**CURB YOUR SWEET TOOTH**

Got a late-night sugar craving that just won't quit? "To satisfy your sweet tooth without pushing yourself over the calorie edge, even in the late night hours, think 'fruit first,'" says Jackie Newgent, RD, author of *The Big Green Cookbook*. So resist that chocolate cake siren, and instead enjoy a sliced apple with a tablespoon of nut butter (like peanut or almond) or fresh fig halves spread with ricotta. Then sleep sweet, knowing you're still on the right, healthy track.

**Find the best fitness friend**

A workout buddy is hugely helpful for keeping motivated, but it's important to find someone who will inspire—not discourage. So make a list of all your exercise-loving friends, then see who fits this criteria, says Andrew Kastor, an ASICS running coach: Can your pal meet to exercise on a regular basis? Is she supportive (not disparaging) of your goals? And last, will your bud be able to keep up with you or even push your limits in key workouts? If you've got someone that fits all three, make that phone call.

# Stock up on these

While there are heaps of good-for-you foods out there, some key ingredients make it a lot easier to meet your weight-loss goals. Next grocery store run, be sure to place Newgent's top three diet-friendly items in your cart: balsamic vinegar (it adds a pop of low-cal flavor to veggies and salads), in-shell nuts (their protein and fiber keep you satiated), and fat-free plain yogurt (a creamy, comforting source of protein). "Plus, Greek yogurt also works wonders as a natural low-calorie base for dressings and dips—or as a tangier alternative to sour cream," says Newgent. Talk about a multitasker!

# Relieve those achy muscles

After a grueling workout, there's a good chance you're going to be feeling it (we're talking sore thighs, tight calves). Relieve post-fitness aches by submerging your lower body in a cold bath (50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit; you may have to throw some ice cubes in to get it cold enough) for 10 to 15 minutes. "Many top athletes use this trick to help reduce soreness after training sessions," says Andrew Kastor. And advice we love: "An athlete training for an important race should consider getting one to two massages per month to help aid in training recovery," adds Kastor. Now that's speaking our language!

# Buy comfy sneaks

You shouldn't buy kicks that hurt, bottom line! "Your shoes should feel comfortable from the first step," says Andrew Kastor. So shop in the evening—your feet swell during the day and stop in the late afternoon, so you want to shop when they're at their biggest. Also make sure the sneaks are a little roomy—enough so that you can wiggle your toes, but no more than that. They should be comfy from the get-go, but Kastor says they'll be even more so once you have a good 20 to 40 miles on 'em.

# Pick your perfect tunes

Running with music is a great way to get in a groove (just make sure it's not blasting too loudly, or you won't hear those cars!). To pick the ultimate iPod playlist, think about what gets you going. "I know several elite athletes that listen to what we'd consider 'relaxing' music, such as symphony music, while they do a hard workout," says Andrew Kastor. So don't feel like you have to download Lady Gaga because her tunes are supposed to pump you up—go with any music that you find uplifting.

# When to weigh

You've been following your diet for a whole week. Weigh to go! Now it's time to start tracking your progress (and make sure pesky pounds don't find their way back on). "It's best to step on the scale in the morning before eating or drinking—and prior to plunging into your daily activities," says Newgent. For the most reliable number, be sure to check your poundage at a consistent time, whether daily or weekly.

# Police your portions

Does your steak take up more than half your plate? Think about cutting your serving of beef in half. That's because it's best to try and fill half your plate with veggies or a mixture of veggies and fresh fruit, says Newgent, so that it's harder to overdo it on the more caloric dishes (like cheesy potatoes or barbecue sauce–slathered ribs—yum!).

# Run with this

Before you hit the road, make sure you're packing these key staples: a watch to log your total time (or a fancy GPS to track your mileage), an iPod with great amp-you-up music, a cell phone if you don't mind holding onto it, and a [RoadID](http://www.roadid.com/Common/LearnMore.aspx?PID=5) (a bracelet that includes all your vital info, $20; roadid.com). And on a sunny day, wear sunglasses. "They reduce glare, which can decrease squinting, ultimately releasing the tension in your shoulders," says Andrew Kastor. And that's a performance bonus, because relaxing them helps conserve energy on your runs. Hey, we'll take a boost where we can get it!

# Say hello to H20

Whether you're heading off to spin class, boot camp, or any other exercise, it's always important to hydrate so you can stay energized and have your best workout. Electrolyte-loaded athletic drinks, though, can be a source of unnecessary calories, so "drinking water is usually fine until you're exercising for more than one hour," says Newgent. At that point, feel free to go for regular Gatorade-type drinks (and their calories), which can give you a beneficial replenishment boost. But worry not if you like a little flavor during your fitness: There are now lower- cal sports drinks available, adds Newgent, so look out for 'em in your grocery aisles.

# Be a weekend warrior

You've been following your diet plan to the letter, but enter: the weekend. To deal with three nights of eating temptations (think: birthdays, weddings, dinner parties), up your activity level for the week. For instance, try taking an extra 15-minute walk around your office each day, suggests Newgent. Then, go on and indulge a bit at the soiree, guilt free. Another party trick? Enjoy a 100-calorie snack before a celebration, which can help you eat fewer munchies at the event.

# Up your exercise

How do you know when to increase your exercise? "The general rule of thumb is to up the amount of miles run, for races half-marathon length and longer, by 5 to 10 percent each week," advises Andrew Kastor. See our [training schedule](http://www.health.com/health/article/1,,20518610,00.html) at [Health.com/yes-you-can](http://www.health.com/health/package/1,,20518428,00.html), which guides you on how to increase your mileage.

# Have a fruity ice cream sundae

Next time your family or friends decide to make an ice-cream run, don't worry about being left out of the fun! Order a fresh (and super-refreshing) ice cream sundae, piled high with diced kiwi, pineapple, and strawberries. You'll get a serving of delish fruit—no hefty calorie-laden toppings required.

# Swap out your shoes

While we've all heard that running shoes break down after logging lots of miles (about 300 to 350), you may still be holding on to your fave pair. (They fit just right! They're so cushy!) Not a good idea. "Glue has a tendency to break down under ultraviolet light, as do the other materials that make up the shoe," says Andrew Kastor. So even if your sneaks have only 150 miles on them but are more than two years old, recycle them (try oneworldrunning.com or recycledrunners.com), because chances are they've already started deteriorating. And as a rule of thumb, always keep tabs on how many miles you've logged on them—tedious, but hey, you'll be proud of how far you've gone.

# Snag the right support

Sure, your yoga sports bras works great for downward dog—but when it comes to running, you'll need one that's designed to lock them in for all that pavement pounding. So what should you look for? "The best sports bras are loose around the chest so you can expand your ribs and diaphragm more effectively. But they should also be form-fitting," says Deena Kastor, an American marathon record holder and 2004 Olympic marathon bronze medalist. Just make sure the cup is made of comfy material (like a soft compression fabric; look for descriptions that include the terms "breathability" and "compression")—you don't want to be itching at mile two!

# Savor your carbs

When trying to slim and trim, you may be tempted to take drastic measures like cutting out your carbs. But before you go and add dinner rolls and chips to your "no" list, remember that yummy foods like brown rice, pumpernickel bread, and even potato chips contain Resistant Starch, a metabolism-boosting carb that keeps you full for longer. And that's great for maintaining a fit you because you won't have to eat as much to feel satiated. So go on, rip open that (single-serve) bag of Lay's!

# Ditch your working lunch

Munching on your lunch while at the computer could lead to mindless grazing, according to a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. People who ate their midday meals while playing a computer game ended up eating more cookies 30 minutes later than those who hadn't been gaming. So carve out 20 minutes a day (we know, you've got a million things to do, but … ), and eat in your conference room (or outdoors!). Your whittled waistline with thank you.

# Slather up!

There's no denying it: Getting the fresh air from exercising outdoors is great! But along with it, you also get the harmful UV rays. To keep yourself shielded while still having fun in the sun, opt for a sweat-proof screen with SPF 30 or higher (look out for types that say "water-resistant" or "waterproof" on the bottle, terms regulated by the FDA), a lip balm with SPF 15 or higher, a lightweight hat, and sports shades. Also consider trading in your white tee and instead going for a shirt with built-in UV protection (a rating of 30 UVP is necessary to be awarded the Skin Cancer Foundation's "Seal of Recommendation"; a white T-shirt has a rating of 10). And remember, the rays are at their brightest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so try to plan a before-or post-work sweat-session.

# Find healthy fast food

Have to work late tonight and need dinner—in a hurry? Not to worry. If you find fast food is your only option, pull up the restaurant's nutrition facts online before you go; you can make an informed decision ahead of time about what to order. "Nearly every quick-service restaurant has a relatively healthful option or two," says Newgent. We're thinking salads, chili, or grilled chicken. Some low-cal, healthy, on-the-run dishes: the vegetarian burrito bowl at Chipotle, the Bangkok curry at Noodles and Company, and the tomato basil bisque at Au Bon Pain.