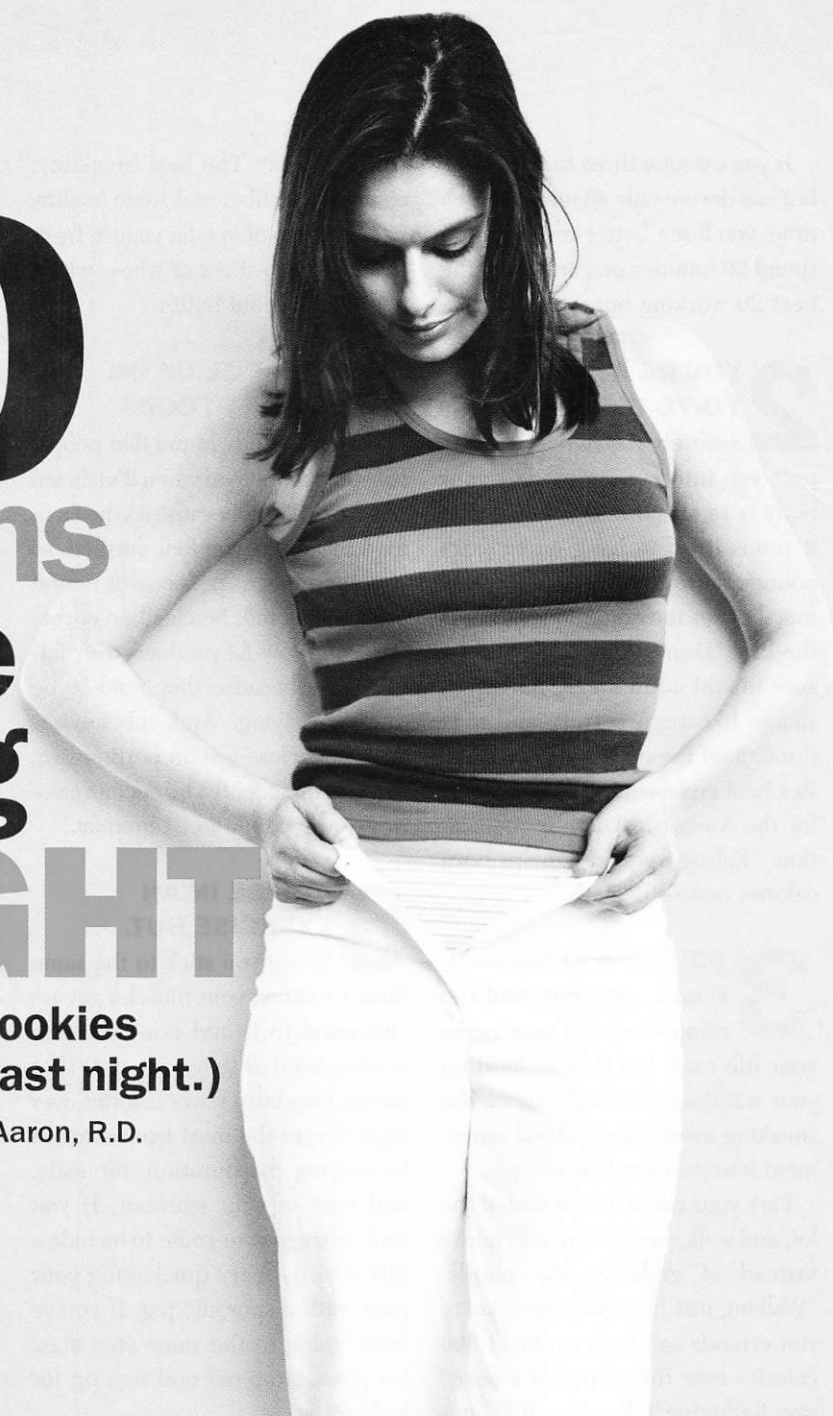


10 Reasons You're Gaining WEIGHT

(Besides those cookies
you polished off last night.)

By Shara Aaron, R.D.



**YOU'RE GOOD ABOUT GOING TO THE GYM AND HARDLY EVER SCARF DOWN YOUR KID'S LEFTOVERS—
BUT YOU'RE STILL GAINING WEIGHT. SEE WHETHER YOU'RE GUILTY OF THESE DIET DESTROYERS.**

1 YOU'RE A WIMP.

Yes, you may be exercising. But a three-times-a-week aerobics class just doesn't cut it anymore. What you really need to do is pump iron.

"Muscle helps burn calories efficiently, and after age 25, you begin to lose muscle—as much as five pounds of it per decade," says Wayne Westcott, Ph.D., fitness research director at the South Shore YMCA, in Quincy, Massachu-

setts. That means that even if you eat the same amount of food you've always eaten, your body won't burn calories as quickly and you'll slowly start to gain weight.

Luckily, there's a solution. "Strength training for 20 minutes two to three times per week can make a huge difference," Dr. Westcott says. "It'll help you maintain the muscle you have and build new muscle—giving your metabolism a boost."

CHARLES GULLUNG, HAIR AND MAKEUP BY MICHELLE B. FOR MARK EDWARD INC. STYLING BY KIM FIELD. PANTS BY GARNET HILL. TANK TOP BY OLD NAVY. UNDERWEAR BY GAP

If you exercise three times a week but can devote only 40 minutes each time, you'll see better results if you spend 20 minutes on cardio and the next 20 working out with weights.

2 YOU'RE A YO-YO DIETER.

Severely restricting calories puts you into famine mode—your body is so afraid it will starve that it trains itself to hang on to extra pounds more tightly. To keep your metabolism moving, moderation is the key. "Don't skip meals, and be sure to add a few small, nutritious snacks like yogurt, fruit, and nuts throughout the day," suggests Heidi Reichenberger, R.D., a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association. "Eating frequently helps burn calories more efficiently."

3 YOU'RE A SLUG.

E-mail, elevators, and the remote control may make your life easy, but they're hard on your waistline. You really should be sneaking every bit of added movement into your day that you can.

Park your car at the far end of the lot, and walk over to a friend's house instead of grabbing the phone. "Walking just five minutes a day to run errands can burn up to 14,600 calories over the course of a year," says Katherine Tallmadge, R.D., author of *Diet Simple*.

4 YOU SKIP BREAKFAST.

Research shows that people who eat in the morning burn more calories all day long than those who don't. Why? "Breakfast kick-starts your metabolism," Tallmadge explains. In addition, if you skip breakfast, chances are you'll be starving by lunchtime, making it more likely that

you'll overeat. The best breakfasts contain both fiber and some healthy fat. Try a cup of low-fat yogurt, fresh fruit, and two slices of whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.

5 YOU FILL UP ON NONFAT FOODS.

One study found that people consume more food when it's labeled "fat-free." That's because it's the fat in food that helps you feel satisfied, so you need bigger portions of nonfat foods to feel full. Reichenberger recommends low-fat products over fat-free ones because they tend to be more satisfying. And she advises keeping a close eye on portion size, because these foods still contain calories—even if they aren't from fat.

6 YOU'RE IN AN EXERCISE RUT.

When you stick to the same fitness routine, your muscles get accustomed to it and don't have to work as hard as they once did. That means they burn fewer calories over time. So get the most from exercise by varying the duration, intensity, and type of your workout. If you walk, change your route to include a hill or two, or try quickening your pace with a sporadic jog. If you've been going to the same step class for years, drop out and sign up for kickboxing.

7 YOU EAT "KID FOOD."

Your children will only eat spaghetti and grilled cheese sandwiches—so you do too. But it's not healthy to load up on refined carbohydrates; they quickly raise blood-sugar levels, which then rapidly drop off, leaving you feeling sluggish. You'll feel better if you switch to whole-grain bread, whole-wheat pasta, and brown rice.

8 YOU EAT OUT A LOT.

The portion sizes at many restaurants are twice or even four times the size of a reasonable portion of food. Plus, at home, you're less likely to use as much fat and salt when you're cooking. "Try not to rely on restaurants or take-out food more than once a week," says Tallmadge. "Keep lots of healthy, quick foods at home, so you can throw together a meal in minutes instead of going out or carrying in."

9 YOU BUY IN BULK.

When you've got a huge vat of crackers or a king-size chunk of cheese on hand, you may be tempted to eat more—just because the food is there. If you do buy in bulk to cut back on your grocery bill, try to save on calories too by breaking foods down into individual portions (stored in small plastic bags) instead of eating directly from the box. If you buy foods that are special treats for the kids, look for ones in single-serving containers.

10 YOU'RE STRESSED.

Tension can cause the release of cortisol and adrenaline—hormones that can trigger the sensation of being hungry. You may respond by heading to a vending machine or a fast-food joint.

Avoid those temptations by keeping healthy snacks like carrots or whole-wheat crackers on hand. Or better yet: Reduce stress by sticking to a regular exercise routine. Your workouts will then be doing double duty in helping you shed those unwanted pounds. □

COOL TOOLS FOR SHAPING UP. Find out your body-mass index and how many calories you need each day at www.parents.com/august.