

Avoiding Plateaus

We have all heard about plateaus before. You are chugging along nicely. You have a good routine with your exercise and your diet. You are seeing progress on the scales and your clothes are getting looser. Then suddenly, things stop. Nothing changes for a little while. You have plateaued. When weight loss is your main goal, there is nothing more annoying than a plateau. So how can you avoid them to ensure you keep making progress? The number one tip for avoiding plateaus is to not use all your tricks at once. This is a mistake a lot of people make because they seek fast results/fast weight loss. They use all the tools in their bag at the same time. But then what happens? They hit that plateau, and suddenly they have no more tools to use to kick start their progress again. Weight loss should always be approached as a journey. Yep, it is not what most people want to hear. But it is your best chance at losing those extra kilos and actually keeping them off. So where do you start?

The main tools you have for weight loss is diet and exercise. Dig deeper and you can look at things like incidental activity, stress management and sleep, all which help on your weight loss journey. My suggestion is to start with a regular exercise routine, because it is much easier to establish than a good diet. Find something you can commit to long term. Give yourself time to settle in, ensure that the activity you have chosen is the one to guide you through your journey, and that you will stick with. Reap the benefits a new exercise routine will bring. Could be a few kilos, could be increased fitness, could just be more energy. Then use that extra energy to kick start a good diet. Remember, one tool at a time. Establish a good relationship with food. This one can take a little bit longer to get right. Make small changes to a healthy diet full of vegetables, proteins, wholegrains and a little fruit, low fat dairy and healthy fats. Do not start by counting your calories, this is another tool you can use later. Just start by making changes and getting rid of the bad habits. The glass of wine for dinner each night. The afternoon teas at work each day. Swap the pancake stack for mushrooms and avo on toast at a café. These small things will make a big difference, and again, you will probably see a few extra kilos lost, and a better overall relationship with food. Once you think you have found those new healthy habits and you are doing well at sticking to them (for the most part – it is ok to indulge sometimes, but that is a whole different article), then you pull out your next tool... calorie counting. To really ensure your diet is going to get you to your goals, you need to know how many calories you are consuming. This one is a little annoying and time consuming but if you find your weight loss at any stage is slowing down, always refer back to your calorie counting. Because after all, weight loss is ultimately calories in vs calories out.

If things were to start to slow again, that is when you would look at upping your incidental activity. Things like taking the stairs, parking a bit further away and walking to your destination. Pacing while your on the phone. Look at managing your stress levels with some gentle yoga or a light walk after work. Ensuring you get plenty of quality sleep at night. All these things will help your weight loss journey and can be used as a tool to avoid those annoying plateaus.

As you can see, one step at a time. If you were to jump head first into a new lifestyle, new exercise, new eating, calorie counting etc, your body will react really well at the beginning, you might lose 5 kilos in the first month, but then it will slow and possibly even stop, and then what do you do? You must either become even stricter on your diet (no joy in that) or you have to up the exercise, which a lot of people will not have time for. It also puts a lot more pressure and stress on you getting it right which makes it less sustainable. Slow and steady wins the race and makes the race more enjoyable too.