

How I Lost 25 Pounds Naturally

by Four-Decade Olympian Ruben Gonzalez

Even though I've always tried to eat healthy and eat a low carb diet, over the years I started to gain weight and after a while I wasn't looking very "Olympian."

A few years ago we were on a vacation in Cancun and I invited my best friend Carlos Quiroz to come spend a few days with us. Carlos is a Medical Doctor. He was one of my teammates in our college soccer team.

When we went to the beach I saw that Carlos had a six pack. I asked him, "OK Carlos, what did you do to get THAT? I want one of those. I've NEVER has a six pack."

Yes, my weight loss was not driven by a desire to be healthy. It was 100% driven by male vanity.

Carlos put me on a special program designed to lose weight slowly so that I'd develop proper eating habits, so that my body wouldn't go into "starvation mode," so that I wouldn't get stretch marks and so that my body would automatically reset the weight it "thinks" I need to be at so that the weight would stay off.

By doing the things you will read about below, I lost 25 lbs in 18 months. Best of all, I kept it off.

I've gone from wearing tight 36" jeans to wearing loose 33" jeans. My weight has stabilized but my waist is still shrinking so I must be gaining muscle now. I'm leaner than I was in college when I played NCAA Division I soccer. And I'm seeing faint outlines of a six pack. One of these days...

Here's what I learned, what I did, and am still doing.

There are 3500 calories in a pound of fat. If you eat 500 calories less a day theoretically you should be able to lose a pound a week.

But there's more to it than that, so counting calories really doesn't work. A big part of it is how high your blood insulin (sugar) level is when you eat other things.

Exercise vs Diet

Exercise is good for you but unless you're an ultra-marathoner, don't count on exercise to help you lose much weight

Jogging a mile only burns 100 calories. You'd have to jog 5 miles a day 7 days a week to lose a pound.

A McDonalds Quarter Pounder with cheese with medium fries has about 840 calories. A Chick-fil-A Sandwich with medium waffle fries also has about 840 calories. An Oreo cookie has about 100 calories. And I know you won't eat only one.

It's a lot easier to lose weight by eating a little bit less and by eating the right things.

Lifting weights helps because the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn. It's like the difference between a 4, 6 and 8 cylinder car. The 8 cylinder car burns more fuel.

Low Carb / No Carb Diet Six Days a Week

When I say low carb, I mean **under 20 carbs a day**. When you start reading labels, you'll see that it doesn't take much food to get to 20 carbs.

Carbs and sugar are high glycemic foods. That means that they cause your blood insulin level, your blood sugar, to spike. When your blood sugar is high, the calories you eat turn to fat much more readily.

When your blood sugar is low, you can eat bacon, butter, beef, cheese, oily foods etc. without gaining weight.

***** You don't start losing weight until after 3 days of low carb! ***
If you cheat only once every two days, you won't lose any weight.**

So now I eat no carbs at all six days a week while eating as much non-carb food as I want. You never want to go hungry.

The seventh day is a cheat day where you can eat whatever you want. The cheat day actually helps you lose even more weight. More on that later.

For six days a week I eat no bread, sweets, rice, fruit, juice, oatmeal, cereal, anything with sugar.

You have to check labels because they put corn syrup in everything. Even salad dressings.

No beer, rum, liqueurs or soft drinks. Wine, whiskey, vodka and gin are ok, but it's better not to. There must be another chemical reaction at play when there's alcohol present in your body.

Drinking makes me sleepy and lazy, so drinking costs me money because it keeps me from working as hard.

Eat as much protein and veggies as you want. Any meat - beef, pork, poultry, fish, eggs. Vegetables, avocados, salads with oil, vinegar, lemon or lime juice based dressings are fine. Just watch out for other salad dressings because they are usually loaded with sugar.

Beans, lentils, and garbanzos (legumes) have a lot of carbs, so easy on them.

At a Mexican restaurant I usually have fajitas with grilled veggies instead of rice and beans. I can eat three platefuls of it that way and I won't gain weight.

Or I can have chips, tortillas, rice beans and fajitas and gain a lot of weight.

I've gotten to the point where I don't want the high carb food because I know how hard I'll have to work to lose the weight again. I don't miss it at all.

Drink water or club soda or the zero-calorie flavored versions. No fruit juices. Fruit juice is all sugar.

I fill my water bottle several times a day and squeeze some lime juice into it. Tastes great, refreshing, and zero carb.

Butter and olive oil are fine too. So are avocados, a FEW nuts and a little sugar free peanut or almond butter. But not cashews because they have a lot of sugar. Of all nuts, walnuts and pecans have the least sugar.

One Brazil nut every day helps keep your blood pressure down. Cauliflower, broccoli and the spice turmeric are good for you too.

First thing in the Morning and Late Night Snack Trick

If you're a coffee drinker, here's a great way to keep from feeling hungry.

Put a teaspoon (or more) of unsalted butter in your coffee and mix it well. Or half and half or even heavy cream. Sweeten it with stevia.

The fat in the butter tells your body that you're not hungry. It's really good too. The buttery flavor makes it taste much better than regular creamer.

Artificial Sweeteners

Most artificial sweeteners will spike your insulin level, so even though they have 0 calories, they still make you fat. **Stevia** is the exception.

Some Other Tips

1 - Don't eat fruit. It's just sugar.

I used to think that eating fruit was OK. Well it's not. Fruit is like eating candy with vitamins. It spikes your insulin level and that makes the calories you eat turn into fat.

I used to eat several bananas every day. Then in the evening I'd eat raisins and dried fruit. And I wondered why I was gaining weight.

So no fruit. Not even a grape during your 6 days. Serious. Save the fruit for day 7.

2 - Eat protein with every meal. Eat as much protein and vegetables as you want.

Melt some 100% Irish Butter on your veggies. And drink a lot of water. All day long.

Being born in Argentina, I've always been a big meat eater so I like this part. I eat a couple of eggs, and veggies for breakfast, eat a lot of meat and chicken and I'm a happy camper.

You don't have to deprive yourself at all by eating this way. In fact today I had lunch at Fogo de Chao. I had a fancy salad, a LOT of beef, club soda, a glass of Cabernet and a double espresso with stevia. Yum!

When the waitress came by with the dessert cart I told her, "If I eat that dessert I'll have to buy another pair of jeans."

That's what I tell the flight attendants when they are passing out honey roasted peanuts and cookies on my flights.

They always laugh. By saying that I reinforce in my mind that I don't want to ever go back to the 36" jeans. It makes it easier for me to be good.

I can always make it up on cheat day.

3 - Cream-based sauces take any dish to another level.

They're delicious, they add fat to the dish, which tells your brain that you're full, and they make the food richer and more enjoyable.

Get creative! A little butter, heavy cream, shallots, garlic, white wine and spices will transform ANY dish.

Who says losing weight has to hurt? Ask yourself, how can I do this while enjoying myself?

The Weekly Cheat Day

The cheat day is completely counter-intuitive but it works like a charm.

Follow your diet 100% 6 days a week. No cheating. Zero.

Eat as much as you want of the allowed foods. Stuff yourself if you want. But don't even eat a grape.

Then on the 7th day, (Saturday for me), you can go hog-wild. Eat whatever you like. All your favorites - pizza, ice cream, cake, pasta, French bread, fruit, candy, whatever.

You may want to eat out on your cheat day so you don't have all that temptation at home. Or at least buy just enough of your high-carb food for that one day.

The cheat day does two things:

1 - It makes it easier to be good the other 6 days because if you get a craving, just write the food down and have it on Saturday.

It's easy to be good if you know that in a few days you can eat anything you want.

2 - By carb loading on the 7th day, your body never goes into "starvation mode," where it thinks you are starving and holds on to all your fat for survival.

You shouldn't do your first cheat day until after being good for 6 days.

My 1st Cheat Day - On my first cheat day I went crazy. After all, I'd been eating really well (or so I thought) for years.

I ate cake, ice cream, ravioli, bread, cookies, cheesecake, you name it. And I felt like crap the next day. Lethargic, sleepy, slow, groggy, lousy. My mind was in a fog.

My 2nd Cheat Day - I took it down a notch but still had cinnamon buns, cookies, ravioli and fried chicken. But instead of cheating all day long, I just did a cheat meal. And I didn't feel as bad the next day.

What my Cheat Days Look Like Today - After a while I was able to figure out which foods make me feel lethargic and I just leave them out.

Everyone is different, but for me, pizza or a lot of bread makes me feel like Rip Van Winkle. But pasta, sweets and fruit don't affect me.

Since I love French bread, I eat a small baguette with butter, some ravioli, a steak and some fruit or dessert and I'm in heaven.

By the way, a cheat **meal** a week with plenty of carbs and dessert is all it takes to keep your body from going into starvation mode.

But it's perfectly OK to do a cheat day. Not just a meal. You choose.

You can move your cheat day if there's a birthday or a special get together. Just make sure to precede it by at least 6 good days.

I ate more sweets and pie than usual on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years and actually lost weight during the holidays. **How cool is that?**

Develop a Champion's Mindset for Success

Champions focus on the process, **not** on the results. Champions trust the process, and commit to the process because they know that consistently following the process leads to success.

If you weigh yourself every day, you'll only get discouraged and quit. It's not really about the weight anyways. It's about how you look and feel.

Think about it, if you lose 10 pounds of fat and gain 10 pounds of muscle, you weigh exactly the same but you look and feel a LOT better.

Rather than weighing yourself, count how many **Victory Weeks** you can do in a row.

Weigh yourself **ONLY** after reaching 10 Victory Weeks with no cheating. Then again after the next 10 Victory Weeks, and so on.

Better yet, shoot a picture of yourself after every 10 Victory Weeks. Or measure your waist every 10 Victory Weeks. But not any more often.

If you focus on and celebrate your Victory Weeks, the weight will take care of itself and you won't get discouraged. Best of all, you'll look and feel great!

Victory Affirmation

Write down a short affirmation, tape it to your bathroom mirror and read it with power and conviction every morning and every evening while looking at yourself in the eyes.

Ex) I am a champion! Everyday I'm getting fitter and fitter, stronger and stronger. I feel great! With every Victory Week I feel better about myself and I'm looking better every day. I LOVE this new lifestyle because it's helping me be my best in every area of my life.

Finally

Remember that this is **all or nothing**. If you cheat even a little bit each day, it won't work. Be **really** good for 6 days then you can feast on the 7th - that's a Victory Week.

Don't starve yourself. If you're hungry, eat. Just don't eat any of the bad stuff. The weight will slowly drop. Slowly is good because that way your body will reset what it thinks is it's "normal" weight.

If you go fast, you tend to regain it fast.

This is a lifetime thing. Not a 6 month or 12 month thing. If you do this, in a year or so you'll have to get a bunch of new clothes and best of all, you'll feel **great** about yourself. Guaranteed!

By Eating this Way I Lost the Weight and Kept it Off



**Carlos, Gracen & I
in Cancun.**



**Much leaner 18
months later.**