

10 Eating Habits of the Highly Successful and Fit

These eating habits will help you lose weight and keep it off. You'll boost your willpower, slim down, and shape up for good.

Successfully fit people are successful not because of good luck, birth order, or family heritage but because they have adopted the right habits. They do things differently than the rest.

To be a successful person, you must adopt the habits of success.

Stephen Covey's theories on learning from the habits of successful people in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* suggest that by emulating the habits of successful people, anyone can enjoy the life he or she desires. Learn the habits, adopt the habits, practice the habits, enjoy the success. It really is that basic. Here, excerpted from *Push* by Chalene Johnson, the 10 eating habits of successfully fit people.

1. They Tend to Stick to the Same "Daily Menu"

The majority of fit people say they eat virtually the same meals every day, mostly the same breakfast, same lunch, same dinner, and when it comes to snacks and beverages . . . well, you guessed it, very predictable food. To clarify, they did not suggest that they eat exactly the same entree for every meal, but they often chose from three, maybe four things that they like for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

There are three possible reasons behind this shared habit among fitness professionals, individuals who have succeeded at taking off 100-plus pounds and keeping it off for years, and those who have been trim all their lives.

First, it allows "careful" eaters to predict their daily calorie allotment without much effort. Second, perhaps the most fit among us are entrenched in habit, including the habit of taste. Third, effortlessly fit folks are in tune with the energy and calorie needs of their bodies. When they find foods that deliver what they need and that they enjoy, why look further? Keep in mind, there's a fine line between careful eating and disordered eating. The careful eater's diet is a habit and not a matter of control or obsession.

2. They Eat Breakfast

This one common characteristic is nearly universal in statistical studies of people who have achieved and maintained a large weight loss. Eighty percent of those who have been able to maintain a weight loss of at least 30 pounds for at least a year report that they always eat breakfast. Research has consistently shown that the people who

successfully lose weight are the ones that wake up and eat! Furthermore, people who eat breakfast regularly have better vitamin and mineral status and eat fewer calories from fat. Experts agree that the majority of people who struggle with overeating are those who undereat during the first part of the day, specifically those who skip breakfast. So it seems that breakfast really is the most important meal of the day!

Why does eating breakfast help people lose and ultimately maintain a healthier weight? One theory suggests that eating a healthy breakfast reduces hunger throughout the rest of the day, therefore decreasing the likelihood of overeating and making poor food choices at lunch.

3. They Drink Water

Not soda. Not iced tea. Just plain old water. This is the biggie. Drinking enough water is a vital part of any conditioning program because it keeps your body functioning in homeostasis and aids every aspect of bodily function. Highly successful fit people drink at least six to eight 12-ounce glasses of water a day, plus more as needed during exercise. Note: It's possible to drink too much water, which dilutes the body's electrolytes (potassium, sodium, chloride, magnesium). Don't drink more than a gallon a day unless you're also replenishing your electrolytes.

4. They Eat Small—And Often

Eating small meals more often reduces cortisol levels, research suggests. In a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, people who ate six small meals a day for 2 weeks, as opposed to three large meals containing the same total number of calories, reduced their cortisol levels by more than 17 percent! They lost belly fat, too.

When you eat small, frequent meals long term, the body becomes efficient at keeping cortisol levels low, which helps both men and women reduce belly fat.

Eating throughout the day also makes you less tempted by the monster-size buckets of popcorn and supersize fries and drink containers that include triple and quadruple servings. Guided by their nutritional needs and deeply rooted habit to eat small meals throughout the day, the superfit stand steadfast, even in the face of a delicious, jumbo chocolate-chip muffin.

5. They Eat Whole Foods First

Whole, natural foods—apples, steel-cut oatmeal, broccoli, salads, brown rice—are what food researchers call low-density foods. That is, they take up a lot of room in your stomach because they contain lots of fiber, which satisfies hunger with few calories. High-density foods are the opposite; they are things like butter, oils, candy, or ice cream. Think about how much frosting you could pack into your

stomach if you really tried. (Okay, don't think about it—it's too gross.) Eating mostly low-density foods is the easiest way to keep your weight in check without feeling hungry or like you're depriving yourself.

6. They Know Their Foods

Just as important: They know what one serving of said food really looks like. You can show an effortlessly fit person a whole grain cracker, and even without looking at the label, he or she can accurately predict how many crackers count as one serving. It's not a gift, actually. It's a skill, and all habits are skills you can master.

This skill is easier to acquire than it sounds. A couple of weeks of label reading is all it takes. There are even apps for your phone and Web sites that provide this information quickly and for free.

7. They Eat Their Favorite Foods—Carefully

Despite knowing everything about their foods and tending to stick to the same foods day in and day out, fit people rarely report eliminating foods. If it's something they crave, they enjoy a little taste. They know that simply eliminating foods they absolutely love will only set them up to fail when the temptation is too great. Instead, successfully fit people know that it's okay to indulge every once in a while. They savor those moments instead of sucking down the food as if they're afraid it's the only time they'll ever see it again.

8. They Don't Keep Red Zone Food in the House

If you look in a successfully fit person's fridge, pantry, or cupboards, you won't typically find cookies, crackers, chips, chocolate, full-fat ice cream, or soda. Why? Because they don't crave these things. They also know you can't eat 'em if you don't have 'em. Smart, right?

What's interesting about these trim types is that they don't have the same inner battle of healthy versus junkie foods that the average person who struggles with weight might have. They can walk past the aisle with chips and sodas and think nothing of it. Either they never developed the junk food habit or they kicked it.

9. They Close the Kitchen after Dinner

Unlike most Americans, successfully fit people eat their final meal at a reasonable hour, as opposed to eating dinner followed by a lavish 10:00 p.m. snack and another dessert. Most often they go to sleep, not hungry, but on an empty stomach. This allows them to wake up feeling thin, rested, and hungry for breakfast. It may take a little effort, but going to bed earlier and going to sleep without food awaiting digestion in your stomach keeps your body's metabolism in a fat-burning state.

Instead of digesting, which causes restless sleep, your body can focus on other things—like repairing cells!

10. They're Resourceful and Politely Picky at Restaurants

They generally steer clear of fried meat, poultry, and fish. Instead, they order their protein broiled, steamed, stir-fried, or poached. They also speak up in restaurants, politely making special requests like asking that their dish be prepared with little or no butter or sauces and with dressings on the side.