

A photograph of a person's feet standing on a white scale. The scale's dial is visible, showing numbers from 180 to 280. A red semi-transparent overlay covers the right side of the image, containing text. The background is a red fabric.

Understanding weight loss plateaus

Nothing is more frustrating than when you're making good progress on your weight loss goals and then all of a sudden, you stop losing weight.

You're following the same plan, but you're not losing additional weight. Unfortunately, you may have hit a weight loss plateau. There are several factors that contribute to hitting a plateau, but with a little effort you can be back to losing weight in no time.



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Four Factors that May Contribute to Weight Loss Plateaus

Weight loss plateaus can be discouraging, but remember that if you're maintaining your weight, you're still making progress!

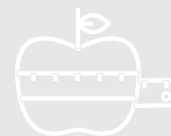
1. You're not eating enough calories each day.

Although your calories need to be reduced in order to lose weight, skipping meals or not eating enough may actually cause you to gain weight. If your food intake is too low to meet your body's energy needs, your body will conserve calories, rather than burn them.

2. You've already lost weight. When you begin your weight loss journey, you may lose weight quickly due to glycogen and fat stores. The more glycogen stores and fat you have to lose, the more "fuel" there is to work this process. As you begin to lose weight, the process slows down due to less "fuel."

3. You're gaining muscles. Muscles burn calories, so it's a given that exercise can assist with weight loss, but developing muscles can also cause weight gain. If you've started a strength training routine, it is possible that you're starting to gain muscle, which could result in a plateau.

4. Your body adjusted to your exercise routine. After 4 to 6 weeks of the same exercise routine, your body develops efficiency and the exercise becomes easier, resulting in burning fewer calories.



Tips for Conquering Your Plateau

It can be discouraging when the number on the scale isn't moving, but know that each step you take to improve your nutrition and physical activity is a step toward good health!

Eat 5 to 6 small meals per day, rather than the 3 conventional larger meals to help your body burn calories more efficiently.

Don't go longer than 3 to 4 hours without eating at least a snack. After this time, your body begins to conserve energy. If you feel physically hungry, it's a sign your body needs to eat.

Track your eating habits to eliminate unnecessary calories.

Always eat breakfast. Your body may not start burning calories efficiently until you eat.

Eat more protein at breakfast, such as yogurt, low-fat dairy and eggs.

Get more fiber throughout the day to help you feel fuller for longer.

Check food labels and carefully measure out your portions to prevent overeating.

Vary your exercise routine to avoid fitness plateaus.

Avoid weighing yourself too frequently. Normal weight fluctuations happen day to day, making it hard to really see your progress. If your weight stays the same after two weeks or more, you may have hit a plateau.



There are additional ways to observe your weight loss! Signs you're on the right track include noticing your clothes fit better, people giving you positive comments about your appearance, or noticing improvements in your energy levels.

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