

Can't seem to lose weight? Top reasons why from weight-loss expert

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(Medical Xpress) -- It's been more than a month since New Year's and swimsuit season is lurking on the horizon – how are those weight-loss resolutions working out?

“Losing weight is one of the top resolutions made every year, yet only 20 percent of people achieve successful weight-loss and maintenance,” said Jessica Bartfield, MD, internal medicine, who specializes in nutrition and weight management at Loyola University Health System's Gottlieb Memorial Hospital.

Although two-thirds of Americans say they are on a diet to improve their health, very few are actually decreasing in size. “Dieting is a skill, much like playing a musical instrument and requires practice and good instruction,” said Dr. Bartfield. “You're going to hit some wrong notes and feel frustrated, but eventually you will succeed and it will get easier.”

Top Four Reasons Why Dieters Don't Lose Weight

According to Dr. Bartfield, here are reasons why many dieters fail to lose weight:

1. Underestimating Calories Consumed. “Most people (even experts!) underestimate the number of calories they eat per day. Writing down everything that you eat, including drinks and "bites" or "tastes" of food, can help increase self-awareness. Pay attention to serving sizes and use

measuring cups and spoons as serving utensils to keep portions reasonable. Food eaten outside of the home tends to come in much larger portion sizes and often is much higher in calories. Try to look up nutritional information of your favorite takeout meal or restaurant and select a healthy meal before picking up the phone or going out to eat.

2. Overestimating Activity and Calories Burned. “Typically you need to cut 500 calories per day to lose 1 lb. per week. This is very difficult to achieve through exercise alone and would require 60 minutes or more of vigorous activity every day. A more attainable goal would be to try to increase activity throughout the day and get a total of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise most days of the week. Buy a pedometer and track your steps; try to increase to a goal of 10,000 steps per day. But be careful: Exercise shouldn’t be an excuse to eat more!”

3. Poor Timing of Meals. “You need a steady stream of glucose throughout the day to maintain optimal energy and to prevent metabolism from slowing down. Eat breakfast every day within an hour of waking up, then eat a healthy snack or meal every 3 to 4 hours. Try not to go longer than 5 hours without eating a healthy snack or meal to keep your metabolism steady.”

4. Inadequate Sleep. “Studies have shown that people who get fewer than 6 hours of sleep have higher levels of ghrelin, which is a hormone that stimulates appetite, particularly for high- carbohydrate and high-calorie foods. In addition, less sleep raises levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, which can lead to weight gain.”

Bartfield regularly counsels patients through the [Gottlieb Medical Weight Loss](#) Program, an interdisciplinary, nonsurgical 12-week program that seeks to establish good health routines. “Just as you rely on an expert to learn a new skill or subject, in the Gottlieb program a registered dietitian, behavioral psychologist, exercise physiologist and a

physician all partner one-on-one with patients,” Bartfield said. “Good health practices are more than just learned, they become a regular habit and a way of life.”

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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