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Nutrition Nibbles

Bombarded by Bacon!

How to Handle a Plateau

When you type “bacon” into a search engine, over 45,000,000 results come up. As a nation we are obsessed with bacon. **Obsessed.** From Wendy’s 970 calorie Baconator with its 6 slices of bacon to bacon-topped cupcakes, Americans can’t get enough of this tasty pork product. In fact, bacon sales have steadily increased since 2011, making bacon a \$4 billion industry in 2013. As many as 65% of Americans would name bacon as the official food of the USA. So, if you haven’t already, should you hop on the bacon bandwagon and sign-up for the Bacon-of-the-Month club? (Yes, there is such a thing!)

Bacon is one of the oldest processed meats in the world, originating as early as 1500 BC in China. Pig flesh is cured (preserved) using large amounts of salt, as well as other preservatives and stabilizers including nitrites and nitrates. Ingredients can even be added to bacon to make it easier to slice or to keep it from spattering while you’re frying it up in a pan.

Is bacon that bad for you? Bacon slices can come from several different parts of the pig, yielding different fat and calorie contents.

The most common type of bacon in the US comes from pork belly, looks streaked and contains a fairly high proportion of fat. In fact, almost 70% of the calories in bacon come from fat, with about 1/3 of those fat calories coming from heart-unhealthy saturated fat. Not to mention, bacon contains large amounts of sodium (not good for your blood pressure) and a fair amount of cholesterol. Think of this food as bacon-wrapped heart disease.

Heart disease isn’t the only health concern when it comes to bacon though. The American Institute for Cancer Research advises against eating bacon and other processed meats due to their link to prostate cancer as well as other forms of cancer. Bummer.

So, is there a way to eat your bacon and enjoy it too?

Yes, sort of. Bacon is a very flavorful food so a little goes a long way when it comes to finishing a dish. Add one ounce of cooked bacon to an omelet, salad, sandwich, baked potato or casserole for a punch of delicious flavor. One ounce of pork bacon (2-4 slices, depending on the type) ranges from 105 to 140 calories

One of the most frustrating occurrences on one’s weight loss journey is experiencing a plateau, when weight loss halts for a period of time despite best efforts with eating and exercise. A colleague of mine, Toni Bloom, MS, shares the best ways to bust through a plateau.

Why Plateaus Happen

It’s very normal to have your weight loss slow and/or halt temporarily, but the goal here is to understand it’s temporary so long as you have the right mental attitude and response! When you weigh yourself on a scale, especially if you do it daily, you are checking not just how much fat you have (or have lost) but also your hydration status and bowel status. Your weight can fluctuate 3-5 pounds a day because of fluid retention or dehydration, so try not to get too hung up on each day’s weight, watch for a trend of weight loss over days or weeks. Plateaus happen because in order

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Bacon continued...

and 7-10 grams of fat.

Try turkey bacon for fewer calories and less saturated fat. Not all turkey bacon brands are created equal; read the nutrition label for the best choice. Caution: turkey bacon is still considered a processed meat with added nitrites and nitrates so eat in moderation.

Go Canadian! Canadian bacon, similar to ham, is a lean alternative to traditional bacon. An ounce of Canadian bacon is around 70 calories and 3 grams of fat.

Become vegetarian. Vegetarian “bacon” or protein strips offer a bacon-like taste and texture but without the pork and the heart-unhealthy fat.

While I don’t recommend becoming a bacon connoisseur, enjoying a small amount of bacon every now and again can keep you from feeling deprived and add some fun to your diet.

Bacon by the Numbers

Per 1 Ounce	Calories	g Fat	g Saturated Fat
Hormel Center Cut, 4 slices	140	10	4
Oscar Mayer Center Cut, Naturally Smoked, 6 slices	120	8	3
Farmer John Premium, 3 slices	105	7.5	4.5
Oscar Mayer Real Bacon Bits	100	6	2
Oscar Mayer Turkey Bacon, 2 slices	70	6	2
Jennie-O Extra Lean Turkey Bacon, 2 slices	40	1	0
Hormel Canadian-Style Bacon, 1 thick-cut slice	70	2.5	1
Light Life Smart Bacon (vegetarian), 3 slices	60	3	0

Plateau continued...

for you to have lost weight, you were for some time eating fewer calories than you burned each day. Now that you are a smaller body, you actually require fewer calories (or more exercise) so that you can continue to be in a calorie deficit which will lead to more weight loss.

What Can You Do About Plateaus?

The first thing I’d suggest is checking in on your food choices to make sure you’ve continued to reduce your intake. Sometimes it’s easy to slip back into old habits, taking a second helping or allowing an extra little treat.

Next, take an honest look at your activity and exercise, it might now be time to crank it up a notch so that you can burn more calories during the time you devote to exercise. Keep in mind, this doesn’t necessarily mean you’ve added time to your routine, you can simply up the intensity and get a bigger bang for your buck!

Once you reflect on your diet and exercise habits and conclude that you’re still on track even though the scale hasn’t changed, now it’s time for **patience**. Yes, patience. Keep on your plan and have faith that your hard work will pay off in the next week or two. Remember, you most likely gained weight slowly over time, so trust your body and allow it to lose fat slowly too.

Toni Bloom is a nutrition expert extraordinaire! For more info, visit her website at www.tonibloom.com.