthiest are fatty acids that come from vegetables and fish," Young says.

This plan's third cornerstone is

protein. New research from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign suggests that **adding more fish, poultry, and lean meat to your diet** will accelerate the benefits of your workout. In a 4-month study that followed 24 women on a fitness plan, one group ate about 9 ounces of high-quality protein a day; the other ate 5 ounces of protein and twice as much carbohydrate-rich food, such as bread and rice. Both consumed the same number of calories, but the protein group lost



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21.5% of their body fat (compared with 15% for the carb group) and 47% more weight. The protein-rich diet boosted the benefits of the exercise plan, say researchers, because high-quality protein contains a high level of the amino acid leucine. Leucine, working together with insulin, helps stimulate protein synthesis in muscle, which revs metabolism. Eating eggs or yogurt for breakfast, nuts and cottage cheese for snacks, and lean meats with meals or snacks are all good ways to add protein.

These five lunch or dinner dishes are packed with healthy fats and high-quality protein, and come in modest portion sizes. Try them and then factor these principles into other recipes, too.

TURKEY-  
AVOCADO  
COBB  
SALAD  
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## Steak and Pepper Kebabs

**PREP TIME** 25 minutes

**MARINATING TIME** 30 minutes

**COOKING TIME** 7 minutes

### KEBABS

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
- ¼ c fat-free plain yogurt
- 1 lb top round steak, cut into 1" cubes
- 1 red onion, cut into 8 wedges
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1" x 2" pieces
- 1 orange bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1" x 2" pieces
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1" x 2" pieces

### SAUCE

- 1 c fat-free plain yogurt
- 2 Tbsp fresh dill leaves
- 1 scallion, green part only, thinly sliced

1. *To prepare kebabs:* In large, resealable rectangular plastic container, combine garlic, oregano, soy sauce, yogurt, steak, onion, and peppers. Thread beef, peppers, and onion onto 12 wooden skewers. Return to container, cover, and marinate in refrigerator 30 minutes.
2. *To prepare sauce:* In small bowl, combine yogurt, dill, and scallion and set aside.
3. Arrange oven rack 4" to 6" from heat. Preheat broiler. Place kebabs on broiler pan, leaving space between them, and cook, flipping halfway through, until vegetables are slightly charred and steak is medium-rare, about 7 minutes. Serve with sauce and brown rice on the side.

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