



Flexible Dieting Guide

Flexible Dieting

If you were to look on any social media guru's account, you could be forgiven for thinking that flexible dieting was simply eating pizza, donuts, cakes, lollies and all manner of junk food. But this is simply not the case and is highly misleading. When looking at these types of influencer accounts, it's important to understand that they are only showing you what they want to. They do this to create the impression that they are able to eat whatever they like and still look the way they do. This is not only patently false but it is deliberately misleading and unprofessional. It is also a way to encourage people to purchase their product or system. I mean, who doesn't want to be able to eat whatever they want and still look fit and healthy?! However, this is clearly not what is actually happening and my advice with accounts like this is to either view them very very skeptically or just unfollow them.

In the past, being on a diet pretty much meant saying goodbye to all the foods you love. No more cake, ice-cream, dessert, alcohol or fun 😊 People would prep themselves before a diet by going on a binge and then trying to completely restrict every "bad" food and ultimately starve themselves until they achieved their goal weight. Sounds totally healthy and enjoyable (not).

So rather than always pigging out on junk or always restricting it, flexible dieting is the happy interim. If you're a numbers person, you could think of your eating habits as 80% nourishing and promoting health and 20% soul food. What this shows us is that most of what we eat should be focused on eating adequate protein and micronutrients and then we can relax for the rest.

With the 80-20 rule you still need to consider your overall energy intake. You want your soul food to still be in your calorie requirements and if they're not, then adjust the days around it accordingly. The 80-20 rule doesn't necessarily equate to meals either i.e. if you eat 21 meals per week, 17 are meeting your macros and 4 are soul food. It's not quite so cut and dry. It's more about including some foods you love, whilst still being aware of the energy associated with them and how they may impact upon your hunger and subsequent eating habits.

Food that is high in both fats and carbs set off a pleasure response in our brain via the hedonic pathway. This pathway overrides our energy control systems and enables us to continue eating, even when our energy requirements have been exceeded. This is why we can eat a piece of cake after dinner, even though we're already full. Eating foods that activate the hedonic pathway are harder to control for a few reasons. The first is that brain really likes them and encourages you to eat more. This is a hard message to ignore. Secondly, they are often low in both protein and fibre making them not particularly satiating. This means you will likely be reaching for something else to eat, soon after. And finally, they often come in sizes that are not single serve making you tempted to go back for more.



Flexible Dieting

So when you're following a flexible dieting program, you need to be aware of the following things:

1. Food manufacturers know how to hook you onto a food. They use palatability, taste, the bliss point, packaging and sales techniques to hook you in. The first step in controlling your intake of these foods is knowing how deceptive the tricks are in getting you to like them.
2. Flexible foods are usually very high in energy, low in micronutrients and not particularly satiating (when you measure fullness per calorie). They require control to be included in a diet and if you don't think you can control how much you eat, consider finding healthier alternatives or excluding them until you can.
3. Flexible dieting needs to be earned. You can't include all the foods you want but then never restrict them either. You also need to be working on building muscle and getting fit as this will build your metabolism which is the path to real dietary flexibility.
4. Flexible dieting involves letting go of all food-associated guilt. Food is neither good nor bad and you are neither good nor bad for the food you eat or don't eat. You're not naughty or bad for eating foods or enjoying your weekend and with flexible dieting, you need to let this mindset go.
5. Flexible dieting is just another strategy to help you stick with a lifestyle change long-term. You need to figure out how to include it in your life - what to include, how often to have it and how much you can have in a sitting.



Alcohol

Most people think that when you're trying to lose weight, you need to stop drinking completely. This isn't necessarily true. When it comes to alcohol, there are a few things to consider, such as:

1. How does the alcohol fit in with the rest of the diet?
2. Does the alcohol displace important nutrients?
3. Does the alcohol impact negatively upon eating habits?
4. Does the alcohol cause the person to exceed their energy intake?
5. Does the alcohol negatively impact upon sleep and training?
6. How does the alcohol make you feel?
7. Can the alcohol be controlled and consumed in a safe manner?

So after considering these questions, the choice to include alcohol or not, really becomes a matter of preference, more so than anything else.

And surprisingly, the research actually supports this. A study by Cordain, Bryan, Melby & Smith (2013) found that when calories were controlled, the inclusion of two glasses of red wine every night did not affect weight loss. Yippee!! I think I can hear all the red wine lovers shouting with glee 😊

In another study conducted by Cordain and associates (2000) they also found that a moderate intake of wine did not affect body weight (in addition to insulin sensitivity, lipids and blood pressure).

And a meta-analysis conducted by Traversy and Chaput (2015), found that there was no association between a moderate intake of alcohol and obesity. However, they could not rule out that this was due to other healthy lifestyle factors of the participants.

At the end of the day, what's important to understand is that if you really enjoy a glass of wine or a beer after work or on the weekends, then it's totally ok to include it so long as it's not causing any of the problems listed above. There are also additional benefits to drinking alcohol which include:

- stress reduction
- increasing adherence to a lifestyle change
- increasing overall enjoyment of life (yes you are allowed to enjoy life)
- resveratrol and other healthful nutrients found in alcohol

So if you want to include alcohol, I have included some popular options on the next page for you to compare and help with your decision.



Alcohol



Vodka Soda (330ml)

Calories: 96
Carbs: 0g
Sugar: 0g



Gin & Tonic (125ml)

Calories: 129
Carbs: 32g
Sugar: 14g



Jim Beam & Coke (375ml)

Calories: 191
Carbs: 23g
Sugar: 23g



Tequila Sunrise (330ml)

Calories: 275
Carbs: 36g
Sugar: 29g



Champagne (375ml)

Calories: 92
Carbs: 2g
Sugar: 1g



Chardonnay (150ml)

Calories: 90
Carbs: 1g
Sugar: 0g



Red Wine (150ml)

Calories: 107
Carbs: 3g
Sugar: 0g



Tooheys New (375ml)

Calories: 142
Carbs: 9g
Sugar: 0g



Margarita

Calories: 168
Carbs: 10g
Sugar: 9g



Mojito (225ml)

Calories: 217
Carbs: 24g
Sugar: 23g



Cosmopolitan

Calories: 213
Carbs: 13g
Sugar: 11g



Espresso Martini

Calories: 228
Carbs: 18g
Sugar: 17g



Eating Out

Whilst you want to make sure you enjoy yourself while you're out, and counting calories can certainly take the fun out of any occasion, you don't want to totally blow your calorie intake either. To help in these situations, there are some very simple things you can do to help keep your energy intake under control.

Before you go out.....

- eat less energy during the day and bank those extra calories
- to eat less calories, fill up on low cal, fibrous veg and lean protein during the day
- eat something protein-rich just before you head out
- make sure you're not starving when you're heading out

While you're out.....

- think about leaving off dressings, sauces and other condiments
- consider a salad as a side rather than bread or other starchy carbs
- consider having a smaller, lower energy main if you're having dessert
- if you're having drinks, skip the dessert
- if you're drinking spirits, either drink it on the rocks or choose a low energy mixer such as soda water
- if you're drinking wine, choose a lower calorie variety
- make sure you drink water in-between each alcoholic beverage
- try to limit your alcoholic intake to 2 standard drinks

The day after....

If you stuck with your plan, the day after is a regular day for you and you don't need to alter anything. However if things got a little out of hand, consider these tips:

- consider fasting until lunch time if you had a big night of eating and/or drinking
- if you can't fast, try and reduce your overall energy intake by 200-500 calories
- if you are hungover, try and eat as much nutrient dense food as possible (fruit and veg)
- if you can't stomach food, try a low sugar smoothie with protein powder
- get a high intensity training session in - either weights or HIIT
- try and be as active as possible
- get outside and get some vitamin D (important for mood if you're feeling yuck)



Eating Out

Example:

Kate's weight loss calories are **2000-2200**.

Monday - Friday she eats 2000 calories.

Saturday she eats 500 calories at breakfast and another 500 at lunch. Just before heading out she has a protein shake which is another 300 calories.

At dinner that night she consumes 1200 calories with dinner and drinks.

On Sunday, she doesn't feel hungry in morning so waits until lunch time to eat. At lunch she has a protein heavy meal then hits the gym for a weights session in the afternoon. By the end of the day she has consumed 1800 calories.

Total weekly intake = 14 300 calories

Weekly weight loss allowance = 14 000 - 15 400 calories

MAGIC 😊

