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Four rules to avoid regaining lost weight

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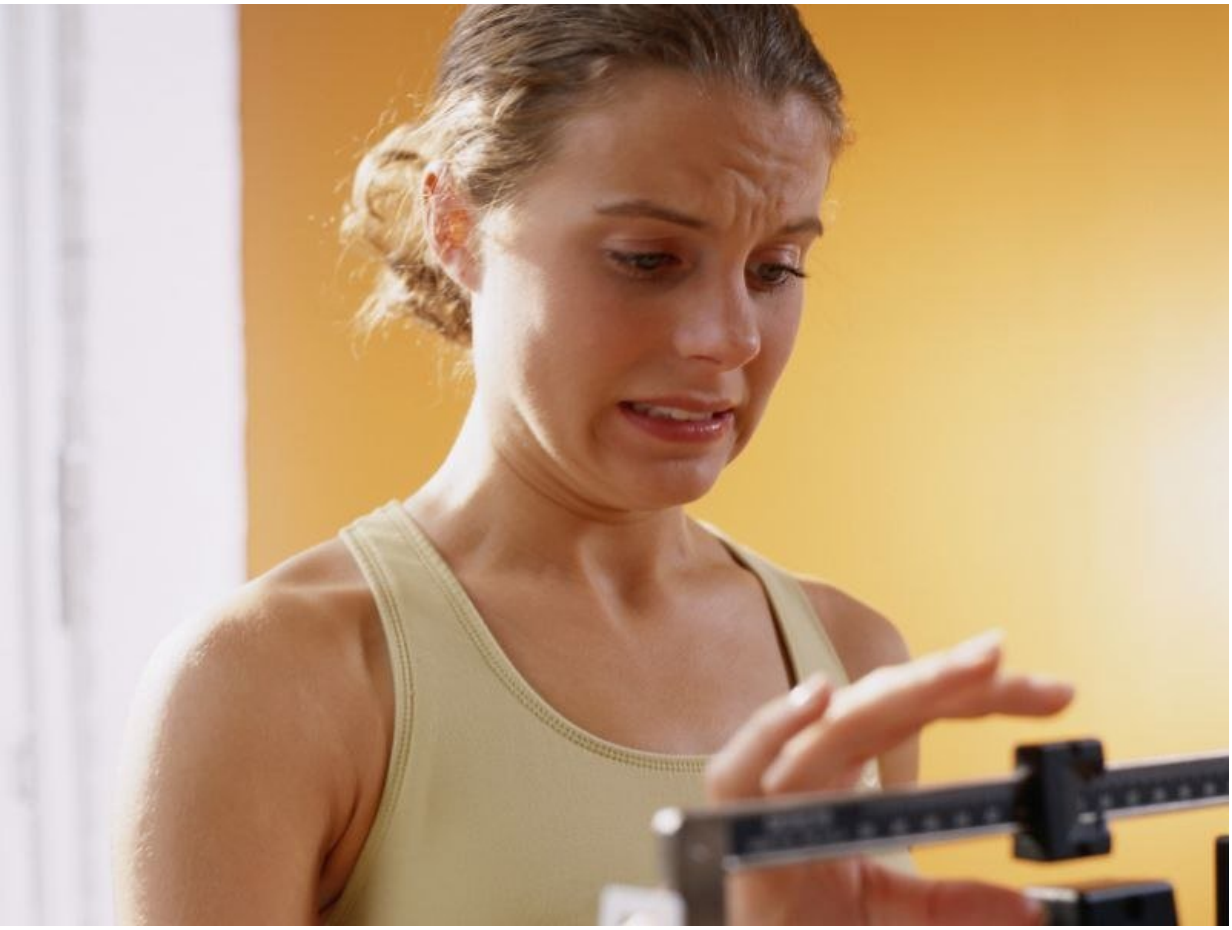

(HealthDay)—Have you reached your ideal weight? Congratulations! You're *halfway* to winning the weight loss battle.

The next phase, maintaining that loss, requires a different mindset. Think of it as a new permanent diet, not a return to your old way of eating, which is a sure way to return to your old weight.

Following these four golden rules will make it easier.

Rule number one: Maintain your support network. If you had help while you were losing weight, stay in contact with your doctor, group leader or diet buddy—whoever provided you with the motivation that got you through being on a restrictive diet. This way, he or she can encourage you to practice good weight-maintenance behavior. Cellphone and online contact may be all you need.

Rule number two: Don't ease up on exercise. People who continue to work out regain less weight than those who don't. Keep in mind that you may need to exercise even more now, especially if you start eating many more calories than you consumed to lose weight. Use a fitness tracker and aim to burn off at least 2,000 calories per week from exercise.

Rule number three: If you didn't choose a forever diet to lose weight, pick one now, one that you can live with for the long term. The Mediterranean diet, for instance, offers a wide selection of good-for-you foods and heart-health advantages.

Rule number four: As you move from a weight loss diet to a weight maintenance diet, increase food intake very gradually. Start by increasing daily intake by just 200 calories for one week. At the end of that week, check your weight. If your weight stayed the same (no gain), you've got your new limit. Continue until the scale tells you that your weight is staying constant. Keep in mind that maintaining your lower weight will take far fewer calories than it took to maintain your old, higher weight—that's why you can't go back to eating the way you used to. Maintain (or start) a food and exercise log to make it easier to

pinpoint the right balance of calories in and calories out.

More information: The University of Chicago Medicine has more easy-to-follow tips to avoid weight regain.

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