Dumb Dieting Mistakes!

1. Thinking in terms of being "on a diet" or "off a diet" - Weight management/weight loss is more of a lifestyle than a diet. It's an ongoing process that pretty much lasts forever. You can have so-called "good" or "bad" days, but thinking about being "on" or "off" a diet is such an old-school way of thinking, and it is NOT helpful to your overall goal. Make a commitment to change your life, and take one day at a time.

2. Skipping meals - This is a TERRIBLE idea. For the most part, you wind up eating more calories in the end because you overeat once you actually do have a meal. Plus, skipping meals is NOT fun. Meals = good.

3. Neglecting the importance of exercise - MOVE AROUND! Small changes can help SO much. You don't need to become a gym rat. Walk 20 minutes a day. Park further from the entrance to the mall. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. All of those can help burn more calories. And the more you burn, the more you lose. Stop being lazy! I don't like exercising, yet I make myself do it. A LOT.

4. Drinking Your Calories...It's easy to ignore the fact that many beverages are fat-filled and calorie-packed. Do you really want to spend 500 calories on a smoothie, or an insane 670 calories on a Starbucks Double Chocolate Chip Frappuccino Blended Crème? Even fruit juice has 100 - 150 calories per cup. We prefer to spend our calories on things that we can CHEW (chewing is fun). Besides, there are tons of guilt-free coffee drinks , sodas, juices, smoothies & shakes, hot chocolate , etc. So don't waste calories on drinks -- swap the high-cal versions for their guilt-free replacements, and sip to your heart's content!

5. Not Eating Breakfast...Think you're doing yourself a favor by not eating breakfast? Think again. Studies show that breakfast-skippers actually take in MORE calories by the end of the day than people who have a morning meal. Why? When you bypass breakfast, you end up so hungry that by the time you finally do eat, you're likely to eat too much. And, when you let yourself get that ravenous, you're more likely to grab whatever is convenient (which is often processed, high-cal, high-fat foods) than to look for something healthy. Now if that isn’t enough to convince you to eat that first meal, check this out: At night, your metabolism naturally slows down while you sleep, but it doesn’t rev back up again UNTIL you eat. Skip your morning meal, and your metabolism will remain at slow speed to conserve calories! Bottom line? ALWAYS EAT BREAKFAST!

6. Falling For Food Fakers...Trail mix, dried fruit, granola... they all sound like diet-friendly treats, right? WRONG! These, and other food fakers, have wrecked many a diet. They may be healthy, but for people who count calories and fat, the stats in these add up WAY too quickly. That's why you absolutely NEED to check food labels before putting anything in your mouth. If you look at the nutritionals on that bag of trail mix, you'll see that 1 cup packs in around 700 calories, 45 grams of fat, and 67 carbs. Yikes!

7. Not Counting Condiments...Unfortunately, what you put ON your food is just as important as what's IN your food. Topping your sandwich with a spoonful of mayo will cost you about 100 calories and 11 grams of fat. The good news is that there are tons of diet-friendly condiments that can perk up your food. Salsas, mustards, Dijonnaise , ketchup and fat-free versions of sour cream, mayo and other spreads are all guilt-free and delicious condiment choices. Just remember not to kid yourself into thinking that CONDIMENTS DON'T COUNT. They SO do.

8. Thinking All Salads Are Healthy...Salads = healthy, right? Uhhhh, not necessarily. Depending on what you toss on top of that salad (or in some cases, what the thing is served in), you could be better off eating a burger, or even pizza. For example, Taco Bell's Fiesta Taco Salad contains 840 calories and 45g fat (BTW, that's almost the same as eating FIVE crunchy tacos). But wait -- that doesn't mean you should ditch the greens (or order 5 tacos, for that matter). Just be sure to order or build your salads carefully. Avoid eggs, regular (meaning fat-packed) cheese, fried noodles, fatty meats, sour cream, guacamole, and full-fat dressings. Instead, bulk your salad up with fat-free or reduced-fat cheeses (RF grated parmesan and FF or RF feta crumbles ROCK!), beans (garbanzo, kidney, black beans, etc.), peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, lean meats, tuna (packed in water) and low-cal salad dressings. Don't be like those people who insist they're "watching their weight" as they chomp down a grilled chicken caesar topped with croutons and 300-calorie dressing!

9. Not Reading Labels Carefully...We cannot stress enough the importance of paying attention to food labels. Quite often, a package that APPEARS to contain a single serving of something actually contains several servings. You need to pay CLOSE attention to the "servings per container" and multiply all of the nutritional info by that number. This will help you to accurately assess what you're taking in. Yes, that tiny bag of chips has TWO servings -- so DOUBLE THOSE NUTRITIONALS!