



maintain **WITHOUT REGAIN**

Now that you've lost it, you've got to keep it off. Use these strategies to shift gears into maintenance mode and stay the course with your new, fit physique.

you've been killing it in the gym and have mastered meal prep. You're happy with your new, fit body and are ready to put the brakes on your quest to downsize. But then – fear sets in. What happens when you go off your diet or stray from your routine? Will you lose all your gains, or worse, put the weight/fat back on?

Creating a post-goal plan can help you determine where to go now that you're ready for maintenance mode. That way, you can enjoy more of the foods you love (including cocktails and treats!) while maintaining your trimmed-down physique – without starvation. | BY SHOSHANA PRITZKER, RD, CDN, CSSD, CISSN

BODY SMARTS

Keeping weight off after a loss is not easy, and most people end up gaining at least some, if not all, of it back. It's not necessarily that you're doing something wrong, but it's more a matter of how your metabolism changes to compensate for your recent loss.

To lose weight and/or fat, you need to create a caloric deficit by reducing your daily intake by a few hundred calories and adding in some exercise to burn a few hundred more. For example, if your original metabolic requirement was 2,000 calories a day and you create a deficit of 500 calories — 250 from food and 250 from exercise — you'll begin to see results.

Using that formula, you'll probably lose 10 or 20 pounds or a few percent body fat, but soon your results will slow down because as you lose weight, your metabolism adapts, requiring fewer calories to function than it did previously. Obviously, it's time to change things up. Maybe you cut back more on calories and add in more exercise, and that might work for a while before your body catches on — but where do you go from there? You can only do that so many times before you're eating like a rabbit.

MAINTENANCE WITHOUT STARVATION

So now what? Are you doomed to live off a measly 1,500 calories or less to keep your new, fit body? Not at all. In fact, that could do you more harm than good, especially if you're an active, athletic woman. Here are some guidelines to help you slide into maintenance mode without any collateral damage — and stay there for as long as you want.

► **Diet Matters — but Not as Much as Exercise**

Though the saying that “abs are made in the kitchen” is totally true, exercise is always going to be the magic bullet when it comes to maintenance. In fact, a recent study from the University of Colorado found that those who were successful at maintaining their reduced bodyweight for more than a year did so by relying on physical activity rather than diet. So keep up your physical activity or even increase it a little, and make sure you change your routine up every couple of months to keep progressing and prevent your body from becoming complacent.

► **Increase Your Calories — Slowly**

The end of a diet is not a reason to celebrate with more food. In fact, going overboard after a long span of restriction can lead to a rapid weight fluctuation and possible disordered eating behavior. Instead, use a process of slow, incremental calorie increases to allow your body and metabolism to adapt. That way, you're more likely to use those calories for beneficial things like performance and strength instead of storing them as fat.

Using the same healthy foods you were eating during your weight-/fat-loss process, start by increasing your daily total calories by about 20 percent. For example, if you were eating 1,500 calories a day by the end of your diet, bump that up to about 1,800 and stay there for three to four weeks. Then assess how your body is reacting to the increase. How do your clothes fit? How do you look in the mirror? How do you feel about your progress? Has your weight increased or remained the same? If you're comfortable with where things are going, increase your calories again by about 15 percent. If not, then stay at 1,500 for another week or two, or increase your calories by just 10 percent instead. This sort of progression should continue until you've increased your calories by about 50 to 60 percent and you feel satisfied, energized and happy with your body.



Having the support of friends and family can make or break your success.

YOUR BODY — BEYOND THE KITCHEN

Hanging on to your new body isn't just about drinking water and logging your steps — you need to adopt this as a mindset and a lifestyle. Implement some of these strategies to help you succeed.

Get Support. Surround yourself with people who share your goals and lifestyle preferences and who won't sabotage your progress.

Manage Stress. Find methods that are not food-related, such as meditation, reading and — of course — exercising.

Stick to Your Plan, Even on Weekends. Yes, it's OK to indulge, but don't eat back all the hard work you put in during the week in one single day. Have everything in moderation, and make sure you're staying physical.

Stay Accountable. Studies show that people who track their food intake with a journal or an app are more likely to maintain their weight loss long term.

Exercise is the magic bullet.

CALORIES COUNT

Everyone has a baseline — or basal — metabolism. This is the number of calories you need just to exist — breathe, digest, sit upright, create new cells, pump your blood and so on. Use the Mifflin-St Jeor equation to determine your basal metabolic rate (BMR), then plug this number into the appropriate activity-level equation to determine your estimated daily caloric needs.

$$\begin{aligned}
 &(4.536 \times \text{your weight in pounds}) \\
 &+ \\
 &(15.88 \times \text{height in inches}) \\
 &- \\
 &(5 \times \text{your age}) \\
 &= \\
 &161 \\
 &= \\
 &\text{BMR}
 \end{aligned}$$

Sedentary/little activity
 =
BMR x 1.53

Moderately active
 (30-60 minutes 3-4 times per week)
 =
BMR x 1.55

Vigorously active
 (60+ minutes 5-7 times per week)
 =
BMR x 1.7-1.9



► **Focus on Fat Loss — Not Weight Loss**

It's easy to obsess over that number on the scale, but that number only tells you how hard the Earth's gravity is pulling you downward and does not account for fat versus muscle weight, how much sodium you ate the night before, your hydration level, that time of the month and when you last used the restroom. In fact, bodyweight can literally fluctuate by the hour, and if you weighed 130 pounds in the morning, it's not out of the question that you might weigh 138 that evening.

Instead, focus on body-fat loss, which is really what you're aiming for when you talk about losing "weight." Because your weight is the sum of all things in your body — bones, fat, blood, muscle, organs, water, food — and the only element on that list that you're aiming to eliminate is fat. This kind of loss moves at a slower, steadier pace and can be visually measured by how your clothes fit and how you look in the mirror. It also can be measured by a fitness professional using body-fat calipers, through hydrostatic weighing or with bioelectrical impedance. All these methods have some degree of inaccuracy — sometimes plus or minus up to 5 percent — but the only thing you need to focus on is that number going down.

► **Add More Muscle**

It is totally possible to be skinny-fat, and a lower bodyweight does not mean lower body fat. Building muscle through strength training is a surefire way to maintain your losses and gains, and while it might weigh more (another reason to skip the scale), muscle is more metabolically active than fat: Fat requires very few calories to exist, and replacing it with metabolically active muscle means that even at rest, you will be using more energy — and burning more fat.

► **Implement Variety**

Changing your training routine can help increase your acquisition of muscle and promote the elimination of fat. Increase the weights you're lifting and decrease the rep range for a while, then change it up again to use a more moderate weight and crank out more reps. A periodization calendar (see below) is a good way to implement change, increasing muscle volume and strength while reducing risk of injury.

► **Eat Thermic Foods**

Some foods require more energy to digest and assimilate than others. This is called the thermic effect of food (TEF), and since protein sources like chicken, fish and lean beef cause the biggest TEF, maintaining a moderate-to-high protein diet is optimal for any kind of weight-maintenance and muscle-building program. Some spices also rank high on the TEF scale and have the potential to accelerate weight loss and help burn fat — while also firing up your taste buds. Experiment with these in your recipes to boost the TEF of your overall meal plan on the reg.

► **Don't Fake 'n' Bake**

According to loads of clinical research, artificially sweetened foods can increase cravings, lead to overeating and may actually damage your metabolism. If you're trying to keep your calories — and cravings — in check, you're better off eating more satisfying whole foods and having just a little of your craved food in its real form.

► **The Whole Enchilada**

When it comes to maintaining your new body, think of your eating as being cumulative over the course of a week rather than specific to just one meal. Planning to eat with an 80/20 ratio, wherein you eat healthfully 80 percent of the time and have 20 percent to loosen up a little, is a good way to look at things. This way, you can sprinkle in a few treats here and there without wrecking your waistline.



Enhance the flavor and the calorie-burning potential of your meals by adding thermic spices.

6 FAT-BURNING FOODS

No single food will magically melt fat from your frame, but these six can boost your satiety levels, keeping you full for longer and helping you stick to your plan.

1. WHOLE EGGS. These nutrient-dense, complete proteins have plenty of healthy fat and important vitamins and minerals.

2. PROBIOTICS. Studies show that unhealthy gut bacteria can contribute to weight gain, so make sure you regularly introduce good gut bugs in the form of a daily probiotic, either in pill form or in a food such as yogurt or kefir.

3. FRUITS AND VEGGIES. Packed with fiber and water, fresh produce is the ideal solution to weight maintenance.

4. CHIA SEEDS. Two tablespoons of chia seeds have almost 10 grams of fiber, and when mixed with fluid, they expand in the belly, keeping you full for hours.

5. OAT BRAN. The soluble fiber in oat bran has been shown to help control blood sugar and promote regularity.

6. TUNA. This super-lean protein source is also cheap and can fill you up even on a budget. ☛

SAMPLE PERIODIZATION SCHEDULE

FOCUS	DURATION
► Muscle Building	Weeks 1-3
► Strength/ Muscle Building	Weeks 4-6
► Strength	Weeks 7-9
► Deload/Recovery	Week 10

BATTLE OF THE AGES

Age plays a big role in the gain/loss equation, and unfortunately as we get older, our metabolism can actually work against us, slowing down and resisting any kind of change. However, a study published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found that middle-aged and older women who exercised regularly did not experience a reduction in resting metabolic rate.

METABOLIC SPICES

- Cayenne pepper
- Turmeric
- Oregano
- Cinnamon
- Black pepper
- Ginger
- Cumin
- Cardamom

