> **When you're trying to lose weight, diet quality matters more than calorie count."**

IF THE POUNDS WON'T come off, you're not alone. According to a survey by Marketdata Enterprises, the average American dieter makes four or five attempts to lose weight each year. It's a vicious cycle: "After a while, you feel discouraged when you don't get results, and that can wear away at your motivation," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, author of *The Flexitarian Diet*. These dieting upgrades should do the trick once and for all.

DIET FAIL #1
Counting every single calorie

Don't get us wrong—plenty of research has shown that we routinely underestimate the number of calories in our food. But when you're trying to lose weight, diet quality matters more than calorie count. A 2012 study in *JAMA* found that people on a low-carb, low-glycemic diet burned more calories than those who followed a low-fat, high-carb diet. "Foods that are high in carbs slow metabolic rates compared with diets higher in fat and protein," says David Ludwig, MD, director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children's Hospital. What's more, high-glycemic foods (sugar, bread, potatoes) spike blood sugar and stimulate cravings.

DIET REDO Focus on foods that are low in junky carbs and rich in protein. Just choose your protein carefully. A 2015 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that folks who upped their intake of yogurt, seafood, skinless chicken and nuts lost the most weight; those who increased their consumption of red and processed meat put on pounds—particularly when it was paired with high-carb foods. (But swapping the carbs for low-glycemic foods, like veggies, helped lower weight gain.)

DIET FAIL #2
Limiting yourself to mini meals

You've heard it a million times: Small, frequent meals help you lose weight by revving your metabolism and controlling your appetite. But dividing a 1,200-calorie-per-day plan into six meals can leave you with a growling stomach and short-circuit your diet. "You need protein, fiber and carbs in each meal to feel full, and it's tough to get that in just 200 calories," explains Blatner. In most cases, people end up overeating at their small meals—it's easy for a teaspoon of almond butter to unintentionally become three. Plus, says Blatner, "because you're faced with more food decisions, you're constantly taxing your willpower."

DIET REDO Think three solid meals a day. "You're a lot more likely to stick to a diet that's simple—planning six healthy meals is overwhelming," says Blatner. While you're at it, front-load calories. A 2013 study in *Obesity* found that people who made breakfast their biggest meal were at least twice as likely to lose weight and trim their waistlines as those who "saved" calories for dinner.

DIET FAIL #3
Always eating the same foods

This tip gained popularity after a 2011 study showed that women who ate mac and cheese daily for a week took in around 100 fewer calories each day than they

← It's hard to keep track of calories, no matter how neat you eat.