

Debra's Top 10 Nutrition/Weight Loss Tips

(Note: Before starting any weight-loss program, please consult first with your doctor. I am not a registered dietician, but by following the steps below, I have successfully controlled my weight and I believe, improved my overall health.)

Be Mindful.

Begin to notice "how you feel" when you eat, which foods energize you, which make you feel sluggish and bloated. Once I began to listen to the signals from my body – acid reflux, gas, bloating, constipation – and which foods caused these symptoms, I made wiser choices and thought about how I was "fueling" my body.

Consider dropping wheat from your diet.

Following the book "Eat Right For your Type" by Dr. Peter D'Admo, I dropped wheat from my diet. Instead I substitute whole grain brown rice, quinoa, gluten free pasta's such as quinoa pasta, and Ezekiel bread instead of processed wheat pasta's and breads. I am now gluten free and have very limited intake of grains. I noticed immediately when I dropped gluten from my diet I was no longer constantly bloated.

Lower your sugar intake.

I strive to follow Dr. Joseph Mercola's(mercola.com) recommendation of 25 grams of sugar a day although some days this is very hard. I believe we are a society that is truly addicted to sugar – I know I was. Sugar is hidden in everything – pasta sauces, taco sauce, salad dressings. Once I went through what I call my "detox" phase and stopped eating a handful of chocolate chips with my coffee in the morning and reaching for sugary protein bars for energy, I was no longer on the roller coaster of up/down energy and immediately lost weight in my belly. I now look at fruit as a healthy treat, not a necessity. I eat berries with walnuts on top as a snack – so yummy-- or a square of dark chocolate for those chocolate emergencies. Be sure to avoid artificial sweeteners and diet sodas. Stevia is a natural herb sweetener alternative.

See Dr. Mercola's article titled "The Dangers of Sugar: It's just as addictive as Alcohol" (mercola.com).

Add Healthy Fats.

Dr. Mercola also recommends when we drop our sugars that we add healthy fats to our diets such as nuts, olive oil and avocado. I snack on raw almonds and add olive oil to my roasted vegetables and salads.

Add Protein to your diet.

Protein is an important component of every cell in the body. Our bodies use protein to build and repair tissues. We also use protein to make enzymes, hormones, and other body chemicals. Protein is an important building block of bones, muscles, cartilage, skin and blood. Think about adding protein to each of your meals.

I start each day with organic scrambled eggs with spinach and mozzarella cheese. Other great options are greek yogurt and oatmeal with fresh berries and chopped walnuts. I have noticed that by starting my day with protein I stay full longer and I am more alert and energized. I also eat lots of meats such as chicken, turkey, and beef. Fish is also a great source of protein.

Eat lots of vegetables.

When I cut back on fruit, I added lots of veggies to my diet. I love salad, roasted vegetables, and raw vegetables for side dishes and snacks. I roast extra veggies so that I always have some in the refrigerator for a snack or lunch. My favorites are broccoli, whole green beans, asparagus, carrots,

turnips, beets and zucchini. Also can't forget my favorite treat – baked sweet potato.

Drink Green Tea.

Green tea has important antioxidants and compounds that help in maintaining good health. Green tea's antioxidants, called catechins, scavenge for free radicals that can damage DNA and contribute to cancer, blood clots, and atherosclerosis.

I drink cold green tea during the day and always have hot green tea every night after dinner. I have noticed that the hot tea helps me to digest my dinner and also curbs my craving for something sweet immediately after dinner.

Take a probiotic.

Probiotics are a type of living bacteria that actually benefit your health when taken in appropriate amounts. Numerous health benefits include:

- Enhanced immune system response
- Reduces negative affects of taking many types of antibiotics
- Increased ability to digest food
- Alleviates many digestive Disorders such as constipation
- Diarrhea, IBS

Taking Dr. Mercola's probiotic immediately helped my digestion. I am also around hundreds of students each week and know that my probiotic is the "secret weapon" that keeps me healthy.

Do not eat after dinner.

I lost weight immediately when I stopped snacking after dinner. The food that we "pop" into our mouth and forget to count in our calories for the day adds up.

Drink Plenty of water everyday

Water is your body's principal chemical component and makes up 60% of your body's weight. Every system in your body depends on water. From the Mayo clinic website, the Institute of Medicine determined that an adequate intake for men is about 13 cups of total beverage per day, and 9 cups for women. I am drinking water constantly throughout the day and have a bottle of water with me at all times.

Recommended Reading: "Eat Right for Your Type" by Dr. Peter D'Adamo.

This book changed my life and has helped hundreds of my students as well. After the birth of my fourth baby, I was thirty pounds overweight. Following this diet along with yoga and pilates helped me to shed the pounds and gain lean muscle mass. I feel strong, healthy and joyful inside and out.