

Dos & Don'ts of a Cheat Meal

Dos

Do savor the cheat meal.

Eat a cheat meal slowly, with no distractions. A healthy relationship with food includes enjoying it.

Do choose foods you love.

Limited in terms of total calorie intake, but otherwise the sky is the limit. Eat what you want and place no restrictions on types of food.

Do listen to cravings.

Listen to your body, it's telling you something. If you have been desperate for something sweet and creamy, make ice cream your cheat. If it's salt you want, try chips or fries.

Don'ts

Don't allow guilt.

Or blame, shame, or any other negative emotions. A cheat meal should be enjoyed, otherwise what's the point? Keep it planned and positive to achieve maximum benefit.

Don't binge.

A food binge is not a healthy behavior in any situation, even for a cheat. A binge not only introduces way too many calories, but it will inevitably lead to guilt.

Don't be too hungry going into a cheat meal.

This will set you up to fail because you will be more likely to binge. It's just like going to the grocery store hungry—it's a mistake.

Don't cheat too often.

The right number of cheat meals depends on the person, but in general, one planned out, moderate cheat per week is sensible.

Don't cheat without a plan.

A cheat meal is not a sneaky indulgence; it is a planned, acceptable part of a healthy lifestyle. Plan your meal to stay on track and avoid going overboard with calories.

Don't continue if they're not working.

If you just can't control your eating, feel overwhelmed with guilt, or derail from fitness and health goals, know when to quit.