

Getting Through the Weekend without Gaining Weight

Lesson Three

You can work diligently all week following your menu and adhering to your exercise program only to have the “wheels come off” over the weekend and undermine all your efforts. It can easily be done with an ounce of fudge here, a piece of pizza there, or maybe a too large a serving size or an appetizer at your favorite restaurant. If eating splurges are a problem for you, it is essential that you stick to your long range planning. The weekends typically encourage people to indulge in high-fat, high-calorie foods that are low in nutrients, and this is also the time we're most likely to make excuses for skipping exercise.

One of the most significant diet dangers revolves around sugar consumption. Problems arise from riding on a sugar roller coaster. When you binge on sugar, you tend to crave more. Along with sunlight deprivation, sugar binges cause a drop (after a rise) in serotonin, a chemical in the brain that regulates sleep and appetite. A lack of serotonin is often associated with depression. When you're deprived of serotonin, you won't feel calm and in control. To help boost your serotonin levels naturally, eat small but frequent meals that include complex, starchy carbohydrates. You can also help control blood sugar levels and appetite by eating a balanced amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat at least four times a day. Having protein, carbohydrate and fat in every meal keeps energy levels constant and appetite under control.

You should keep up your regular exercise during the weekends and accept no excuses. When endorphins are high, you'll cope with stress better, and exercise will boost endorphins.

Here are some other weekend survival tips:

- Avoid eating no fat. Eating moderate amounts of fat at a meal can help you feel full sooner and keep you full longer, just don't overdo it.
- Don't skip meals. Skipping meals leads to hunger, low energy levels and improper food choices.
- Don't pass up favorite foods or deprive yourself completely. Moderate consumption is the key.
- Don't tempt yourself by keeping trigger foods or comfort foods around the house. If you have them, it increases the likelihood that you will overeat.
- Plan meals by keeping in mind the demands you'll have on your schedule that day.
- Don't go to a party starving. Before you leave home, eat something light or drink a meal replacement shake. Also drink a great deal of water the day of the party.
- Alcoholic beverages pack on the calories. If you're drinking alcohol, stick to light beer or a champagne spritzer.
- If you tend to overeat during family gatherings, plan and visualize what and how much you will eat before you go. Plan additional daily activities for that day or the following one. The additional activity can be anything from a longer shopping day to additional gym time.