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## 7 Tips to Conquer a Weight-Loss Plateau with MyFitnessPal



Let's get one thing straight about weight loss: It is not a destination but a journey. A *lifelong* journey. I know that sounds cliché, but it's 100% true. It takes work every single day of your life, and by *work*, I mean making choices to continue on your journey. There's one thing I can almost guarantee will happen on this journey: Your weight *will* plateau.

After working with hundreds of people on their journeys to a healthy weight, I can assure you that weight-loss plateaus are very, very normal. Weight loss is a dynamic process. Your body needs time to catch up with what's going on and get used to the new body changes that weight loss creates. In essence it's deciding whether it's in survival mode or a healthy state. I think of a plateau as actually a good thing because it means your body is done changing and is now adapting.

When weight-loss warriors hit a plateau, one of these things usually happens:

- They assume what they are doing isn't working and therefore not worth it. Outcome: Throw in the towel.
- They become obsessive over the details of their new diet and weight-loss plan. Outcome: Neglect other important areas of life.
- They think something is wrong with them and they are the only ones on the planet with this issue. Outcome: Self-loathing.

None of these outcomes is very positive. I think these feelings are among the reasons why "dieting" is so despised. No one likes feeling this way about himself or herself. Instead of going down one of the negative paths listed above, think of plateau-busting as troubleshooting. It's time to go through your lifestyle changes one by one and determine what is still working and what needs a tweak. Many people believe that what worked for them once will always work again, but that's just not the case.

[MyFitnessPal](#) is the perfect tool to help you troubleshoot because it makes tracking your food and exercise so easy. Many times we think we are doing something positive (e.g., eating more vegetables, eating less sugar, drinking fewer high-calorie beverages), but when we track, the truth comes out. Oftentimes there are several lifestyle areas that need to be re-evaluated and simply tweaked to get you back on track and losing weight.

From my experience, people are hesitant to track because they are embarrassed about what they might learn. These feelings come from a dieting mentality that says we should be A+ eaters and never struggle. However, I see tracking as simply data on our bodies. It is *not* supposed to be used for grading how good of a person you are but rather give you a state of the union on your lifestyle to help you identify necessary changes. Here are ways you can use this helpful tool to break through a plateau and make tracking your food and fitness easy:

### **1. Choose a realistic calorie goal.**

This might be the No. 1 mistake I see my clients make that contributes to plateauing. When setting up their profile they choose the option to lose two pounds a week, the most MFP will allow. For some people, this rate of weight loss may set a calorie level lower than they'd realistically be happy eating for a long period of time. Even worse, when you are not fueling your body with enough energy, it's not comfortable burning fat stores and thus prevents weight loss. I recommend starting with half to one pound per week when setting up your profile. Slow weight loss, while not as exciting, is usually more sustainable weight loss.

## 2. Calculate the Nutrition Facts for your favorite recipes.

Do you regularly cook a handful of recipes from your favorite websites? If you said yes, then it would be helpful to have more accurate nutrition info for those foods. Just because a recipe is deemed “healthy” does not mean it’s the right calorie level for you. Analyzing your most-used recipes will help you know exactly how many calories the recipe contains and whether it fits into your weight-loss eating plan. While this sounds very complicated, MFP makes it incredibly easy. All you do is paste the URL from your favorite recipe into the [Recipe Importer](#), do a little tweaking and — voilà! — MFP gives you all the Nutrition Facts.

## 3. Do track your water.

I used to think that drinking water was too simple of a behavior to notice. But, after my own experience tracking water intake I’ve learned that being properly hydrated is crucial for feeling good and ensuring your body works at tip-top condition. It also helps ensure that your hunger is true hunger and not just thirst! (See my post [Benefits of Drinking Water: Better Mood](#) for more info.) It’s always a good idea to do a water checkup to make sure you are drinking enough and setting yourself up for weight-loss success. You can easily track your water intake in your MFP Food Diary by clicking the water glass at the bottom.

## 4. Focus on fiber.

[Increasing your fiber intake](#) is a simple and effective strategy to improve your diet, and it could promote weight loss. Fiber provides a fullness factor to your food, helping you eat less and manage your appetite, as well as improve your health by preventing many diseases. The daily fiber goal is 25 grams per day for women and 38 grams per day for men. Start tracking your food, and see where you stand. Then, begin choosing foods that are higher in fiber, like whole grains, nuts, fruits, vegetables and beans, to see whether you can meet your daily goal.

**HI-TECH TIP:** To view your fiber intake, click on Reports, then choose fiber from the drop-down menu.

## 5. Write in the Notes section.

The Notes sections in MFP allows you to reflect on your food and fitness each day and identify changes you can make to get over your weight-loss plateau. I encourage my clients to take notes on meals, foods and workouts that produce positive or negative feelings or experiences. Did a particular breakfast energize you all morning? Make note of it. Did you feel sluggish one afternoon after a lunch out? Write that in. Did you enjoy a new workout or fitness plan? Type it in so you don’t forget about it. Your Notes help you evaluate how your overall food choices are helping you achieve your goals. This is a crucial step that many people overlook, and it could be key to breaking through your plateau.

**6. Track your weight weekly.** Weighing yourself regularly can be a controversial recommendation, so I must emphasize that this is not for everyone. Keep in mind people who track their weight tend to have a better connection with how their lifestyle choices are impacting their body. However, many people think they should track their weight daily, and they fret over every change that occurs. Taking a weekly weight is a more balanced and accurate reflection of change, as many factors impact daily weight fluctuations. Tracking your weight weekly in MFP is a great way to connect with when you are feeling discouraged at a

plateau. It's very helpful to go back and look at how much progress you have already made and celebrate it! Remember how I said at the beginning that this is a journey? This tool will help you remember that.

### **7. Track your fitness — cardiovascular *and* strength training.**

When trying to lose weight, many people just increase their volume of exercise and don't think as much about the type and quality. While simply burning a lot of calories can be a good thing for weight loss, improving your body composition (think: more lean muscle) through strength training is extremely important for long-term weight maintenance. The [American College of Sports Medicine](#) recommends strength training twice a week, working 8-10 large muscle groups by doing 8-12 repetitions. (2) Track your workouts in MFP and see whether you are meeting this recommendation. If not, begin to make time for strength training. It doesn't need to be complicated. Here is my favorite [full-body no-equipment exercise](#) you can do almost anywhere.

As you troubleshoot these different areas, remember these important concepts of weight loss: Be patient with yourself, and don't give up. Don't let that scale dictate your success. Remember how far you have already come and how good it feels to take care of yourself.