

A heart shape is formed by a pile of oatmeal on a bright yellow background. A red measuring tape is draped across the middle of the heart, with the numbers 21 through 49 visible. The tape is positioned horizontally across the center of the heart, with the numbers increasing from left to right.

SLIMDOWN SECRETS

Finding it hard to stick to your New Year's resolutions? VIVA chats to the food and fitness experts to help keep you on track...

For most of us mere mortals, maintaining a healthy diet and exercise regimen can be tough. Those who really struggle with weight loss and maintaining healthy lifestyle choices can feel a lot like Sisyphus, the mythological Greek figure eternally doomed to push a giant boulder up a hill over and over only to see it roll to the bottom again and again. Even with the best of intentions and even if you do achieve your weight and fitness goals, progress can all-too-easily slip back down that proverbial hill just like Sisyphus's burdensome boulder. The ensuing disappointment can be enough to prompt even the strong-willed to head to the emotional dark side and devour a block of Cadburys.

The reality is, willpower alone isn't enough to sustain healthy habits and maintain fitness over the long-term. Unless you base your diet, exercise and other lifestyle choices on correct, factual information from credible sources, backsliding remains an ever-present threat. Sadly, the health and fitness information superhighway is strewn with myths and misinformation. Incorporating faulty ideas into your diet and exercise routine is like stepping in a huge pothole. You go forward in good faith only to find your progress sidetracked at best, severely derailed or completely obliterated at worst.

In my quest to help health-seekers keep their "body boulder" at the top of that hill, I've sought out advice from health, food and fitness industry field experts. These are pros who have been around the block or two and, in many cases, have literally written the book. Their insight and advice runs the gamut, including what food choices to make for a healthy lifestyle and how to effectively multitask your exercise regimen. When I asked them for their best slimdown secrets, this is what the food and fitness pros shared:

1 "Restrict calories without hunger. This means balancing protein and carbohydrates at every meal. You shouldn't be hungry for five hours after a meal."
--Dr Barry Sears ZoneDiet.com

2 "After a long day, cooking is the last thing on my mind. My new obsession is meal delivery services. It's a great way to guarantee veggies at your doorstep for every meal. Growing fresh herbs and tomatoes on my kitchen windowsill also keeps me connected to the food I eat."
--Padma Lakshmi, Top Chef

3 "Get fit with fiber. Dietary fiber does more than contribute to what we delicately refer to as 'regularity'—it also aids in digestion and can play a role in preventing heart disease and colon cancer, among other conditions. Fiber is also an effective tool for weight management: it fills you up quickly despite being very low in calories, slows digestion and keeps blood sugar on a level plane, which maintains normal insulin levels associated with a healthy weight. Aim for at least 10 grams of fiber with each meal (and 5 grams with each snack)."
--Harley Pasternak, HarleyPasternak.com

4 "Always cook with cast iron. It's the oldest pan in the book, but there's a reason for it. Cast iron allows you to cook with less oil and helps the meat cook at an even temperature. You'll never have to worry about the pan releasing any unhealthy toxins, like nonstick."
--Chef Chris Kydes, The Flaming Greek

5 "Skip the bread basket and the olive oil usually served in fancy restaurants as soon as you sit down. This represents about 400 calories of oil and white bread at each sitting on average. 15 meals with bread and oil and it is 2 pounds of extra fat on your body (indeed, you need to eat 7,000 extra calories on average to gain 2 pounds of fat). Do like the French, only eat one slice of bread with your meal. Don't stuff yourself before the good food is put on the table."
--Valerie Orsoni, LeBootCamp

6 "Maintain your exercise routine and change it up even when living a fast paced lifestyle, traveling or on set! Take the time to experience new gyms, exciting workouts and taking your workout outdoors while traveling. This will keep you motivated and refreshed in your workout goals. Consider wearing a Fitbit and tracking your food intake on My Fitness Pal to stay on target as well. Get out of your comfort zone — try a barre, Flywheel, Boot Camp, or yoga class in the local area."
--Stacy Goldberg, SavorFull.com

7 "There are tons of fad diets out there that promise results, but what these diets don't disclose is the extreme calorie deprivation and lack of substantial nutritional components. Cutting too many calories makes your body think that you are too lean and slows down your metabolism and holds up the fat burning process to conserve energy. Every individual's body is different in what to consume and how much to consume."
--Steve Saunders, PowerTrainSports

8 "As a co-host, I've learned that cooking with someone in the kitchen promotes more than just good food. It demonstrates positivity in a relationship because you are both cooking for the greater good (meaning each other). It also creates a camaraderie in the kitchen. If one is trying to change themselves, either eating better, losing weight, cooking together helps achieve that."
--Kami, Co-Host, The Flaming Greek

9 "Add heart healthy cocoa flavanols to your diet. Cocoa flavanols are powerful phytonutrients that are scientifically proven to help promote a healthy heart by supporting healthy blood flow. CocoaVia is a cocoa extract supplement that delivers a high concentration of cocoa flavanols. It can be consumed either before or after exercise and scientific studies demonstrate that within a few hours of consuming a product with cocoa flavanols, the cocoa flavanols enter the body and start to help support your cardiovascular system. Add this product to yogurt, oatmeal, coffee or your morning smoothie. It's a delicious way to support your heart health."
--Harley Pasternak, HarleyPasternak.com

While these experts give you plenty of advice the most overwhelming message is that eating a healthy diet and making smart choices about fitness doesn't have to be complex. Small choices made consistently each and every day is what's needed if you want to lose weight, get fit and stay healthy. You certainly don't need to feel deprived. For more details check out: www.TheLuxeList.com