

RUCHI GURNANI · NUTRITIONIST

Lose weight on the food already in your kitchen

No starving, no powders, no banned foods. How much to eat, when to eat it, the habits that quietly undo it, and what to do when the scale stops.

Swipe 👉

Read this first

Weight comes off when you eat a little less than you burn, for weeks in a row. That is the whole science. Every diet that works is one way of doing that. The one that works for you is the one you can eat for a year.

Home food is the diet. **Roti, sabzi, dal, dahi, rice.** What changes is the amount, the order, the clock, and what you drink.

Aim for **two kilos a month.** Faster than that costs muscle and hair, and comes back.

THE ONE RULE

Never skip a meal to lose weight. Skipped meals come back as the 4 pm biscuits and the 10 pm fridge. Eat three meals and one snack, every day.

1

HOW MUCH TO EAT

THE SUM Most women lose weight steadily on 1,300 to 1,500 calories a day, most men on 1,600 to 1,900. Below that the body fights back, muscle goes, hunger wins.

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE Two rotis or one katori rice, a full katori of dal, a full katori of sabzi, a katori of curd, salad. Twice a day. A protein breakfast. One fruit, one fistful of nuts.

THE OIL One spoon of oil is 120 calories. Three spoons in a sabzi is a meal's worth. Measure it for a week; most kitchens pour double.

THE SUGAR One spoon of sugar in three cups of chai is 100 calories a day, 3,000 a month. That alone is a kilo in three months.

2

BREAKFAST

**WITHIN
TWO
HOURS**

Eat within two hours of waking. People who skip breakfast most days eat more by night and carry more weight at the waist.

**PROTEIN
FIRST**

Poha, upma, idli and paratha carry almost no protein. Add one: two eggs, a katori of curd, sprouts, a slice of paneer, a besan or moong chilla.

NOT THIS

Toast and jam, biscuits with chai, a banana alone, juice. Sugar twice before 9 am, hungry again by 11.

NO TIME

Roasted chana and a katori of curd take one minute. Keep both at the office.

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LUNCH AND DINNER

THE ORDER Salad and sabzi first, dal or paneer second, rice or roti last. Same food, new order, half the sugar spike, fuller for longer.

LUNCH BY 2 Rice at 3 pm on an empty stomach is the biggest spike of the day and the 5 pm craving. If lunch will be late, a katori of curd or chana at 1.

DINNER EARLY The same meal eaten four hours later makes you hungrier the next day and burn less. Move dinner up before you cut it down. 8 pm beats 10 pm.

THREE HOURS Dinner three hours before bed. The body burns while you sleep, not while you digest.

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DO NOT DRINK YOUR CALORIES

THE RULE Sugar eaten gets cancelled out later in the day. Sugar drunk is simply added on. Drinks slip past fullness.

OUT Cold drinks, packet juice, fresh juice, sweet lassi, sharbat, flavoured milk, energy drinks, sweet coffee. One a day is a kilo a month.

IN Water, chaas, nimbu pani without sugar, coconut water, black coffee, chai with half a spoon on the way to none.

JUICE A glass of orange juice is four oranges with the fibre gone. Eat the orange.

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THE 4 PM HOLE

WHY

Craving at the same time every evening is lunch too small, not weak will. Check the dal before you check the biscuits.

KEEP READY

Roasted chana in a jar. Frozen banana slices for a two-minute ice cream with cocoa. Khajoor with a walnut pressed in. Papaya in the fridge with curd.

THE PORTION

One fistful, in a katori, sitting down. Never from the packet, never standing at the counter.

CHOCOLATE

Dark, 70 percent or more. Two squares. Put the bar back in the fridge before the first bite.

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EATING LESS AND STILL NOT LOSING

WRITE IT DOWN

Every bite for three days, including the bites while cooking and the children's leftovers. People undercount by a third. The notebook finds it.

THE OIL AND THE NUTS

A spoon of oil is 120 calories. A fistful of almonds is 160. Healthy is not free. Measure both.

THE WEEKEND

Five careful days and two free ones is a flat line. Saturday's plate undoes the week. One treat meal, not one treat day.

THE SWEET LASSI

A glass of sweet lassi, a mango shake, a sweet coffee is a meal's worth of calories that does not fill you.

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WHEN THE WEIGHT STOPS

IT WILL Almost every weight loss stalls by month four to six. A lighter body needs less food, and portions have quietly grown back to week one. This is normal.

DO NOT Do not cut food further. Below 1,200 calories the body holds on, and the hair and the mood go first.

DO Go back to the week-one plate and measure it again. Dal, dahi or eggs at every meal so muscle stays. Lift something twice a week.

MEASURE Measure the waist, not only the weight. The tape moves when the scale does not.

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THE HABITS THAT DECIDE

THE PLATE Eat from a quarter plate or a katori. A bigger plate means a bigger portion, every time, and nobody notices.

THE PHONE One meal a day with no screen. Eating while scrolling means eating more now and more at the next meal, because the body did not register it.

TWENTY MINUTES Fullness arrives twenty minutes late. Serve once, wait, then decide. Most second helpings are eaten before the first one has been counted.

THE PACKET On packaged food people eat about 500 calories a day more than on home food with the same salt, sugar and fat. Keep chips, biscuits and namkeen out of the house, not just out of the diet.

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MOVE, BUT NOT THE WAY YOU THINK

THE WALK Ten minutes on your feet after every meal. After-meal sugar drops, and so does the 4 pm hunger. Inside the house counts.

LIFT Twice a week. Squats from a chair, wall push-ups, a filled water bottle. Lifting does not change how much comes off. It changes what comes off: fat, not muscle.

CRUNCHES There is no spot reduction. Six weeks of crunches did not cut belly fat. The belly goes when the plate changes.

STEPS Walk to the shop, take the stairs, stand every half hour at the desk. Eight to ten thousand steps a day beats one gym hour and a chair all day.

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SLEEP AND STRESS

SLEEP Short sleep makes you eat about 400 calories more the next day and burn no more. Five-hour nights lose muscle instead of fat. Seven hours is part of the diet.

STRESS Stress all day parks fat at the waist. A ten-minute walk after lunch and the phone out of the bedroom are not luxuries.

THE SCALE Weight swings a kilo a day with salt, water and the weekend. Weigh daily, same time, and look at the weekly average. Monday's jump is water, gone by Wednesday.

THE MISSED DAY One missed day does not break the habit. Two days of "I have ruined it anyway" does. Eat normally at the next meal and carry on.

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FESTIVALS, WEDDINGS, TRAVEL

- THE RULE** Enjoy all of it. Swap, do not skip. Three treat meals in a weekend become one. One jalebi after a meal, not two before it.
- THE PLATE** At the buffet: salad and sabzi first, then the protein, then one roti or one spoon of rice, then one sweet. Not the other way round.
- THE DRINK** Water between drinks. Sweet mocktails count as sweets.
- THE MORNING AFTER** Normal breakfast, normal lunch. Do not starve to make up. Starving is what starts the next binge.

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ONE DAY THAT LOSES WEIGHT

- WAKE UP** A glass of water. Five soaked almonds.
- BREAKFAST** Two eggs with a roti, or a moong chilla with curd, or poha with peanuts and sprouts. Chai after, half a spoon of sugar.
- LUNCH BY 2** Salad, a katori of sabzi, a katori of dal, two rotis or one katori rice, curd.
- 4 PM** A fruit, or a fistful of roasted chana, or chaas.
- DINNER BY 8** Sabzi, dal or paneer or chicken, one roti or one small katori rice. Ten-minute walk after. Nothing sweet, nothing after.

WATER

Two and a half litres through the day. Hunger at odd hours is often thirst.

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WHEN THE PLATE IS NOT THE PROBLEM

THYROID Weight going up on a careful plate, with cold, dry skin and tiredness: get TSH tested. Diet alone will not move a slow thyroid.

PCOS Weight at the waist, irregular periods, hair on the chin, acne: PCOS. The plate helps a lot, alongside a doctor.

MEDICINES Some tablets for sugar, BP, mood and allergies add weight. Do not stop them. Ask the doctor if there is another.

FOR LIFE Protein breakfast. Lunch by 2. Dinner by 8. Nothing sweet to drink. Walk after meals. Weigh weekly, measure the waist. That is the whole plan.

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Weight is one part. Your plan is the rest.



I read your reports before I write a single meal. Then the plan: your routine, what you actually eat, your family's food. Three plans of ten days each, so it changes as you change.

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