

# Small Diet Swaps That Trim the Waistline

Often the biggest, best results come from doing the littlest things. Do them over and over and you've got yourself a habit. Losing weight is the same idea: You don't have to overhaul your entire kitchen or burn your takeout menus to make a huge impact on your diet. You just need to start small by making Smart choices every time you eat. Healthier grains. Natural sugars. Unprocessed foods. You get the idea.

The easy diet tweaks below require no additional time – you simply decide to do them – to fast track yourself back into your beach body.

My favorite switch ups:

1. **instant oatmeal to chia seeds**, which have more nutrients, fiber and protein, while keeping you full longer.
2. **high glycemic to low glycemic fruits** to lessen the spike to your blood sugar levels. Try to stick to berries, green apples, and pears.
3. **mixed drinks to red wine** for greater antioxidants and less sugar and calories from unhealthy mixers.
4. **smoothies made with yogurt or dairy milk to smoothies made with nut milks or raw coconut water** for greater nutrition without the saturated fats and casein, a protein that puts huge pressure on human digestion.
5. **one cup of coffee for one cup of green tea** to boost antioxidants without the acidity.
6. **fruit juices to vegetable juices** so you get the vitamins, minerals and fiber without the extra sugar.
7. **whole wheat wraps to collard green wraps**, cruciferous greens with phytonutrients that help lower your cancer risk by supporting your detox and anti-inflammatory

systems.

8. **sports drinks, energy shots and vitamin waters to raw coconut water**, which is loaded with healthy ingredients that naturally boost energy and electrolytes.
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## Smart Life Success Story

I can't help it, I love to share my clients' successes on this journey. I'm so proud of everything they've accomplished and hope they inspire you the same way they inspire me every day.

### **Rich Dropped 40 Pounds! These are his Before and After Photos!**

"6 Months to a Smart Life introduced so many great, positive changes into my life. Prior to working with Ronit, I was slightly overweight, with mildly high blood pressure, borderline high cholesterol, and from time to time, a short temper. Since implementing her approach I've seen great results:

1. I lost 40 pounds.
2. My blood pressure lowered from 154/104 to 120/80, and my medication dropped to minimal dosing.
3. No more headaches due to high blood pressure.
4. My blood sugar levels are lower.
5. My cholesterol dropped from 206 to 154.
6. I sleep better and longer.
7. I manage stress more easily and don't blow my fuse as often.
8. I feel more energized and younger, and work out 4 to 5 days a week.

The days of feeling lethargic, cranky, overweight and getting

older are in the past!

Thanks to the Smart Life approach:

- I'm eating less processed, store-bought foods, plus making smarter choices at restaurants.
- I've replaced dairy and dairy products, including milk or creamer in coffee, with almond milk and coconut products.
- I'm drinking more green tea instead of coffee.
- I've reduced consumption of alcohol.
- I'm enjoying more vegan meals.
- I've eliminated toxins, such as processed sugar and dairy, as well as incorporated organic foods whenever possible.
- I've started juicing and enjoying green smoothies. I actually crave greens and miss them when I don't have them.
- I eat more, and as many super foods as possible, like chia seeds, goji berries, spirulina, hemp and flax seeds, and kale (I'm a kale-a-holic!).
- I take supplements that add antioxidants and anti-inflammatories to my diet.

Thank you, Ronit, for showing me the way that I should be eating and living!" – Rich

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## Green Tahini Dressing

### Ingredients:

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup sesame tahini

2 tablespoons shoyu or tamari

1 tablespoon ume plum vinegar

$\frac{1}{2}$  bunch parsley chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$  bunch scallions chopped

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water (more or less)

### **Preparation:**

1. Put tahini, shoyu/tamari, vinegar, parsley and scallions in food processor.
2. Blend and add water slowly to achieve desired consistency.
3. Platter the steamed greens and top with Tahini sauce or use as dipping sauce for crudité veggies.

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## **The Smart Way to Blast Fat**

Don't wait for the New Year to start your weight-loss resolutions. Blasting fat and dropping pounds are easy to do year-round (even during the party season) when you understand how your body works.

Below are some easy ways to stop storing—and start releasing—fat to avoid those creeping cold-weather pounds, despite winter blahs, hectic holiday hours and non-stop celebrations.

1. **Switch to SMARTer Caffeine.** That morning mug of coffee sounds like the perfect quick fix to burn fat and spike energy when you're tired. Problem is that drinking caffeine on an empty stomach tells your body to store

fat, not release it. Switch to a gentler pick-me-up, like **green tea**, followed by a B vitamin. This more caffeine-friendly lifestyle powers up your **energy** without boosting your waistline.

2. **Keep a consistent meal plan.** Skipping meals or maintaining irregular meal schedules puts you on the fast track for storing fat. When you're depleted, your blood sugar drops, triggering your endocrine system to move leftover sugar to where you store fat (think love handles, muffin tops and thighs). Fat is simply stored glucose. Instead, **schedule your eating** at regular times to keep blood sugar levels balanced and don't rebel. The more you mother yourself this winter, the better you'll look and feel.
  3. **Stop avoiding fat in your diet.** Despite what you read in the media, fat is not a four-letter word. But, "low-fat" and "fat-free" might as well be. The ingredients in low- and no-fat foods – chemicals, preservatives and sugars – added to make up for taste, sabotage your body's ability to absorb nutrients, create inflammation and turn your cells into fat-storing machines.
  4. **Move after meals.** Don't eat and stay seated after you're finished. Instead, spend 5 minutes away from the table and moving. Even a slow walk or mini stretch session signals your brain, liver and endocrine system that it's time to use what you just ate for fuel. Pronto!
  5. **Eat like a European.** Prevent fat storage while you sleep by eating your biggest meal at mid-day. The perfect size lunch is about 400 to 500 calories, then lighten up at dinner.
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# Cleansing Carrot-Ginger Soup

This is a great cleansing soup during the cold months of winter. You can double or triple amounts as needed.

- 2 Tbs coconut oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 Tbs ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 6 medium size carrots, chopped
- 6 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups of water
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon turmeric
- sea salt and pepper to taste
- chopped chives to garnish (optional)

## Directions

1. Saute onion, garlic and ginger in coconut oil until onions translucent.
2. Add carrots and vegetable broth, water and turmeric.
3. Bring to simmer, cover, cook for 30 minutes.
4. Add all ingredients to blender (or use hand blender to stir in pot), add sea salt and pepper to taste, blend until smooth.

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## The New Fat Formula: Sugar + Stress

There's no magic formula to dropping pounds. Take away sugar and stress, you'll see a huge difference in how you look and feel. Guaranteed.

If you're serious about losing weight, the first thing to do is clean out the sweets. It's where I start with all my clients. Sugar increases insulin, which in turn triggers your body's storage of fat. The process is simple: You need to eat to get energy – that's how your cells provide you with the fuel to go about your day. When insulin is low, fatty acids come into cells, boost energy and leave as fatty acids. That's healthy. Foods low in sugar don't spike insulin levels so this fatty acid process works efficiently. When insulin is high, fatty acids get stored in cells as triglycerides (a type of fat), a process that makes you gain weight. Eating less sugar means lowering your insulin levels, thereby lowering your weight.

Stress also makes you fat. Insulin and cortisol are interconnected hormones. When insulin is high, so are your cortisol levels. And when cortisol hikes up, it keeps insulin hiked up, too. Increased cortisol is your body's response to stress. That's why stress can pack on the pounds. There's a myth that when you're stressed out, you eat unhealthy food, make bad choices or stuff yourself for emotional comfort, causing you to gain weight, but that's only part of the story. The reality is that so many people are eating healthy but still can't lose inches. Why? Their cortisol levels are keeping insulin spiked, so it's nearly impossible to shed pounds.

The answer: stress less, weigh less.

3 things you can do in the next 24 hours to feel calmer:

**Right now: Breathe.** Do a breathing exercise that gets you out of anxiety, worry or fear and into the present moment. I love this one from Dr. Andrew Weil: Inhale four counts slowly, hold your breath four counts, then exhale slowly for eight counts. Repeat three times whenever you need to clear your thoughts or just before bed to help you drift off to sleep.

**Today: Organize.** Clutter and chaos can make you feel overwhelmed and stressed out. Create a To Do list based on how you like to work – by priority, by ease, by due date – to streamline your day and give you a sense of control. Check them off when completed. When you juggle your obligations in your mind, they never turn off which increases anxiety and the feeling like they'll never get done.

**Tonight: Sleep.** Get at least seven hours of shuteye each night. Anything less and you'll begin to compromise your system, which lowers productivity, focus, memory, concentration and hormones related to hunger satiety. At the same time, fatigue, irritability and moodiness increases. And yep, you guessed it, all that adds to even more stress.

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## 10 Tricks for Tackling Health in 2014

It's easy to slip off track with our health goals during the holiday season, but the New Year is the perfect time for a fresh start. Whatever your fitness level or weight-loss goals, try incorporating one or two of these smart tricks to help you speed your results.

1. **Become “breathless”.** Regardless of what types of activities you normally do, make sure to fit in cardio at least twice a week. While less aerobic activities, like yoga or weight lifting, have countless benefits, workouts that leave you breathless help jumpstart your metabolism and drop weight more quickly.
2. **Mix it up.** Some people think we're more likely to stick to a program if we create a weekly schedule and stick to



it. Not me. Our lives are too hectic. Instead of committing to a specific routine – Monday night spinning, Tuesday night yoga, Wednesday night kickboxing, and so on – commit to exercising a certain number of times per week. One week you might take three morning Pilates classes, while the next week, you can only fit in lunchtime Spinning classes. This way, just because you miss your favorite workout, you don't skip the gym altogether.

3. **Add movement, whenever, wherever.** Movement is more about a lifestyle, rather than an hour-a-day commitment in a class or at the gym. It's about squeezing in health every chance you get. Here are a few tricks I love: Take a walk when you're bored. Walk home after work, the gym or dinner out instead of taking a cab or train. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk up the escalator in stores. Use bathrooms on different floors at work. Get lunch from a place further away and opt for take-out, not delivery.
4. **Book one "Surprise Myself" exercise class each week.** After I reach my workout goal for the week, I add one more class I didn't plan on taking. I think about it as 'treat' to my health! It varies. Some weeks, I'll take a new instructor; other weeks, I'll try something completely different. I burn more calories and always find new activities I love. If surprising myself doesn't happen, I don't get discouraged because I've already hit my targets.
5. **Upgrade your salads.** Take your health up a notch by not wasting your time on romaine or mixed greens. The smarter choice? Kale, spinach, arugula and watercress, which are higher in vitamins and minerals. Once you've got your base, load it with nutrient- and fiber-dense vegetables. You'll get fuller faster and cut down your calories without feeling deprived. I top mine with flax seed or extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice and herbs, rather than dressings especially when I don't know

what's in them!

6. **Make veggies your main plate.** Most people follow the formula: choose your protein then build side dishes around it. I say flip the model and pick your produce first. Start with roasted veggies, salad or veggie soup, then top them with grilled chicken, poached salmon or a cup of whole grain like quinoa. Finally, use spices and herbs to jazz up flavor, rather than butter and salt. It's a great way to try new vegetables or taste combinations, rather than stick with the traditional, boring and tasteless romaine with tomatoes combo (I couldn't stick with that menu either!). Nearly all my clients start with this easy strategy to jumpstart weight loss.
7. **Keep it simple in the kitchen.** It doesn't take a culinary degree, a library of cookbooks or a pantry filled with high-tech gadgets to make a fantastic and healthy meal. Look for simple recipes that call for what you already have in the kitchen or require 5 or fewer ingredients. If you need inspiration, try this trick: Next time you buy fish, ask the salesperson for their fastest, easiest, most flavorful preparation. Same strategy goes with dining out and delivery. Choose entrees with the fewest ingredients and simplest preparation, like grilled fish or chicken with no sauce. Cutting down on just two restaurant meals a week will dramatically change how you look and feel.
8. **Don't listen to your mother (when it comes to eating!).** Sorry, mom, but we don't have to finish what's on our plate. That's the fast track to weight gain. After a meal, you should leave feeling energized from your food, rather than lethargic and stuffed. My favorite trick? I stop eating when I feel that if I had to get up and take an easy exercise class, I could handle it. That's pretty easy to do when you eat slowly, sitting down (versus on your commute) and with the TV off.
9. **Keep healthy snacks ready to go.** Stash them everywhere

you might need to nosh – your gym bag, your office, your handbag, your apartment. Snacking between meals keeps your metabolism revved and blood sugar levels balanced. Plus, when you get to meals feeling like you can eat like a horse, you usually do! Opt for raw vegetables and fresh fruit instead of processed bodega snacks. Or, make your own trail mix and divide it into small storage bags. I mix cocoa nibs, dried fruit, raw almonds and raw cashews. Sometimes I don't feel hungry, but if it's there, it's much better than grabbing a bag of chips or a high-calorie, processed bar.

10. **Remember your motivation.** Why do you want to lose weight? To look better in your clothes? To feel more energetic? Or to simply improve your overall health? First, get clear about what you want, and then use that desire to inspire you throughout your journey. Train your brain to think positively and don't let negativity mess with your health (or your head!). Next, eliminate the phrase "I can't" and replace it with a phrase that says, "I can and I will." Use this mantra to stay on track. Mine is "I can do this – I am living the Smart Life." Whenever I start making excuses to skip a workout or cheat on my diet, I say my mantra aloud and instantly feel energized.
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# What I learned about my health in 2013...

We all eat, all day and every day, yet for some reason so many people are confused about food. What fascinates me about being a health coach is seeing how we truly are what we eat and how the key to health is each person's individual needs. What I noticed this year with my Smart Life clients is the more they improve their health, the more empowered they feel to pursue the life they want to live.

As I reflect back over the year, I'm inspired by all the changes and epiphanies my clients have shared with me as they've begun to live a Smart Life. I've shared some below and hopefully they'll inspire you, too, as you set new challenges for yourself in 2014.

## What I learned about my health in 2013 ...

"... That I have much more control over my health than I ever imagined! I also learned that prioritizing my health truly does make a difference in other areas of my life."

"... A radical new way to look at food. This year I turned 59 and there was no way I wanted to enter my sixth decade as a fat, tired woman. With Ronit's help, I've tried new foods and adopted different diet strategies. Not only have I lost weight, but I have gained so much valuable information on how to eat healthier. I'm eating "smarter" today than ever."

"... To say goodbye to my Weight Watchers app and stop counting calories! I learned to eat healthy whole foods and not only did I finally lose the weight, I also gained freedom from the annoyance of counting points and calories."

" ... Small changes add up to big results. Adopting a healthier lifestyle can seem daunting and impossible, but adding just

one simple change every week adds up over the course of a year. I've made small changes in my diet and exercise routines one step at a time. It's been as simple as adding 10 minutes to my workout, choosing to reduce the amount of animal protein I consume in a week or switching to organic produce. Just one change per week allowed me to embrace a healthier lifestyle. The physical changes were enormous. I look better, but more important, I'm much healthier than I was two years ago with more energy and stamina than I had 10 years ago!"

" ... How much health and happiness go hand in hand. When I made smarter choices about my diet, my mood changed drastically. I felt better about myself and that confidence improved my relationships and my productivity at work. Those little successes kept me motivated to stick with it. The better I felt the healthier I wanted to be."

" ... Staying connected to people who inspire me is important in keeping my goals top of mind. Being part of the Smart Life community not only empowers me but it holds me responsible to me and reminds me to put myself first."

"...2013 has been a wake up call for me... I learned that the most important thing in life is to take care of myself. With Ronit's help, I learned how to nourish my body with whole foods and plenty of fresh vegetables. Trying new spices, herbs and simpler ways of cooking made choosing new foods a breeze. Bring on 2014...I am ready!!!"

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# Protein-Packed Plant Diets That Work

Most people think steak, chicken or fish when they think of protein-packed meals. That's not the entire truth. And unfortunately, this myth is fueled by a healthy meat industry that profits when you buy their propaganda. Turns out, a plant-based diet can pack the same punch as other sources. A complete protein is one that contains all nine essential amino acids that you need to consume through food: histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan and valine.

**Try these 3 tricks for the ultimate protein-packed plant diet:**

1. **Eat a variety of whole foods.** Loading your diet with different vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, peas, beans, legumes and fruits optimizes the amount of the nine essential amino acids you're giving your body. The World Health Organization recommends that 5 percent of our daily calories (a little more if we training or working out) come from protein. On average, fruits have about 5 percent of their calories from protein. Vegetables, 20 to 50 percent. Sprouted seeds, beans and grains, 10 to 25 percent.
2. **Eat more raw foods.** Studies have shown that baking or grilling makes about half of the protein in the food unusable to the human body. Raw or living proteins are an even better source than cooked plant foods. We need 25 to 35 grams of protein a day. That means that if you eat 2,000 calories per day of raw plant foods containing average of 10 percent of their calories from protein, you would get 200 calories worth of protein, or 50 grams. This is more than adequate to support great health. Optimize your intake of raw foods by adding a fresh raw vegetable salad to every meal.

3. **Eat more superfoods: Plant-based sources of complete protein** are referred to as 'superfoods' and they're easily obtainable from supermarkets, health food stores and online. They include:

- Hemp seeds
  - Quinoa
  - Amaranth
  - Buckwheat
  - Bee pollen
  - Goji berries
  - Chia seeds
  - Flax seeds
  - Spirulina and chlorella
  - Dulse (a sea vegetable)
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## 5 Reasons to Love Quinoa

Quinoa may be a super food, but most people don't find it super interesting. I disagree! It packs the same amount of protein per serving as milk, while giving you loads of nutrients, vitamins and minerals. It can easily stand alone in meals or be incorporated into a variety of healthy and flavorful recipes.

Not convinced to put this powerful grain into your meal rotation yet? Maybe these five reasons will change your mind:

1. **It super fuels your body with energy.** Cooked quinoa contains approximately 8 grams of protein per cup, according to the USDA. It's also one of the few vegetarian complete proteins, meaning it contains all 9 essential amino acids your body needs. Try it for breakfast or lunch to help you power through tough

afternoon workouts or long days at work.

2. **It stimulates healthy digestion.** One cup of quinoa contains a healthy serving of 5 grams of fiber, which improves digestion, lowers cholesterol levels, controls blood sugar and helps you maintain a healthy weight.
3. **It's a nutrient-dense food.** Quinoa is an amazing source of iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, folate (a B vitamin) and more. In fact, a recent study showed that the grain contains the same concentrated amounts of two flavonoids, quercetin and kaempferol, as found in antioxidant-rich berries like cranberries and lionberries.
4. **It's naturally low in calories.** One cup of quinoa boasts just 222 calories. Because of its high levels of protein and fiber, this healthy carbohydrate doesn't convert quickly to sugar in your body. This means it doesn't spike your blood sugar levels and keeps you feeling fuller longer.
5. **It's a versatile grain.** Breakfast, lunch and dinner? Check, check and check! Quinoa can be prepared in delicious ways at all mealtimes. And research has shown that this superfood's nutrient profile isn't compromised by boiling, steaming or simmering. Toss it in salads, stir-fries, soup and porridge, or shape it into a veggie burger or a sushi roll.