

11 Surprising Reasons Why You Can't Lose Weight, No Matter How Hard You Try



Are you not able to lose weight no matter how many diets you've tried, or how much you exercise? In this video, I'll reveal 11 surprising reasons why you can't lose weight, no matter how hard you try.

It seems like dieting is our new national past time, with the CDC estimating that over 40% of Americans are obese, and overall, over 70% of Americans are either overweight or obese. And we saw that obesity was one of the strongest risk factors for bad outcomes during the recent pandemic.

These numbers aren't surprising since it's estimated that 88% of Americans are metabolically disturbed, meaning they either have diabetes, pre-diabetes or at risk of developing diabetes.

Hi, I'm Dr. Steven Park, ENT surgeon and sleep doctor, and author of the Amazon best seller, Sleep Interrupted.

Sometime last year, I saw a middle-aged woman named Wendy who came to see me for sinus infections. She was having severe right sided facial pain, puffy eyes, stuffy nose, and a pounding headache along with nausea. She had already taken multiple courses of antibiotics given to her by other doctors. And it kept coming back every few weeks.

She also had trouble staying asleep and kept waking up to go to the bathroom. She was about 50 pounds overweight, but this wasn't her main problem. She was always overweight, but she gained a lot more after starting at her new job about 2 years ago.

After I listened to her story and did a thorough exam, I told her that she didn't have a sinus infection, but sinus migraines. And that it was related to her poor sleep and poor breathing.

She initially didn't believe me and was adamant that I give her more antibiotics...and she was upset at me because I refused. I took a lot of time to explain that we needed to take care of what's causing her sinus migraines which can feel like an infection, rather than just covering it up with more antibiotics. She became interested in what I had to say when I told her that I could help her with her sleep and nighttime urination issues as well.

I gave her a prescription nasal allergy spray, just to give her something for her nose and sinuses. But the more powerful prescription wasn't a pill, but 3 simple lifestyle changes.

First she was only sleeping 5-6 hours every night. She stayed up using her iPad in bed and had trouble falling asleep. She also came home late at night after work so she had to eat dinner just before bedtime.

First I had her eat dinner much earlier, about 3 hours before she went to bed. She shifted her work schedule to be able to come home earlier to cook dinner and eat earlier. We talked for a few minutes about making some simple changes to her dietary regimen, especially to curb her constant cravings for snacks.

I also had her stop using her iPad or any device before bedtime since the blue light from the screens lowers the sleep hormone, melatonin.

Because she was able to fall asleep faster, now on an empty stomach, she was getting about 7 hours every night. Not perfect, but much better.

In 2 weeks she called to tell me that her sinus was feeling much better, and she was sleeping a bit better and wasn't getting up to go to the bathroom anymore. She was thankful.

On a follow-up visit 3 months later, she looked like a different person. Her eyes weren't puffy anymore, and she was about 20-25 pounds lighter. Her sinus migraines were completely gone.

As you may already know, there are probably thousands of books, articles, videos, blogs, podcasts, and other opinions on what you can do to lose weight.

The most common reasons I've seen for not being able to succeed in losing weight include the following:

1. Too much sugar
2. Too much carbohydrates
3. Eating too much
4. Not enough exercise or physical activity
5. Not drinking enough water
6. Eating too much fat
7. Lack of mental will-power

8. Bad genes
9. Insulin resistance
10. Vitamin or mineral deficiency
11. Hormone imbalance
12. Toxins

While some of these points have some truth to them, some have been found to be plain wrong when it comes to weight loss. For example, it's been shown that while exercise is important for overall heart health, it does very little to help you lose weight.

So here are the 11 surprising reasons why you can't lose weight, no matter how hard you try:

1. The first one is because you're eating a low-fat diet. This is one of the biggest misunderstandings that began in the 1970s and early 80s when the USDA promoted food guidelines that recommended lowering total fat intake, especially saturated fats. This is also when the food pyramid guidelines were created a few years later, which demoted red meat and promoted lots more fruits and vegetables, and especially grains, which contained a lot more carbohydrates. And here's one interesting statistic: Dr. Jason Fung estimates that the change from butter to margarine lead to ~ 100K heart attacks every year in the US.

There are a lot of other pieces to the puzzle in how this happened, but essentially, it started the low-fat movement, and cholesterol was demonized. It's important to note that a low-fat diet won't help you to lose weight and in fact, it can actually cause more weight gain, since sugar and other carbohydrates had to be added to make low-fat foods taste better. Here's a graph of the obesity epidemic in the US up to just beyond 2010. There's a lot more nuance and disturbing history on this topic. I'll place links to some books that are helpful below.

Also, without adequate amounts of fat in your meals, you'll get hungrier much earlier, which will lead to more snacking. In most cases, snacks will include carbohydrate or sugar-filled foods. This is what then led to some experts' recommendation to snack more often.

More recent high-quality prospective studies show either no difference between meat and non-meat eaters for heart disease and longevity, or better health outcomes for meat eaters. Most of the older studies were retrospective, and lumped meat eaters with processed, hormone and antibiotic laden meats as well as with other bad personal habits. And here's one recent study showing the benefits of eating grass-fed and finished cows over conventional meat.

And here's a major study from Lancet in 2015 which should have been the last nail in the coffin of this debate. Meta-analysis of 53 prospective RCTs, looking at low fat diets vs other diets. More than 68K patients in 18 countries, with at least one 1 year follow-up. Higher fat diets better at weight loss, even at only a 5% higher fat content. Higher carbohydrate intake was associated with a higher risk of dying, and the reverse for higher fat intake, with a lower risk of dying.

Interesting finding: that total fat and types of fat were NOT associated with heart disease and heart attack. And lastly, saturated fat had an inverse relation to risk of stroke. So saturated fat was protective against stroke.

So did this study nail the coffin closed completely? Not really. It's widely known that these guidelines were and still is heavily influenced by the processed food and beverage industries. If you look at the messaging by the most influential health advocacy organizations as well as the government, they're still pushing low-fat, low cholesterol and carbohydrate rich foods. I wonder why.

2. You're eating too much processed vegetable seed oils.

McDonald's used to use beef fat for their fries until 1990 when they changed over to sunflower and rapeseed oil due to all the concerns about saturated fat. And in 2021, they added natural beef flavoring to their fries to replicate what it used to taste like using beef fat. So because of this change, McDonald's fries are not vegan anymore.

Actually the transition from traditional saturated fats to highly processed polyunsaturated vegetable oils start many decades earlier, due to a number of historical factors. One major milestone was in 1911, when P&G heavily promoted Crisco, which was made from waste products from the cotton industry, and the US government propping up peanut oil for use during WW2, and this one important event in 1961: At that time, the fledgling AHA received \$1.7 Mil from P&G and they started promoting vegetable oils over saturated fats such as butter, tallow, and lard. To this day, the AHA is still recommending limiting saturated fats despite tons of evidence. Long-term, it's been shown that eating vegetable oils worsens your chances of heart attacks and early death. I'll place links to some studies showing the dangers of limiting saturated fats in your diet.

And here's an interesting fact from Dr. Chris Knobbe (see link)

He argues that total saturated fat, and macronutrient content doesn't make a difference with heart disease, as long as your omega 6:3 ratio is about 1, not > 10.

3. You're eating foods with the words low-calorie, zero-calorie, reduced, skim, low or 0 fat, diet, or "heart healthy."

If you have to add back vitamins, minerals or fiber, then it's not healthy because the food's been processed too much. That's why you should try to limit or eliminate foods that come in packaging with nutrition labels.

4. You're watching too much media. This includes any type of screen activity from your cell phone to your TV, laptop or your computer. It's not only the time you spend on these devices, but most of the content that you consume will be negative and anxiety provoking. Remember, they're not creating great content for free. The main point of media is to have you buy something. And many of the commercials are related to food, beverages, or medications. In most cases, it's not going to be healthy.

They talk about intermittent fasting to lose weight, so I recommend using this same concept for media in general. Set aside time to cut out media entirely, including music, since that will usually involve a device. Use this time to do an activity, exercise, play an instrument, sing, or do something creative. Create new thoughts, ideas, or music on your own when you have this quiet time, rather than being told what to think or buy. There's no doubt that watching media, especially the news will make you more stressed or worried, not to mention being more hungry.

5. You're drinking too many bottled, canned or prepared drinks, including juices, soda, diet drinks, coffee, and alcohol. Drink filtered water that you filter. You'll save a lot of money as well. Soda consumption is down now but about 1/2 of adults are still drinking at least one can a day. Some are drinking many more. And there are some studies that show that diet drinks are linked to more weight gain. This is an endless topic to cover in detail, especially with HFCS in most of these drinks, as well as the dangers of most of the sugar substitutes, including a higher risk of stroke. Add we also have the sugary drinks called juice and formula that our young children consume. For infants, breast milk is best, and for children and adults, just drink water.

6. But don't drink plain tap water, since most tap water is heavily contaminated with pollutants and chemicals. The most important one I want to stress is Fluoride, since it can cause weight gain due to blocking iodine. You can either buy water or

use filtered water. If you buy water, do your research online and make sure your water company's water doesn't have fluoride. I think a better way and more economical way in the long run is to drink filtered water. However, the typical pitcher filters such as Britta or PUR can't filter fluoride. There may be some other pitchers that can do this but you'll have to do some research. You can also get a RO system to install under your sink as your main source of drinking water, or if you're willing, a whole house RO system. You can also distill your water as well. It's important to remember that these two latter options will strip out all the important minerals, so you have add it back somehow.

Just a quick note about needing fluoride to prevent cavities in your teeth. I won't go into this issue in much detail except to say that placing fluoride in our water supply was as bad as recommending a low-fat diet. Most of the European countries have banned fluoride and they have no worse rate of cavities. Plus there are lots of documented studies on the neurotoxic and IQ lowering properties of fluoride, including high concentrations found in calcified pineal glands, which is the area in the brain with lowered levels of the sleep hormone, melatonin.

7. You exercise too much. It's generally accepted that regular exercise and physical activity is important for good health, but just like in the Goldilocks story, it can't be too little or too much. It has to be just right. For example, here's a study from the Am. College of Cardiology in 2015 showing that compared to sedentary non-joggers, subjects who were light joggers had significantly much lower overall death rates, with a HR of .22, relative to 1.0 for the sedentary group who were the controls. Light jogging was described as running a slow pace, ~5 MPH, 2-3 times per week for no more than 2.5 hours total. Strenuous joggers ran 7 MPH or faster for more than 4 hours per week, or more than 2.5 hr/week and more than 3 runs per week. Compared with the sedentary subjects, strenuous runners' overall death rates were no different in the initial analysis, but when adjusted for alcohol, education

and diabetes, here below, it was almost twice the death rate, at 1.9.

They go on to cite statistics that show that sudden cardiac death is almost 4X higher in marathons compared with 1/2 marathons. They speculate that long-term endurance exercise may cause damage to the heart and large arteries. Other studies showing earlier deaths in long-term marathoners link to the possibility that many marathoners use ibuprofen, which has been shown to raise your risk of heart attack or stroke.

One last comment about exercise. If you look at the blue zones, which are pockets throughout the world where people live the longest. One thing they all had was regular exercise, but not by jogging or working out at the gym. They walked a lot, did manual labor outdoors, and did a lot of gardening. You don't need a gym membership to live a long and healthy life.

8. You snack too often. There's been a trend by many experts to snack often between meals to prevent hypoglycemia. Diabetics are told to snack before bedtime to prevent hyperglycemia. Entire food industries were created to satisfy your hunger pains and cravings in-between meals. This problem likely started as we went to a low fat diet. Since eating fat and protein is very satiating, whereas a carbohydrate rich meal will give you a quick glucose and insulin spike, making you hungry much quicker. More up to date research has shown that you want to minimize the insulin spikes throughout the day, since this can lead to diabetes. There are countless studies showing that snacking in general is associated with more weight gain.

Ideally you should be able to go between meals without snacking. And definitely no snacking before bedtime, since that's more likely to cause acid reflux and apnea at night. This will raise your stress hormones, which will increase glucose even more. And poor sleep leads to more weight gain.

And here's one example of problems caused by the low-fat craze. In 1992, Nabisco introduced Snackwells, a fat-free cookie, and it was a hit. Later, it was blamed as adding to the obesity epidemic due to its high carbohydrate content.

9. This is a big problem here in the US. Many Americans in the general are vitamin D deficient. Recent studies show that that average Vit D level is in the mid-20s. 30 is the bare minimum level, to prevent Ricketts. But it's been shown that you need to be at least above 50 or even 60 to have all the health benefits of Vit. D, including preventing heart disease, depression, cancer, osteoporosis, digestive problems, autoimmune conditions, and dementia.

And you may have guessed by now, that it's strongly involved in helping you to keep your weight down. In fact, it's not really a vitamin. It's a hormone. And the best way to get it is by being exposed to sunlight. With the combination of low-fat, low animal fat diet and doctors telling you to stay out of the sun, and using sunscreen religiously, our levels of Vit D plummeted. Here's a systematic review and meta-analysis showing that the obese had significantly lower Vit D levels. So the key point here is that Vit D is important in every system of your body, just like your thyroid hormone.

10. Your elevated stress levels. This is a huge problem for most people who are trying to lose weight. On multiple different levels. It's been said that 90 to 95% of all illness is related to stress. When you hear the word stress, you think about anxiety or worries about relationships, at work or about school work. So that's mostly psychological or emotional stress. Then you also have physical stress such as if you're in physical danger, or training for marathon. And lastly, you have physiologic stress, which can come from thousands of different reasons. Even down to the cellular level.

Dr. Robert Sapolsky, in his book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, talks about how your body reacts to any kind of stress. He actually gives a humorous account of Dr. Hans Selye's experiments that lead to him describing what's now called the fight or flight response. He points out that there are good stresses, like if you're running from a tiger. This probably saved many people's lives hundreds of years ago. But now as we live in modern societies, we have much smaller degrees of stress, but stacked up to much higher overall levels, and for a much longer period of time, sometimes never ending. It's this chronic form of physiologic stress that's thought to cause diseases.

Physiologic stress causes your stress hormones like cortisol to stay higher, which raises your glucose and insulin levels. If this continues, it promotes weight gain, or makes it harder to lose weight. You're also going to crave sugary, starchy foods to eat as well, all the time.

11. I believe that this is the biggest problem that's not being addressed by most doctors. Untreated sleep-breathing problems. The end extreme of this condition is called obstructive sleep apnea, where you stop breathing at least 5 times every hour while sleeping, for at least 10 seconds or longer for each episode. Untreated, obstructive sleep apnea can lead to high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack or stroke, as well as depression, dementia, sexual dysfunction, or even liver and kidney damage. Even when it's picked up by doctors, it's rarely rarely addressed fully, and many people don't feel any benefits even after being treated with pressure machines, dental devices or even after surgery. I talk about why this happens on my blog at doctorstevenpark.com, and what you can do about it.

Now there's an additional, huge category of people who don't breathe well during sleep, but don't officially meet the criteria for obstructive sleep apnea. So for example, if you underwent a sleep

study and stopped breathing 25 times every hour, but only for 8-9 seconds at a time, then officially, you don't have obstructive sleep apnea. So you won't qualify for any treatments. This is called upper airway resistance syndrome. And I talk about this in much more detail in my blog, book, podcast and in other videos as well.

Whenever you have breathing pauses, regardless of how long it is, your brain wakes up from deep to light sleep. This sleep fragmentation leads to a stress response, and unrefreshing sleep, daytime fatigue, lack of energy, and many other symptoms. If your breathing pauses go on for more than 10 seconds during an apnea, even up to 40 or 50 seconds, then your oxygen levels can drop to dangerous levels, and this is what can lead to heart disease over many years.

Oftentimes, these breathing problems during sleep is what may prevent you from losing weight, especially if you have obstructive sleep apnea. Surprisingly, people with UARS tend to be on the thin side and have low blood pressure. So if you're struggling with losing weight despite doing all the right things, go see a sleep doctor to get screened for obstructive sleep apnea. One word of caution. If you're found to have obstructive sleep apnea and are placed on a CPAP, or continuous positive airway pressure machine, you may sleep much better, but start to put on more weight. I covered this issue in a past video, which I'll place a link to below..

So what can you do?

1. Minimize eating any processed food or chemicals in a box or plastic packaging
2. Be skeptical of anything that says it's heart healthy (or any other health claim, for that matter)

3. Buy only single-ingredient, natural, organic foods, which are typically found in the periphery of the supermarket, or at farmer's markets, without any nutrition labels
4. Avoid sugar as much as possible. Minimize sugar substitutes, even healthy ones.
5. Avoid anything with the words low-fat, low-calorie, reduced, 0 fat, 0 calorie, diet, sugar-free, high fiber, or whole grain. All these words imply that it was processed or highly refined.
6. Don't stress too much about the macronutrient proportions. If you eat natural foods, your body will adjust. Remember what I mentioned about Dr. Knobbe's findings in his study of people measuring their omega 6:3 ratios and rates of heart disease. It really didn't matter what your macronutrient ratio was, as long as the omega 6 to 3 ratio was 1-2, and not over 10.
7. Get lots more sunlight for Vit D production. Most people living in our the higher or lower latitudes will need supplementation. Shoot for Vit D levels above 60. You also need more NIR light, which you can get through natural sunlight in the early morning and late afternoon hours to make a powerful anti-oxidant in your mitochondria, called melatonin.
8. Prioritize sleep. Sleep hygiene. If you snore, go see a sleep doctor. Even if you don't snore, but if you don't sleep well, get tested for OSA or UARS
9. Don't be fooled into thinking that red meat is bad. Don't be scared of saturated fat or cholesterol. Low cholesterol is linked with higher death rates. Your body and your brain needs cholesterol to work properly, as well as to make enough of your sex hormones.
10. Control your stress. Work on improving your personal relationships. Get help for traumatic events in your past life. If you suffer from trauma in your life, there's a really helpful book called The Body Keeps Score. I highly recommend it over prescription medications, many of which can cause you to put on more weight.
11. Cut down your timeframes in the window of eating. This is called intermittent fasting. You can read about this on your

own, since there are many variations. Minimize snacking. Once you add more healthy fats to your meals, you won't need to snack as often. This way there's no need to limit total calories.

I hope you found this video helpful. Please subscribe to my channel and press the thumbs up icon. I know I gave you a lot of information, so I'll be placing a link to download the transcript in the description box below.

If you've struggled with multiple diet plans or fitness regimens and still can't seem to lose weight, please take a look at my [90-Day Sleep Diet](#) course. Everything I mentioned in this video is a small fraction of what I cover in this course. It's the the only weight loss program that incorporates my sleep-breathing paradigm to more fully optimize your ability to breathe better, lose weight, and sleep great. Click on the link below to find out how you can get \$30 off, but only for a limited time.