

Can't lose weight,
even though you
aren't over-
eating?



I don't over-eat, but I still can't lose weight!

Do you ever wonder why you can't lose weight even though you don't over-eat? You may even notice that you eat *even less* than some of the people around you, yet they apparently have no trouble remaining slim while you always seem to struggle.

There are five common causes for this.

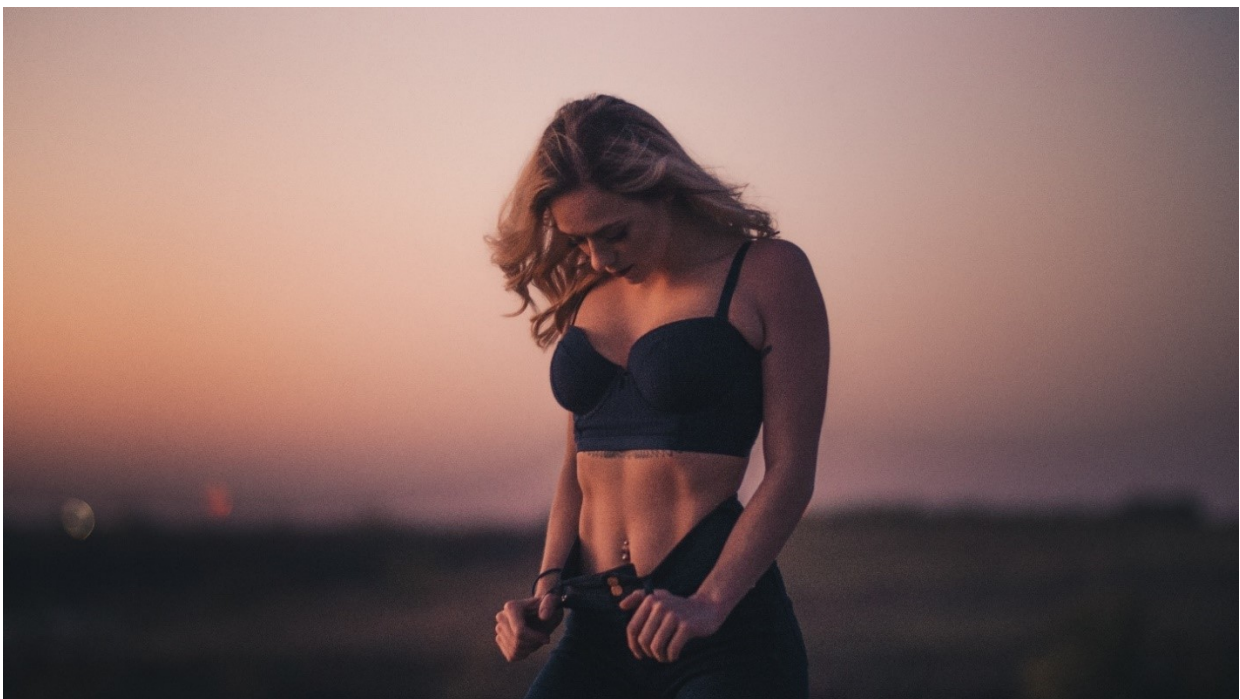
Well... there are four **common** causes and one **highly unlikely** one.

In this guide we're going to run through each of those five causes, with some simple and actionable strategies to knock each one of them to the curb.

Just before we get into it, I want to keep this guide bite-sized (excuse the pun), so I'm not going into much detail on any of these. If this information clicks with you, and you want to learn step-by-step method for transforming your body composition and getting the body you've always wanted, I've got you covered. Check out my **Body Transformation Blueprint** digital course over at:

<https://BodyTransformationBlueprint.com>

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Reason #1: You're eating more calories than you think

OK, I know you probably don't think this applies to you. I get it. But please bear with me, because the stats tell a different story, and that could actually help you out a lot! The vast majority of people seen by nutritionists and weight loss clinics are making this type of error. It is by far the most common cause of your dilemma, and so it makes sense to rule it out.

Thankfully there are quite a few simple and effective solutions available to you, so please don't feel overwhelmed or cheated by this.

Causes:

- ❖ **Over-compensating food intake after exercise.** It can be disappointing to realise this, but it's much easier than you think to 'eat back' all the calories that you burned while exercising. This is especially so because we often do feel hungrier because of a good workout, and it's easy to tell yourself that you've earned the additional food. It's partly true, but easy to over-shoot.
- ❖ **Consuming hidden calories.** The biggest mistake here is drinking your calories in the form of soft drinks or juices. Snacking and grazing are other common offenders.
- ❖ **Having cheat days instead of cheat meals.** The concept of 'cheat meals' is sound, and there is solid science behind its effectiveness as part of an overall calorie-deficit strategy. However, many people make the mistake of having 'cheat days' instead. Sadly, it is very easy to undo a whole week's worth of calorie deficit in a single day of excess.
- ❖ **Over-sized portions.** We humans are terrible at estimating how much food we eat (which is why we're here at Reason #1), and this is evident in our estimate of portions. Especially if you're counting calories, you need to ensure that you're multiplying from the correct base. For example, it takes quite a bit of experience to know the difference between a 150-calorie handful of nuts, and a 300-calorie handful.
- ❖ **Vacation eating or eating out too often.** The truth about how restaurants make their food delicious is this: they add a large amount of salt, sugar, and fat to everything. It is also difficult if not impossible to accurately count the calories in a restaurant meal. You can guess based

on experience, but in most cases you'd be underestimating by a very significant factor.

- ❖ **Your maths is out.** This type of error can apply to calories in (food), calories out (exercise), as well as your baseline daily energy expenditure. All the metabolic calculators require a relatively arbitrary 'activity factor', which is often too conservative. This results in an over-estimation of your metabolic baseline, which ultimately means that your actual calorie deficit can be much less than you've calculated. It can even become non-existent (i.e. actually a calorie surplus) with this error.

Solutions:

The single most effective thing you can do to fix this, is to keep a food diary. Not only does that provide you with relatively objective data, but the mere *act* of logging food induces a natural improvement in our behaviour. That's a virtuous cycle, yay to that!

There's one big key to success here, and that is to be **honest** with yourself and your logging system. By that I mean don't log what you *think* you ate, or what you're willing to *admit* you ate. Log what you *actually ate*. Log all of it. Don't judge yourself, and don't think anybody else is going to – this is just between you and your food journal.

The fact is you can only change what you measure. You're doing this to get data, so treat this for what it is: a data-gathering exercise. Only by non-judgementally logging all the food that goes into your mouth, will you get the outcomes you seek. So, don't round down or ignore little snacks. In fact, do the opposite and round upwards. Lean towards over-estimating if there is any doubt whatsoever.

Another key point here is to log/measure/count for a couple of weeks before you even consider making any changes based on the data you collect. And if you don't like counting and measuring, rest assured that you won't need to be doing this forever. After four to six weeks of measuring and logging, you'll have developed a pretty good internal calculator, and will be able to reliably estimate the number of calories in foods and meals just in your head.

The MyFitnessPal app on Android and IOS makes this pretty easy, or Cronometer (<https://cronometer.com/>) is an excellent online tool.

Drink water instead of juice or soft drink (even diet soft drinks are not helping you). Also make sure to drink a big glass of cold water half an hour before your meals. Water is good for you in all sorts of ways, and drinking it before your meals will help you to feel fuller sooner.

The rounding down idea also applies to those formulae which you can use to calculate your daily energy expenditure baseline like <https://tdeecalculator.net/>. Follow the instructions for estimating the activity modifier, but then apply a factor which is less than suggested or calculated.

Reason #2: Your diet is less healthy than you realise

I have just recommended, in Reason #1, that you do some counting and measurement. But we also need to focus on quality, not just quantity. I do recommend getting your quantities sorted out first, so that you're getting the best of both worlds. But the quality of what you're putting into your mouth is next on our list:

Causes:

- ◇ **Eating an inappropriate ratio of macronutrients for your goal.** Assuming the goal is to lose weight, it is very common for people to eat too much carbohydrate, and insufficient protein. Carbs aren't necessarily your enemy, but protein should be given top priority within your calorie budget. High quality fats also need a look-in, but only within the constraints of your energy budget – remembering that a gram of fat contains four times as many calories as a gram of protein or carbohydrate.
- ◇ **Being taken in by low fat, diet, or health food marketing.** These variations on already-unhealthy foods rarely help you lose weight, and many of them contain harmful chemicals. Low fat varieties of otherwise-high-fat foods usually make up for it by adding sugar.
- ◇ **Eating too much highly processed food.** Many processed foods are high in salt, preservatives, chemicals and calories. If you're eating too much of this type of food and not enough whole foods, you're at a distinct disadvantage. All muesli bars are unhealthy. Ditto for most packaged breakfast cereals.

◇ **Drinking too much alcohol.** It's possible to remain slim while also drinking alcohol, but that's doing it the hard way. Alcohol delivers a negative triple-whammy, and needs to be carefully managed:

- Alcohol contains a truckload of calories in and of itself. An average pint of regular beer has over 200 calories. That is the same as a single-serve chocolate ice cream cone. With a sprinkle of nuts!
- Your body treats alcohol like the toxin that it is, and processes it in preference to all other macronutrients. This means that any other macronutrients that you consume along with the alcohol is stored as fat, while the alcohol is processed out of our body as quickly as possible.
- One of the effects of alcohol is that it clouds your judgement and erodes your discipline. This makes you less aware of things like portion sizes, it pushes your weight-loss goals to the side, and it makes you more likely to indulge in the type of eating that you would otherwise actively avoid. And of course, we generally indulge in alcohol during social situations - which usually involve eating together.

Solutions:

Assuming your goal is to lose body fat, then your macros should usually be adjusted so that you're eating more protein and less carbohydrate. Once you understand your caloric budget, make sure you prioritise protein. Beyond that, the way to ensure that you have enough calorie budget to fit in high-quality fats, and have just enough carbs to not feel terrible, is to fill up on low-starch vegies and green leafies.

Low-starch choices are good here including broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, lettuce, tomatoes, Brussel sprouts, cucumber, celery, carrots and tomatoes. Anything green and leafy, honestly you should just eat your fill. If you're counting calories, you don't really need to count any foods that are in this category.

High-quality fats are awesome for you, in limited amounts and within your calorie budget. Energy balance trumps all else, but within those guard rails you should be looking to eat foods like nuts and seeds, avocado, eggs, fatty fish like salmon and tuna, tofu, olives and extra virgin olive oil, and dark chocolate (yes!).

In terms of avoiding process foods, one simple guideline to keep in mind is that food from your fridge is less likely to be highly processed, while food from your pantry is far more likely to be.

For alcohol, know what size a standard drink is (hint: it's a lot less than you might think). If possible, finish drinking your alcohol about an hour before you eat dinner. And in any case, do your best to avoid eating while drinking, and particularly avoid fatty foods in that scenario.

Reason #3: You're stressed out, or not sleeping enough

Part of the natural human 'fight or flight' response is to over-eat in times of stress. This response likely evolved to ensure that whatever calories were burnt in getting into this state of stress – like fighting a wild animal, say - are replenished. But it doesn't do us any good in these days of chronic, long-term stress.

Chronic stress leads to elevated levels of the hormone cortisol, which causes us to crave sweet and fatty foods (think comfort food). Cortisol achieves this mean trick by increasing your insulin levels, which in turn causes blood sugar levels to drop.

Lack of sleep is a mild stressor in its own right, but it also affects weight gain by disrupting the functioning of ghrelin and leptin, the two main chemical controllers of appetite. Being tired is also quite a bit like being slightly drunk, which we discussed earlier: your impulse control and planning are all affected in similar fashion, leading to the erosion of will-power and a reduced ability to resist temptation.

Causes:

- ❖ **Emotional or mindless eating.** This typically involves continuing to eat even after you're no longer hungry. In this state you may also eat faster, have larger portions, and make poorer food choices.
- ❖ **Insufficient sleep.** For all the reasons outlined above.
- ❖ **Chronic stress.** Ditto. Chronic stress is a Bad News Bear in so many ways, it's worth facing into it. It's robbing you.

Solutions:

Practise mindful eating. Eat slowly, chew each bite thoroughly, really pay attention and take the time to appreciate what you're eating. Make a point of stopping before you're completely full, to give ghrelin and the nerve stretch receptors in your stomach a chance to catch up.

There are a couple of tricks you can play on yourself to stop eating when you should. The main one is to serve out the amount you want to eat and put the rest away. This is particularly relevant for snacking. For example, if you like to have a couple of squares of chocolate after dinner, break off the pieces you intend to eat and put the rest back in the fridge.

If this doesn't work, another trick is to clean your teeth immediately after each meal. In the chocolate example, you'd clean your teeth as soon as you've had the amount of chocolate that you decided to have – this discourages you from continuing to eat.

Get more sleep! There are lots of resources all over the web for this, so I'm just going to list out the science-backed approaches that have been proven to work:

- ◇ Set a regular bedtime. Most of us already set an alarm to get up in the morning, but try setting one for going to bed at night as well. This is important even on weekends. Consistency is the key.
- ◇ Have a warm bath before bed. Adding lavender will help you relax.
- ◇ Black out your room. Studies have revealed that even a tiny amount of light can affect sleep.
- ◇ Turn your thermostat down. We sleep best at a room temperature of 60 to 67 degrees Fahrenheit (16 to 19 degrees Celsius).
- ◇ Don't drink alcohol immediately before bed. Alcohol can sometimes help you get to sleep, but it reduces the quality and duration of our sleep.
- ◇ Avoid caffeine, obviously. For most of us, caffeine lasts for several hours in our bodies. Consider having no caffeine after about 3pm.

- ◇ Supplements such as magnesium, melatonin (more is not better), L-theanine, 5-HTP, GABA (those last two go well together), valerian, and chamomile tea can all help.
- ◇ Avoid screen time in the last hour before bed. Reading an actual book is much better.
- ◇ Try box breathing: breathe in slowly for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four, breath out for a count of four, and hold again (lungs empty) for a final count of four. Repeat this exercise a few times.

When it comes to reducing stress, again there are lots of methods. Of course, if it was easy to reduce stress then none of us would be stressed!

All the sleep ideas we just ran through can help. In addition, here's a quick list of proven stress-reduction methods you can try:

- ◇ Exercise. I recommend resistance training, but it all works. Even a gentle walk, or yoga or stretching, it all helps.
- ◇ Meditate. You don't have to get all woo woo here. Just find 10 minutes of solitude to still the chatter in your mind, and focus on your breath. For a primer on how to begin meditating if you've never done it before, read this: <https://vitalcapacity.live/how-to-meditate-if-youve-never-done-it-before/>.
- ◇ Write down the things that are stressing you out. Similarly, keeping a gratitude journal can be a game-changer.
- ◇ Listen to calming music.
- ◇ Get a massage.
- ◇ Go for a walk, especially in nature.

Reason #4: You have unrealistic expectations, or you're measuring the wrong thing.

This one is obviously less about what you're eating and doing, and more about the way you're thinking about the results. The truth is that permanently losing weight takes time, just like gaining weight does. This is especially true as we

get older – the changes we need to make become more significant, they need to be sustainable changes, and the changes need to stack up on one another.

Weight loss never goes in a straight line. There are inexplicable plateaus and some ups and downs which can be quite disheartening. These can test our confidence in the process. Patience is the key here.

I also find that many people focus too much on the number on the scales. When people say “I want to lose weight”, they almost always really mean they want to lose *body fat*. One of the best ways to do that is to increase your lean mass (muscle). This improves body composition - so you’ll look and feel great - but it may not actually cause your weight to drop all that much. This is where measuring the right thing comes into play.

Causes:

- ◇ **Impatience** and unrealistic expectations.
- ◇ **Measuring the wrong thing.** Body weight is just a number.
- ◇ **Dieting.** This isn’t about being on a diet, it’s about how you eat in general. And what kind of person you choose to be.

Solutions:

Think about the reasons you want to lose weight, and align your measurements and metrics against those. Once you frame it like that, the number on the scale is likely to become less relevant.

Here are some examples to get you thinking: How do you feel? How do your clothes fit? What is your waist measurement? How much energy do you have? How do you look in the mirror? What are your friends saying? How far can you walk before you get breathless? How far can you ride or run? What belt notch are you on?

Be patient. Structure things so that you can enjoy the process. I always say that while you can’t necessarily eat everything that you like when you’re losing weight, you can definitely *like* everything that you eat. That is absolutely possible.

Focus more on the process than the outcome. A way to do this is to frame your goals so that they’re process-oriented, rather than outcome-oriented.

For example, a goal might be to consistently implement one new suggestion from this guide every week.

You should be done with diets. Slim athletic people never seem to be on diets, do they? No, they have just chosen to *be a certain type of person*. The kind of person who doesn't drink soft drink, for example. And you too can choose to be whatever type of person *you* want to be, including a healthy one.

Reason #5: You have a slow metabolism.

I left this one until last, because frankly it's least likely to be the reason for your challenge. By a long shot. This news might disappoint you, but really it shouldn't. If you think about it, Reason #5 here is the only reason in this guide that is out of your control. That would suck, wouldn't it? To discover that the reason you aren't losing weight is because you drew the short straw in the lottery of life.

Causes:

- ❖ **Hypothyroidism.** An underactive thyroid activity is one of the few medical conditions that can cause slow metabolism, and it is very rare.
- ❖ Certain rare and life-threatening genetic disorders.
- ❖ You get the picture. It's not your metabolism.

Solutions:

Hypothyroidism can be successfully treated with hormone replacement therapy, although this will not in and of itself treat any associated weight gain. So, the strategies listed in this guide would still be needed, even if your thyroid were the problem. Which it's not :o)



There you have it! Five reasons why you're struggling to lose weight, and a bunch of actionable strategies to combat the situation.

Do you want to learn the step-by-step method for feeling good, looking great, and getting the body you've always wanted?

The [Body Transformation Blueprint](#) digital course is your complete body recomposition solution. Inside the 10 modules of video lessons you'll learn all about energy balance, macronutrients, what the diets that work all have in common, and what will work for you. You'll learn which supplements are worth your money (spoiler: most aren't worth a red cent), and you'll bust a bunch of diet and exercise myths.

You'll learn that you don't need to spend hours pounding the pavement, navigating complicated gym equipment, taking a bunch of pills, missing out on the foods you love, or going hungry.

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