

# Do This, Not That!

Get the skinny on the most common **weight-loss mistakes** runners make—and how to avoid them.

By Mackenzie Lobby

## Mistake #1

### SETTING UNREALISTIC GOALS.

It's easy to get overzealous when you start training for a big race. "People often think, *Now I'm exercising, so I'm going to lose weight really fast.*" says registered dietitian Sharon Richter. "They forget that they could also be putting on muscle, so the number on the scale might not be changing, even though their body is."

### REMEDY:

Richter suggests setting four to eight pounds per month as a realistic goal. "Weigh yourself at the same time and the same day up to two times per week," she recommends. Since a myriad of factors can affect those numbers, avoid getting too preoccupied with singular scale readouts. Instead, watch for progress over the long haul.

**F**rom green-juice cleanses to alkaline diets, there is no shortage of fad weight-loss schemes. But between all the banter, it can be tricky to figure out what works—and what's a total waste of time.

Many assume running and weight loss go hand-in-hand. However, this isn't always the case. When it comes to lightening your load, runners often make a few key mistakes.

If any of the following blunders feel familiar—rest assured you're not alone. You've got the running part down, now you just have to tie up a few other loose ends and you'll have a clear path toward dropping unwanted lbs!

## Mistake #2

### MISCALCULATING CALORIE BURN.

"Many runners overestimate how many calories they are burning, as well as how many calories they deserve after workouts," explains Richter. Since you are often hungry after a run, it can make you feel that you have license to scarf down snacks.

## Mistake #3

### GOING OVERBOARD WITH SPORTS FUEL.

Sports drinks, chews, gels and bars are important tools in a runner's training arsenal—but it's easy to over consume. She explains, "If you burn 600 calories on a run and then have two gels and a bottle of sports drink, you can end up consuming 800 calories without realizing it."

### REMEDY:

By making calculated decisions about both exercise and diet, you'll reach your goals, rather than crashing and burning. "When you cut 500 calories a day, you will lose about a pound a week," says Richter. That means whether you're cutting 500 calories from your diet or simply burning 500 extra calories through running, you'll see a steady loss over weeks and months.

### REMEDY:

By understanding about how many calories you burn, you'll have a better idea of how to approach post-run replenishment. "Very generally, you burn about 100 calories per mile or every 10 minutes," she says. "If you're running 5 miles at a 10-minute pace, that's going to be about 500 to 600 calories."

#### Mistake #4

##### CUTTING TOO MANY CALORIES.

It can be tempting to pair serious calorie cutting with a tough workout routine. But this approach will spell disaster for both your weight loss and running goals. "You'd never try to start your car without gas, and you have to think of your body the same way," says Richter. "You just can't run well without the right fuel."

##### REMEDY:

"If you're doing less than an hour-long run, you don't need to replenish with a sports drink. Water is fine," she says. The same goes for gels and chews. Save the fuel for extra-long training runs or difficult workouts in hot weather when you're sweating more than usual.



#### Run Don't Walk

When it comes to slim-down success, running beats out its more casually paced counterpart. A recent study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* followed more than 45,000 walkers and runners and found that, over time, the speedsters had gained less weight and maintained smaller middles.

#### Mistake #5

##### CARBO-LOADING TO EXTREMES.

A pasta party is a fun ritual the night leading up to a big event. But there's no need to carbo-load before every single workout or race. Eating a massive plate of noodles before a normal run will do nothing to improve your performance—but it will definitely derail your weight-loss goals.

##### REMEDY:

Richter recommends following this pre-race meal plan: "Don't make any major changes to your diet. Make sure there are some carbs, but you don't need a whole lot extra." When you eat a balanced meal, you're better off both in terms of your run the following day, as well as the numbers next time you hop on the scale.