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The Secret to Successful Weight Loss: 5 Tips for Busy Moms

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You're busy as can be. You juggle three jobs or three children... maybe even both. From attending your child's school play to preparing dinner for your family, you're so busy, you just can't seem to make the time to prioritize your own health.

Luckily, there are a few simple things busy moms (and dads!) can do to set yourself up for success. Signing up for a weight loss program like the South Beach Diet, which delivers pre-portioned, nutritionally balanced foods right to your door, is probably the easiest way for busy moms (and really, anyone with a hectic schedule!) to achieve their weight loss goals. But there are some other foolproof ways to stay on the slim-down straight and narrow while maintaining your status as world's best mom.

There isn't a mother out there who doesn't want her kids to be as healthy as possible. Luckily, many of the same healthy habits that will help you lose weight will also benefit the health of your family.



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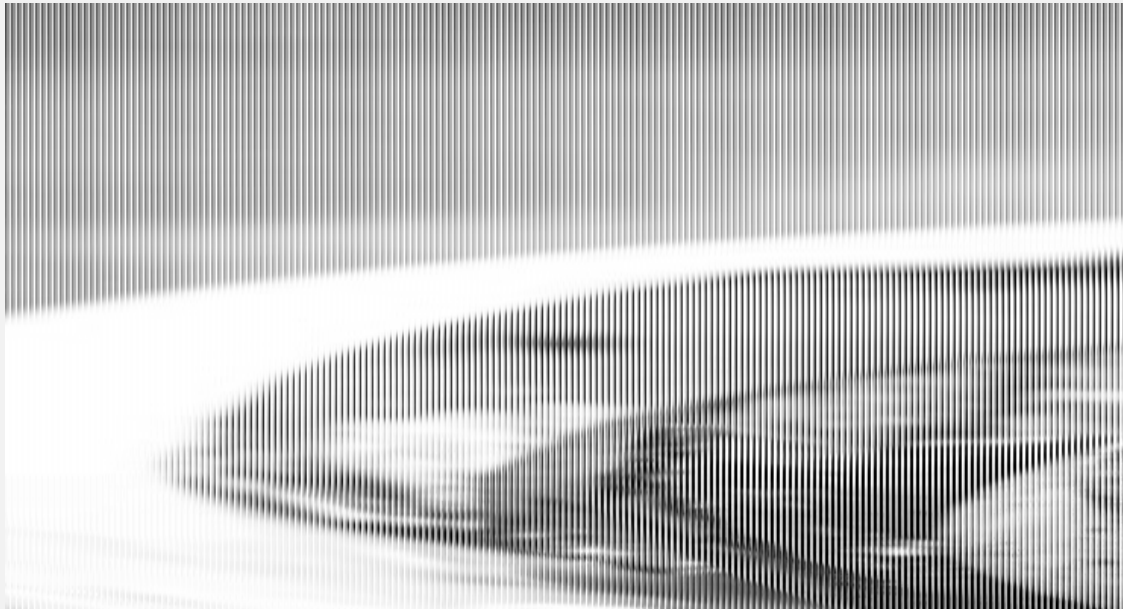
Commit to creating an environment that lends itself well to healthy choices. Both you and your kids will benefit. Clearing your cabinets of junk food and making sure you have plenty of fresh fruits and veggies, nuts and other good-for-you snacks on hand is a great first step. Leaving diet-destructors off your grocery list (because if they're not in your fridge, you can't eat them, right?!) is another way to set a healthy precedent for your home. Making physical activity a regular part of your routine also ensures a healthier household.

We caught up with weight loss expert and mother of two, Mary DeSanto, to get her advice.

Here are her weight loss tips for busy moms:

1. Make Cooking a Family Affair

Involving your kids in menu planning and cooking is a great way to spend some quality time together, while also helping them develop skills they'll need later in life. Plus, if you choose a few healthy recipes and let them decide which they'd like to help prep, you'll give them a sense of ownership, while staying confident that the meal they select won't sabotage your slim-down. Mary's daughters love their food prep rituals. "Every Saturday, my girls come shopping with me at a local farmers market, and they help me pick out fresh veggies and fruit. When we get back, they love to help me portion everything into little baggies or containers that last me for the entire week," she says. Try designating one day a week (we like Sundays!) "Menu Planning Day," and spend some time with your kids mapping out a week of meals and snacks. Then hit the store together and let them grab the ingredients for the meal they picked. When you get home, tackle prepping as much of the foods as you can... together.



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2. Prep Your Lunches, While You Prep Theirs

“After my girls go to sleep at night, I make all of our lunches for the very next day,” says Mary. Follow Mary’s lead and, while you make your kids’ lunches and snacks, go ahead and prep your own, too. Chances are good that you’re including some healthy options like veggies or fresh fruit in your little ones’ lunches. If you already have the cutting board out, you might as well chop up some extras for you. Making PB&Js for the kiddies? How about spooning some extra peanut butter in a Tupperware with some celery sticks for you while you’re at it?

3. Turn Family Time Into Fitness Time

Finding fun activities that the whole family can enjoy is a great way to get in your workouts, without having to miss out on quality family time. That’s the approach Mary takes: “I love to run and there is always a race that I have planned. My girls are very motivated and they will run the kids race, too! I am looking forward to running a mommy/daughter race in the near future.” Instead of catching up on each other’s days, plopped in front of the TV, share your stories with your family during a post-dinner stroll around your neighborhood. Skip the movie night and torch calories engaging in some friendly competition at the bowling alley or mini-golfing. Your family will love spending the time together, and your waistline will appreciate the mini workout.



4. Sneak Workouts in Before the Kids Wake Up

... or after they fall asleep. As a mother, you are constantly pressed for time, but it's in your best interest—and the interest of your family—to stay active and healthy. Take a look at your calendar for the week and map out when you can schedule workouts. If Monday is jam-packed, but Tuesday looks a little lighter, schedule a quick sweat sesh then. If the mornings tend to be hectic, but evenings are a little looser, commit to a quick workout at night. If both mornings and evenings are busy for you, try to squeeze in some exercise during your workday. That's Mary's preference. "I like to exercise during my lunch time. I am very fortunate to be able to eat at my desk. I get 30 minutes for lunch, so I can get a 22-minute workout. It doesn't sound like a lot but it is something! During my two, 10 minute breaks I take a fast walk outside—even in the freezing cold!" Is it easy to find time? No, but it can be done. It just takes a little planning.

Having trouble getting motivated to move? Mary suggests actually writing down the days and times you plan to work in a workout on your calendar, and checking each sweat sesh off as you complete them. There's just something satisfying about crossing off a to-do. So satisfying, in fact, that it may be the very thing to keep you moving when your motivation is waning. Consider setting an "accountability alarm," a reminder on your phone that will go off a few minutes before your planned exercise session. Use a fitness tracker like the South Beach Diet app, which allows for easy logging of exercise (plus weight, food intake and more!), to hold yourself accountable.



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Even better? Find a workout buddy. Whether it's a coworker who can join you on your lunchtime stroll, or a long-lost pal who is also struggling to get back in shape, find someone with similar goals, and you'll be less likely to cancel your exercise dates. If time permits, consider joining an exercise class with other moms in the group, who will provide support, and keep you motivated for optimal results. This is especially important for new moms who might feel pent up in the house all day. Interacting with adults and becoming more social is good for your overall well-being. This will help you to stay consistent with your exercise routine for the long haul.

5. Focus on the "Why"

Exercising and eating right require tremendous willpower. And, if you're a mom juggling a million and one responsibilities, it's an even a tougher struggle to stick with your regime. Stay focused on why you're trying to lose weight and get healthy. If you're like most moms, you want to have enough energy to keep up with your kids. To see them graduate, get married and have their own children. Mary reminds us that by achieving a healthy weight and reclaiming your health, you'll be able to do all of these things. Stay focused on that fact, she says, and it will be easier to stay motivated.



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"I am already in my 40s, and I want to live a long and healthy life and be there for my children. They both like to be picked up, and if I wasn't strong enough or full of energy, that wouldn't be possible. Another thing that motivates me is that I know that they are watching me. My five-year-old told me the other day that she noticed that I eat too much broccoli and told me that one day, she will be like me, but right now she doesn't like it. I told her that she doesn't have to like everything that I eat and she said, 'Mommy, I want to grow up to be just like you.' After hearing her say that, I have realized that I am doing something right and will continue to do so."

6. Carve Out A Little 'Me Time'

When you're a mom, it can be hard enough to shower in peace, let alone enjoy some downtime all to yourself. But the truth is, you're of no use to anyone, if you're overly exhausted and stressed. In the same manner that we recommend planning out your workouts, make sure to schedule some "me time." Kids at a play date? Head to your favorite coffee shop and allow yourself to slowly sip your staple drink. Or take a relaxing yoga class at your local gym. Baseball practice running long? Dive back into that book you've been meaning to read. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Holding on to life's little pleasures will keep you feeling positive, and able to be the best mom you can be.



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