



Lose Weight
Together
Keep It Off
Forever!

The
girlfriends
DIET

STARTER KIT



Contents

WELCOME! Here you'll find some of the best tips from *The Girlfriends Diet* to help you and your girlfriends get started together on your weight loss journey. You'll learn why dieting with friends is proven to be more successful than going at it on your own, as well as why a Mediterranean-style diet is the best meal plan for women to boost their metabolism and help them lose weight faster. We've also included some of our favorite recipes from Week One of our four-week meal plan. Get started losing weight today, and order *The Girlfriends Diet* on July 28th to get the full meal plan along with 150 delicious recipes, and to learn even more tips from the experts on how to finally lose that extra weight and keep it off—for good!

Introduction	3
Meet Your New Best Friends.....	4
Meal Plan for Week 1 and Sample Recipes.....	24

- * Order a copy of *The Girlfriends Diet* at goodhousekeeping.com/girlfriends. Available July 28th.
- * Share your success stories and get more dieting tips on our Facebook page at facebook.com/girlfriendsdiet.

Introduction

HERE'S THE THING ABOUT MOST DIETS: They're kind of a drag. You pledge to eat less, move more, and after a few weeks of denying yourself the happiness that is a sleeve of candy-colored macarons and devoting yourself to the elliptical machine, maybe, just maybe, you drop a couple of pounds. Then what? If you're truly self-motivated, you keep up the good work. The rest of us (me!) revert to bad habits. But you can change this pattern with the help of GH's proven new weight-loss plan. I did! And the make-it-stick trick is simple: Enlist the support of a girlfriend(s). Research proves that dieters who team up to slim down are more likely to lose weight for good. Why? Well, there's the accountability factor. Are you really going to blow off Zumba when you know your friend is there waiting for you? No. Plus, it's more fun. Yes, I did say, fun. Because The Girlfriends Diet is just that and that's why it works. Throughout this book, you'll be inspired by real women's stories of remarkable body transformations. You'll learn their secrets and be given the tools to rev your own metabolism, burn more calories and eat smarter without ever feeling deprived. (You might want to skip directly to page 293 for the Chocolate Pudding Cake recipe. Just saying.) So, whether you have 5, 15, 25 pounds or more to lose, grab a friend and let the slim begin right here, right now...with a smile.



Jane Francisco
Editor in Chief, *Good Housekeeping*

Meet Your New Best Friends

CHRISTI BORCHERS was lumbering through her 30s at 200-and-something pounds until a chance run-in with an old friend ended in a pact that they'd both get fit together. Today, Christi not only is 80 pounds lighter, but you can find her at the head of the Zumba class that she once hid in the back of—now as the instructor. (Find the rest of Christi's story on page 172 in *The Girlfriends Diet*, available for order on July 28th.)

Give it up for Jackie Freitag, who got the much-needed kick in her size 20 pants when her close friend asked her to be her maid of honor. "It was like, ugh, I can't be the fat girl of the wedding party," she remembers oh so well. Not only did her BFF, her fiancé, and her gal pals at her old gym support her journey to a 105-pound weight loss, but they were cheering her on when she finished running two marathons.

Another cheer goes to Vicki Baughman, who couldn't figure out any way to get out of her size 28 clothes until she started getting on a treadmill and sharing diet secrets

and advice with a group of virtual girlfriends. Today, they are all marveling over her photos in her now size 2 pencil skirts. (There's more about Vicki on page 22.)

You may never actually meet any of these extraordinary women in person, but you'll get to feel as though you know them as you read their compelling and triumphant stories in the coming pages. They, and dozens of other women like them who first shared their dieting successes and secrets in the pages of magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, *Redbook*, *Marie Claire*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Woman's Day*, are appearing once again in these pages to inspire you with their stories and successful dieting tips so you, too, can make your weight-loss dream come true. Consider them your diet buddies—your new best friends who will inspire you to steadily and assuredly lose a pound or more a week until you reach the weight you want, just as they did. It doesn't matter if you're trying to lose 10, 20, 50 or 100 pounds; as you'll learn, your chances of weight-loss success increase dramatically when you diet with friends.

Diet Teams Work Best

Though from disparate backgrounds and different parts of the country, these women all share a common bond. They finally and permanently took off the weight they struggled for decades to lose by realizing what it actually takes to get there: a commitment to a new lifestyle of healthy eating, regular daily activity and a support group that is with you all the way. They'll all tell you that the key to ditching their old habits in favor of healthy ones was the motivation they got from their supporters—be it spouse, kids, coworkers, friends, diet buddies or online cheerleaders. It's the same kind of discovery, friendship and bonding that can help you, too.

Talk to any woman who's ever tried to break a bad habit, and

she'll tell you the process can be tough *and* isolating. However, what these women have discovered, research proves: Support is the key to success—and that's especially true when it comes to weight loss.

According to the American Psychological Association, your chances of losing weight and keeping it off are best when you have a social network where you can share tips on diet and exercise *and* when you have a diet buddy or buddies to go along with you for the ride, just as you will on The Girlfriends Diet. Brown University researchers found that people who had a diet buddy dropped significantly more weight after a year of effort compared with those who went it alone. When people are in a group with others on the same journey and make themselves accountable to one another, they feel there is this element of, *Hey, this worked for her, so why can't it work for me, too? I'm giving it a try!*

While getting support and diet directives (eat this, don't eat that) from a professional—be it your doctor or a well-established forum such as Weight Watchers—beats doing it on your own, dieter-helping-dieter has proved to produce the best results. In another study at Brown University Medical School, meeting with a health coach helped dieters shed almost 10% of their weight in six months. But, the researchers discovered, the counselor didn't have to be anyone official: A diet buddy—a so-called peer coach—worked just as well.

A diet buddy can be even more effective than a professional. University of Pittsburgh researchers put this theory to the test by pitting dieting teams of four friends against lone dieters, all of whom were given the same eating plan and the same behavioral counseling. Among the loners, 76% completed the program and 24% went on to maintain their weight loss after 10 months. But 95% of the diet buddies completed the program, and 66% maintained their full weight loss 10 months later, way overshooting the 20% long-term

success rate that is believed to be the norm. A lot of it has to do with accountability, research shows. Being in it together gives you a feeling of responsibility to others—you don't want to let them down. And it appears to work best peer to peer.

Another study involving more than 200 people, most of whom were women, found that professionally led diet programs can actually hinder weight-loss progress because they tend to be so rigid. However, even in such a setting, the dropout rate is lower when friends attend the program together. More important, the researchers discovered the same thing: Friends dieting together manage to keep the weight off longer than individuals who make a go of it alone. In the study group, two-thirds of diet buddies were still successful six months later, compared with only a quarter of those who were on their own. Long lasting, just like a friendship.

She did it!

RITA COOKSON

AGE 42

LOST 29 POUNDS!

HERE'S HOW: "I look at wedding pictures and think, *Oh! Is that me?* My mother has said, 'Well, what do you expect? You're a mom and a wife now. You're never going to look like that again.' I don't think that has to be the case. I'm a pastry chef,

and I come from a big Italian family that loves to eat, so making a healthier diet a part of my lifestyle is always going to be key. It was that nudge from my mom that set my mind to doing it.

"If I can lose weight, anyone can! Last year at this time, I felt depressed, tired and generally gross about myself. I am a completely different person today. I stopped eating all those extra cupcakes and cookies,

plus I have my exercise buddies. I've been doing four fun cardio classes per week, in addition to meeting with a trainer twice a week.

"I was afraid of lifting heavy weights because I thought I'd bulk up, but I got leaner and feel amazing. My husband climbed the Canadian Rockies last summer, but I didn't go because I wasn't in that kind of shape. Now, maybe I can go with him!"

Man, Woman, Food, Diet

Girlfriends share a special closeness that is quite different from male bonding. Studies show there is a direct relationship between emotional support and psychological well-being—something that benefits both genders. However, while male and female friendship networks are similar with regard to quality and trust, studies show that women benefit much more from their relationships with other women in terms of their health pursuits, especially when it comes to weight loss, simply because they are much more willing to make the effort to go on a diet and eat better.

One reason relates to the different ways we perceive our bodies. “Women are more dissatisfied with their body weight and shape than men,” says Barbara J. Rolls, Ph.D., an expert in food and gender differences and professor at Pennsylvania State University. In one Florida study, when both sexes were asked to critique their own bodies, the men thought they’d be “too skinny” at the weight the health charts said they should be and just shrugged it off. Women who were at their ideal weight, according to the charts, thought they weren’t skinny enough and that men would like to see them even thinner than they were. The guys didn’t agree with the women’s view of themselves.

Women simply have their minds on their weight a lot more than men, according to a study published in the *British Food Journal*. A lot of men only start getting antsy about their weight and decide they better do something about it when they are hit with a health threat—like a heart attack scare, or high cholesterol or blood pressure. Same goes for women, too, but they are just as likely to want to lose weight in response to a threat to their psychological well-being—like a skinny frenemy who appears to be having more fun. It’s just the way a lot of us are wired.

Women tend to benefit more from weight-loss support groups

because, in general, our gender is more susceptible to the unrealistic messages magazines, television and Hollywood send out about what is “acceptable” thinness and beauty. Support networks can help keep us in touch with reality—a key component to success because unrealistic weight-loss expectations are a driver of weight-loss failure.

Then there are the differences in our relationship with food. In general, men go for meat and potatoes, and women like carbs—salads, pasta and sweets. Comfort food? Men want steaks, casseroles and chili, while women think of comfort as chocolate and ice cream. In food survey questionnaires, women report they like and eat fruits, vegetables and fish, but when we’re under stress and the going gets rocky, these are the foods we give up—and we break out the cookies. In fact, one study reported in *Health Psychology* found that when men get stressed out, they “markedly and significantly” get turned off by food, but women eat nearly *twice* as much. *Yikes!*

Guys, in general, have a hard time understanding the relationship women have with food. We are more motivated to eat healthy foods and much more determined when we set out to lose weight—which experts say explains 50% of gender differences in food choices. “Women experience more food-related conflict than men in that they like fattening foods but perceive that they should not eat them,” says Rolls. When we cave in, it sends us on a guilt trip. Men just dive in and enjoy.

This is not to say that guys and gals can’t be diet buddies. Or that a man can’t be your chief supporter. Many of the women in this book are proof of that. Spouses are important to weight-loss success—and it works both ways. But if you pair up with a guy, you have to realize that, when it comes to dieting, men and women are not on an equal playing field. It doesn’t necessarily come any easier to men, but they do lose weight faster. Meaning it can be hard not to

start resenting your significant other when he eats foot-long subs and still drops five pounds, while you nibble on nothing but salads and lose only one. There's a biological reason for this: When it comes to metabolism, men have it made.

“Men naturally have more lean muscle, so their metabolic rates run about 10% faster than women's,” says Liz Applegate, Ph.D., director of sports nutrition at the University of California, Davis. “Women's bodies, on the other hand, are designed to hold on to body fat to nurture and grow babies.”

Men's body composition is another reason they have the easier-losing edge. Men have more muscle mass and about 10% less body fat than women. Muscle burns at least twice as many calories as fat, even when you're just sitting around doing nothing. In fact, one study found that men naturally burn 37% more calories per day

High-Protein Diets Are Not Female-Friendly

Ever try a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet? How long did it last for you? A week? Two? Even less?

There's a reason why women cannot tolerate a high-protein, low-carb diet very well, says Olga Raz, M.Sc., R.D., a diet researcher from Israel and author of *The Bread for Life Diet*. And it all has to do with our biology.

Compared with men, women naturally have lower levels of serotonin, the hormone that controls satiety. Eating carbs is what gives our serotonin a lift. “When serotonin levels are low, we get

cravings and feel hungry,” says Raz. In her research she's found that robbing ourselves of carbohydrates—the good kind found in foods like vegetables and whole grains—makes serotonin levels sink even lower. “I have women patients who tell me they can't tolerate a low-carb diet like Atkins, but their husbands do not have a problem sticking with it,” she says. On the other hand, a diet high in complex carbs, like you'll find on The Girlfriends Diet, raises serotonin levels, so you'll feel fuller longer.

through movement than women. Plus, there's some evidence that female hormones, estrogen in particular, encourage our bodies to store food as fat, especially around the middle.

The bottom line? You can diet with your significant other or best guy pal to keep each other encouraged and motivated, just don't go in a head-to-head competition with each other. But if you're in need of help from someone who can truly connect with what you're going through—biologically and mentally—some girl-to-girl bonding is to your benefit. And there's a place to find it even if your BFF is a “perfect” size 6.

Dieter Meet Dieter

Emerging research shows that social networking your way to weight loss works. In one study conducted by The George Washington University School of Nursing, 349 Oregon workers joined a company-run website with the goal to improve health-related behavior. After six months, the online users increased the time they spent walking by 164%, compared with only 47% in another group of workers who tried the same endeavor offline. And though the goal was to improve overall healthfulness and not to lose weight per se, the online users lost an average of 5.2 pounds, compared with an average of only 1.5 pounds in the offline folks.

Another study, conducted by Baylor College of Medicine, found that dieters who were given access to three diet tools—group meetings, a mobile app and online services—lost nearly eight times more weight (10.1 pounds versus just 1.3 pounds) after six months than people who tried to diet on their own.

Group weight loss is so powerful that even videoconferencing works. In one three-month experiment that took place in South Dakota, people who met and supported each other once a week with

a videoconference meeting lost weight, while another group that went on the same diet on their own *gained* weight.

Other studies have also found that mobile apps and instant messaging are valuable, especially when it comes to maintaining weight loss. In one study, Duke University researchers sent out a daily 8 A.M. message to 120 successful dieters who had already lost an average of 15 pounds. Three months later, *everyone* had still maintained their new weight. It's a reinforcement technique, the researchers concluded, that shows promise in helping people "sustain healthy behaviors that can lead to improved health outcomes."



ADVICE FROM A BESTIE

Keep your 'before' pictures."

"When you're losing weight, your day-to-day progress can be slow, and it's easy to think nothing's happening. So I tell my friends, don't ditch the fat photos! When you look at a picture of your former self, it's a lot easier to see what transformation has taken place. On days when I feel like blowing off the gym, my 'before' pics remind me of how hard I've worked and that I didn't get here by making excuses or giving in to temptation. That makes me stronger."

—Antoinette Marrero, 33, Metuchen, NJ, who lost 45 pounds

The same opportunities can be yours when you team up with a friend or group of friends and go on The Girlfriends Diet and form your own Girlfriends Diet Club, a female-focused approach to healthy weight loss that combines a Mediterranean-style eating plan, behavior-modification strategies and exercise. You'll team up together in a mutual effort to:

- * Increase your intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains



“I post my weekly progress on Facebook. My girlfriends’ ‘likes’ encourage me to carry on.”

—Wendy Kalman, [facebook.com/goodhousekeeping](https://www.facebook.com/goodhousekeeping)

Calling All Girlfriends

You can meet virtual like-minded dieters by connecting with any number of online diet groups and bloggers. You can do it alone and join an established group of like-minded dieters, or you can form your own Girlfriends Diet Club to work as a team online.

It’s a strategy many studies reveal can lead to success. Michelle and Brian Coleman, 42-year-old marrieds and diet buddies, decided to form a social media diet support group on Facebook after the pair lost a combined amazing 254 pounds. “We launched with five friends, and it’s grown to 35 members,” Michelle reports. “We motivate one another and share ideas about how to overcome obstacles. Several people have lost more than 10% of their body weight—and one member was so inspired that she signed up for her first triathlon.”

These are a few of the other websites women featured in this book recommend:

Sparkpeople.com—With more than 13 million members, this may just be the largest collection of successful losers in the world. Even with so many people, it’s

still fairly easy to find and work with others who match your goals.

Weightlossbuddy.com—Connect, inspire and lose weight together. It’s all here. You might even become the weight-loss buddy of the month.

Meetup.com—Type in keywords like “weight loss” or “walking,” and connect with a support group that meets face-to-face. Can’t find a fit? Choose the “Start a Meetup Group” tab to launch a new one in your area.

Myfitnesspal.com—Sign up for a free membership, and you’ll gain access to discussion forums where you can find support from others who are in the process of making healthy lifestyle changes. Bonus: The site also gives you an online food diary, a searchable food database and free mobile apps to keep track of your exercise and calorie intake on the go.

Exercisefriends.com—Enter your zip code, age and the type of activity you’re interested in, and you’ll be connected with potential exercise buddies. Then you can set a date for an in-person meeting.

- * Incorporate more activity into your daily life, including walking and other easy forms of exercise
- * Break bad habits around food
- * Deal with stress in ways that will not drive you to food
- * Take more time for yourself to improve your health and well-being
- * Use girlfriend power for support to keep you motivated and on track

Think of the weight-loss potential: A lot to lose and nothing to gain! The blueprint to get you started—the diet, recipes and exercise plan—is the book you have in your hands right now.

Starting a Club of Your Own

Starting a Girlfriends Diet Club is simple. All you need is this book and a group of women who strongly desire to lose weight and who will take a pledge to support one another and get together once a week. Pledges are important to your ability to stick with the program. A Dominican University of California study that examined the success of goal-setters found that those who wrote down their intentions were more likely to achieve them than people who merely made mental commitments.

Your club can be anything you want it to be, though we have a few suggestions to get you started. First, read the book before your initial get-together so you can discuss what you want to accomplish as individuals and as a group. There's much to discuss:

- * Ways to increase your daily intake of the nutrient-dense foods featured in Chapter 4, as well as decrease the number of unhealthy foods in your diet

- * How to change your habits around food and your attitude about food—an important aspect necessary to achieve permanent weight loss
- * The best ways to keep and stick with a food diary, which studies show is the single-most-important tool for weight-loss success (see more on page 60)
- * Coming to terms with the ways you undermine your own diet success, like giving in to a full-day binge when having just a slice of pizza would have satisfied your urge to eat
- * The importance of putting yourself first and rewarding yourself so you can reach your weight-loss goal (see Chapter 7)
- * How well you are doing incorporating the 10 life-changing weight-loss habits described in Chapter 3. For example, you might want to explore them one by one, a week at a time.
- * Which activities you can do together that promote a healthier and more active lifestyle
- * Recipes you'd like to try—you'll find nearly 100 recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner in Part 2, The Girlfriends Meal Plan & Recipes
- * Setting individual and group diet and fitness goals. Remember: Challenge yourself, but at the same time be realistic. A team goal depends on meeting your individual goal.
- * Setting up a system of non-food-related rewards for members of your group
- * Online diet websites that you could join as a team to compete with other diet teams

- * Creating a Facebook page for your group to keep in contact between meetings and cheer each other on. Or setting up an email list or phone call chain for the group for when you feel yourselves weakening in resolve.

Don't worry if you don't get through all of these points in your first meeting. As long as you set your agenda for future meetings, you're sure to cover everything.

During your first meeting, do take some time to talk about your individual and team weight and fitness goals and what you might hope to achieve as a group. Then commit them to paper, sign and date. The individual pledge should include:

- * Your weight-loss goal
- * Your exercise goal
- * Your commitment to support your sister dieters
- * Your commitment to keeping a food journal
- * Your commitment to attend weekly meetings—unless there is a circumstance equivalent to a doctor's excuse! Remember: Your success rate is tied to your commitment as a group.

YOUR INDIVIDUAL PLEDGE MIGHT READ SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

I want to lose 30 pounds so I can improve my health, renew my energy and be a good role model for my children. I will follow The Girlfriends Diet program of healthy eating and an active lifestyle, and support my girlfriends in achieving their goals. I will faithfully and honestly report what I eat and drink in my food diary and figure out my daily calorie intake. Being part of The Girlfriends Diet Club and attending its get-togethers is a high priority because I value my mental and physical well-being and what it will mean to my family.

**YOUR TEAM PLEDGE—AS A PAIR OR A LARGER GROUP—MIGHT BE
SOMETHING LIKE THIS:**

We The [fill in your group name] Girlfriends Diet Club will support one another to achieve our individual goals, encourage those who stray, praise those who succeed, celebrate improving our health and maintain a positive attitude for all.

The key to permanent weight loss, as you will find out as you read on, is to change your relationship with food in a way that you can live with and *enjoy* day by day. To achieve *permanent* success, your weight-loss goal should be more than *I want to lose 30 pounds*. Your written goal should describe how you are going to achieve that 30-pound loss and your commitment to make sure those pounds don't come back.

FOR EXAMPLE:

My goal is to lose 30 pounds. I will strive to eat healthy each day by increasing my intake of vegetables, fruit and whole grains; limiting my intake of red meat; and avoiding sugar, refined grains and processed foods. I will limit my calories to _____ [fill in your number] and log a minimum of 10,000 steps on my pedometer every day. I also resolve to be more physically active in my daily life.

You can make your club more interesting, fun and accountable if you set a group weight-loss goal—the total of your individual commitments. Setting a predetermined weight-loss goal and achieving it is what keeps membership intact on the Trevoise Behavior Modification Program, a successful volunteer-led group weight-loss program that's been in existence since 1970. Trevoise believes that attending the weekly meetings is so important to the success of the group as a whole that missing a meeting can result in dismissal. You needn't go this far in setting up your rules, but it is important to emphasize that

your club's strength and success rest on the individual commitment of all your members. The Trevoze program and other experts also say that meeting weekly is best for motivation and accountability.



“I run with a group of women. It keeps us all on track.”

—Shari Stein, Good Housekeeping reader, Millburn, NJ

To this end, at your first gathering, put your calendars together and pick your meeting times for the next two months. Mark them “top priority.” After one month, look at your calendars again and schedule out another month. Meeting weekly is important to your success. Remember, you’re all in this together, and success for everyone relies on each person’s commitment.

Everyone needs to keep track of the calories they are consuming, and we’ll tell you the important reasons why you want to do so on page 60. This can be done however you’d like—by hand in a pretty journal or online—but you must have access to your journal at every meeting of your Girlfriends Diet Club.

As for gadgets, you’ll need a scale for a group weigh-in, if you choose to go that route, or if you prefer privacy, you can go by the honor system. We also recommend that each member get a pedometer. It’s proved to be instrumental in achieving the exercise goals important to weight loss. In one large university-based study of women between the ages of 40 and 50, only those who religiously carried a pedometer each day increased the amount of walking they did throughout the day. And walking is the *minimum* amount of exercise recommended on this program. Any pedometer will do; they can range in cost from about \$10 to \$100. We like the Fitbit because it syncs with your computer and/or cell phone and allows you to work on individual and group goals.



FRIEND
SOMEONE

Friends don't matter just for the here and now; they matter for your future—your future *life*. Studies reveal that people with strong social networks live longer than those with less support. According to researchers at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, the positive effects of friends are comparable to—and this is a biggie—quitting smoking. Close family members and coworkers count toward this pal quotient, too. So why not invite your favorite work buddy for an after-work happy-hour glass of wine? Tell her it's doctors' orders!

Million-Dollar GF Advice for Getting Started

Big-budget movie studios have trainer Ramona Braganza on speed dial. Why? Because she's the pro at getting A-listers in amazing shape for filming. For now, she's a diet buddy focused on you. Here is her priceless advice that you can use to get started on The Girlfriends Diet:

1. Tell your friends you're trying to lose weight. "Many people think that trying to slim down is something they should keep private, so they rely on their willpower alone to stick to a program—and willpower only gets them so far!" Braganza says. Her client Jessica Alba, who has taken on several roles requiring her to wear skimpy clothing, sticks to a daily training and healthy-eating program with the help of friends and family, and entices them to work out and diet along with her. But you don't need to be cast in a movie to get

similar motivation and support: Declare your goal in your Girlfriends Diet Club or by posting it online where other dieters meet. "You want to connect with other women who are dealing with the same temptations—like couch time or cake—and staying on track."

2. Give yourself weeks, not days, to start seeing results. Fact: It's always better to train moderately than to try to do it all in a hurry, which is a recipe for burning out and giving up. "Remember Jessica Biel's fit-for-fighting body in the movie *Blade*? Well, she came to me a full two months before she started filming, so she didn't have to crash diet at the end and over-train," says Braganza. "Sound sane? That's the idea, and the key to not quitting."

3. Know what you're really eating—and not eating. Braganza has all her new

continued on next page...

...continued from previous page

clients keep a food diary that includes meals and all their components, timing of meals, portion sizes, water intake and exercise. “They find that things they didn’t think were sabotaging their weight-loss goals actually are—like a daily latte and a couple glasses of wine,” she says. “That can add an extra 500 calories a day! If you start shedding pounds but then hit a wall, this may be why.” The good news is that it’s possible to *double* your weight loss just by recording what you eat, some studies have found. Warns Braganza, “You can work out like crazy, but if you don’t change your nutrition, you won’t see results.”

4. Walk like you’ve never walked before. You don’t need to make starting up on exercise complicated. Braganza always recommends walking to her celeb-

rity clients. “They love getting out for hikes or just strolling through their nabe with their dogs or babies,” she says. She recommends beginning with 20 to 30 minutes three times a week, then building up slowly to five days a week. (We’ll show you how in Chapter 7.) The best way to stay motivated: Wear a pedometer.

5. Use your brain to change your body. “The mind is a powerful weight-loss tool,” says Braganza. Science backs this idea. One study found that thinking about the muscles you’re using as you work them allows you to use more muscle fibers and build more strength. “Sometimes people rely on distractions like TV to get through a workout,” she says, “but if you want to cut your workout time in half and slim down faster, focus on your body, not the tube.”

Are You Ready to Go, Girlfriend?

Are you ready to be a BFF to other dieters? To be the best friend that you can be to others, ask yourself these four key questions:

1. HOW FED UP AM I ABOUT MY WEIGHT AND THE WAY I LOOK—REALLY? When you’re at the point where the pain of the present outweighs the sacrifice that change demands, you’re ready—really.

2. WHAT AM I WILLING TO GIVE UP? “Cheating” is the dieter’s downfall. Many women put themselves on a rigid plan, then cheat every chance they get. The Girlfriends Diet, however, is not about

sacrifice; it's about *adding* nutritious food to your diet and making a lifestyle change. To make it stick, though, you must expect to make the deal: You don't have to give up your favorite "fattening" foods forever, but you do have to commit to eating less of them less often. You also have to be willing to pick yourself up and start all over again when you stray.

3. AM I READY TO MAKE A COMMITMENT? Winging it doesn't work if you want to make a serious change in your life. You need to spell out clear, concise rules for yourself to eliminate ambiguity, and be willing to share them with your diet buddies. They don't want to let you down; by the same token, you should be willing to commit to not letting them down.

4. AM I READY TO BE ACCOUNTABLE? It's easy to fool yourself into thinking you're on the straight and narrow when you're not. Establish a reality check that works for you. It could be a daily or weekly weigh-in. It could be changes in clothing size or keeping a photo of the original you at hand.

We'll get to the nitty-gritty of The Girlfriends Diet weight-loss and lifestyle program shortly, but first let's get in the face of some of the demons that make weight loss particularly challenging for women. Only by understanding the enemy can we figure out how to fight it.

Your GF Action Plan

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO CHANGE. The Girlfriends Diet is all about making a lifestyle change to a healthier way of living. Your first step is to *want* to lose weight and to *commit* to doing what it takes to get there.

AMAZING! Vicki Baughman

MAKEOVER! *"I lost 70 pounds—and found my newbff!"*

I'D ALWAYS BEEN a yo-yo dieter, but my weight struggles intensified after both of my sons were diagnosed with autism. I was so completely overwhelmed with caring for them that I forgot to take care of myself. I knew I had gained weight—I was wearing a size 28W—but it didn't hit me how bad it was until my husband snapped a photo of me on Christmas morning in 2007. As soon as I saw the image, I knew it was time to do something.

With my busy home life, I knew I couldn't commit to a diet that involved a lot of planning and cooking. So I chose a planned diet that offered ease, convenience and pre-portioned meals. I also started walking on a treadmill and spent time on message boards, where I made a lot of virtual girlfriends.

My husband committed to the diet along with me, which was great. Only for him it was easy. He lost 40 pounds, no sweat. But me?

I was struggling with these crazy cravings! This is why meeting girlfriend fellow dieters online became important to me. I think with women, dieting is much more of a mental thing. I met lots of women who were going through the same thing that I was. We challenged each other to stick to our diets and get more active. In a few months, I stopped relying on

"Being accountable to my new friend, and having her support, made it much harder to quit."

the pre-portioned meals and I was finding that I was able to eat less and make healthier choices on my own. I was also down 20 pounds.

Online is also where I met Beth Hansen, who is now my real-life best friend. We decided to do the Jillian Michaels *30 Day Shred* DVD together. We communicated every day and we compared notes along the way. Being accountable to my new friend, and having her support, made it much

harder to quit.

In 14 months, I went from 186 pounds to 116 pounds, and I now wear a size 2. I'm happier, healthier and more active than I've ever been, which in turn makes my home life much more manageable. And it all happened in time for my 40th birthday! I have more energy to do the fun *and* hard stuff with my boys. But there's another great bonus:

Beth. I live in Texas and she's in South Carolina, but we now get together in person. Also, we talk every day. Beth,

who is five years older than me, is the person I call when I'm in the supermarket staring at a bag of cookies and I need someone to tell me why I should *not* buy them. She lost 55 pounds and looks fantastic. She's my inspiration. But I got help from a lot of other women as well. In fact, 15 of us got together for a giant girlfriends' weekend last year, and we're planning on doing it again. We're now real-life friends—all much happier in our skin.

FORM YOUR OWN DIET CLUB. You can follow *The Girlfriends Diet* as a solo pursuit but research shows that diets work best when you come together as a team. Form a Girlfriends Diet Club with friends, coworkers or other people in your community. Enlist a friend and buy her a copy at goodhousekeeping.com/girlfriends. Set up at least a month's worth of meetings, and make sure everyone has finished reading so that you're all on the same page. Then make it interactive by going online to keep in constant between-meeting contact with one another or to join other groups of like-minded dieters. Set up a private Facebook group or share your success on our Facebook page at facebook.com/girlfriendsdiet.

GET YOUR FRIENDS TO COMMIT TO YOU, AND MAKE SURE YOU COMMIT TO THEM. Realize that the success of your group hinges on the individual commitment and participation of each team member. Make sure to complete your individual and team pledges and goals at your first club meeting.

START TRACKING YOUR CALORIES. Before trying to change anything, spend a week eating what you normally eat and simply track your calories. At the end of the week, tabulate your calories—you'll use this information as you establish your dieting goals and calorie needs.

- * Order a copy of *The Girlfriends Diet* at goodhousekeeping.com/girlfriends. Available July 28th.
- * Share your success stories and get more dieting tips on our Facebook page at facebook.com/girlfriendsdiet.

Meal Plan for Week 1 and Sample Recipes

TUSCAN SUN SALMON SALAD. Halibut with Tomato, Olive & Pine Nut Relish. Tropical Oatmeal & Fruit Salad. Just the sound of these Mediterranean-style dishes that are part and parcel of The Girlfriends Diet are enough to make you want to dig in!

The more than 150 recipes in The Girlfriends Diet—300-calorie breakfasts, 500-calorie lunches, 500-calorie dinners, appetizers, side dishes, snacks, desserts and even cocktails—were designed with busy women in mind. Sample recipes include delicious and easy to prepare foods for every meal. Enjoy!

Week 1

DAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
1	Figgy Waffle page 26	Souper Soup Side: Pear page 28	Greek Chicken Side: Roasted Asparagus & Whole Wheat Orzo page 29
2	Kale Smoothie	Burger Day Side: Hummus & Veggie Dippers page 28	Halibut with Tomato, Olive & Pine Nut Relish Side: Steamed Spinach & Quinoa
3	Baklava Yogurt	Greek Grain Salad	Feta Turkey Burgers with Yogurt Mint Sauce Side: Mushroom Soup & Sweet Potato Fries page 30
4	Spicy Egg Sandwich page 26	Chicken, Spinach & Strawberry Salad Side: Triscuits page 28	Vegetable Lasagna Toss Side: Salad
5	Grainy Breakfast Bowl	Nut Butter Sandwich Side: Strawberries with Greek Yogurt Dip	Italian Steak Kabobs Dessert: Fire-Roasted Nectarines with Berry Salsa page 32
6	Grab & Go	California Chicken Sandwich Side: SunChips Dessert: Apple	Sticky Glazed Salmon Side: Steamed Baby Carrots & Quinoa with Almonds page 31
7	Morning Glory Muffin Side: Yogurt and Strawberries page 27	Asian Tuna Salad Side: Ak-Mak Crackers	Black Bean Soup Side: Multigrain Tortilla Chips

FIGGY WAFFLE

Top a toasted, whole-grain waffle (such as Kashi or Van's) with $\frac{1}{3}$ c. part-skim ricotta, 2 dried figs, chopped, 1 Tbsp. chopped walnuts and 1 tsp. honey.

PER SERVING | Calories 300 | Protein 14 g | Carbohydrate 35 g | Total fat 15 g | Sat fat 4.5 g
Fiber 6 g | Sodium 220 mg

SPICY EGG SANDWICH

Scramble 1 egg in a skillet coated with olive oil cooking spray. Stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ c. baby spinach until wilted. Put egg mixture on a toasted, 100% whole wheat English muffin along with $\frac{1}{4}$ avocado, sliced, and 1 tsp. sriracha. Serve with $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cantaloupe chunks.

PER SERVING | Calories 310 | Protein 14 g | Carbohydrate 37 g | Total fat 13 g | Sat fat 2.5 g
Fiber 8 g Sodium 510 mg

Morning Glory Muffins

MAKES 12 SERVINGS

1¼ c. all-purpose flour
 1 tsp. baking powder
 ½ tsp. baking soda
 ½ tsp. salt
 ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
 1 c. old-fashioned or quick-cooking oats, uncooked
 ⅓ c. fat-free (skim) milk
 ⅔ c. unsweetened applesauce
 ¼ c. packed brown sugar
 ¼ c. light (mild) molasses
 2 Tbsp. canola oil
 1 lg. egg
 3 med. carrots, shredded (about 1½ c.)
 ½ c. chopped dried plums (prunes)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease 12 standard muffin-pan cups, with baking spray, or line cups with fluted paper liners.

In large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon; stir in oats. In medium bowl, with fork, mix milk, applesauce, sugar, molasses, oil and egg until blended; stir in carrots and prunes. Add applesauce mixture to flour mixture; stir just until flour is moistened (batter will be lumpy).

Spoon batter into prepared muffin-pan cups (muffin cups will be full). Bake 23 to 25 min. or until toothpick inserted in center of muffin comes out clean. Immediately remove muffins from pan. Serve muffins warm, or cool on wire rack to serve later.

Side for One: ½ c. plain nonfat Greek yogurt mixed with ½ tsp. honey and topped with 4 strawberries, sliced, and 2 tsp. each sliced almonds and unsweetened shredded coconut.

PER SERVING 

Calories 310 | Protein 17 g | Carbohydrate 44 g | Total fat 8 g
 Sat fat 2.5 g | Fiber 4 g | Sodium 260 mg

SOUPER SOUP

Heat 2 c. boxed mushroom soup (such as Imagine; 80 calories per cup) with $\frac{1}{2}$ c. frozen brown rice, cooked, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. canned lentil beans and 1 c. baby spinach until spinach wilts and soup is warm throughout. Dessert: 1 pear.

PER SERVING | Calories 480 | Protein 20 g | Carbohydrate 89 g | Total fat 7 g | Sat fat 0 g
Fiber 21 g | Sodium 820 mg

BURGER DAY

Toast a 100% whole wheat English muffin and spread with 1 oz. goat cheese; layer with 1 veggie burger, cooked according to package instructions, $\frac{1}{2}$ jarred roasted red pepper and $\frac{1}{8}$ small-to-medium avocado, sliced. Have with $\frac{1}{2}$ red pepper, sliced, and 5 baby carrots dipped into $\frac{1}{4}$ c. hummus.

PER SERVING | 490 Calories | Protein 30 g | Carbohydrate 52 g | Total fat 20 g | Sat fat 6 g
Fiber 13 g | Sodium 1,190 mg

CHICKEN, SPINACH & STRAWBERRY SALAD

Top 2 c. baby spinach with $\frac{2}{3}$ c. shredded rotisserie chicken breast, $\frac{1}{4}$ c. strawberries, sliced, 2 Tbsp. each sliced almonds and feta crumbles, 1 tsp. red onion, chopped, and 2 Tbsp. reduced-fat balsamic vinaigrette. Serve with 6 Triscuits.

PER SERVING | Calories 470 | Protein 39 g | Carbohydrate 33 g | Total fat 22 g | Sat fat 5 g
Fiber 8 g | Sodium 930 mg

Greek Chicken

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

4 boneless, skinless
chicken breasts, cut
into 1-in. pieces

Kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 Tbsp. olive oil

2 c. marinara sauce

½ c. Kalamata olives, pitted
and halved

2 Tbsp. chopped fresh
parsley

2 oz. feta cheese, crumbled

Season chicken with kosher salt and freshly ground pepper. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add chicken and cook about 5 min., until lightly browned all over.

Pour in marinara sauce and olives, reduce heat to low, and cook until heated through. Sprinkle with parsley and feta.

Side for One: Roasted asparagus (see box on page 287) and ½ c. cooked whole wheat orzo.

PER SERVING

Calories 500 | Protein 38 g | Carbohydrate 40 g | Total fat 21 g

Sat fat 5 g | Fiber 10 g | Sodium 900 mg

Feta Turkey Burgers with Yogurt Mint Sauce

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

½ c. plus 2 Tbsp. plain fat-free yogurt
 2 green onions, green and white parts separated and thinly sliced
 ½ c. fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
 1 lb. lean ground turkey
 1½ oz. feta cheese, finely crumbled
 1½ tsp. ground coriander
 Salt and pepper
 4 burger rolls
 2 tomatoes, thinly sliced

Preheat an outdoor grill for covered direct grilling on medium.

In small bowl, combine ½ c. yogurt, white parts of green onions and half the chopped mint.

In bowl, with hands, combine ground turkey, feta, coriander, ⅛ tsp. salt, ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, green parts of green onions, and remaining mint and yogurt. Mix well, then form into 4½-in.-round patties (each ¾ in. thick).

Place turkey patties on hot grill; cover and cook 12 to 13 min. or just until turkey loses its pink color throughout, turning once. (Burgers should reach an internal temperature of 165°F.) During last 2 min. of cooking, add rolls to grill. Cook 2 min., or until warmed, turning once.

Put turkey burgers on rolls. Top with tomato and yogurt sauce.

Side for One: 1 c. boxed mushroom soup (such as Imagine) and 10 sweet potato fries.

PER SERVING

Calories 510 | Protein 42 g | Carbohydrate 59 g | Total fat 14 g
 Sat fat 2.5 g | Fiber 7 g | Sodium 870 mg

Sticky Glazed Salmon

MAKES 4 SERVINGS


3 Tbsp. maple syrup
 1 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce
 2 tsp. rice wine vinegar
 ¼ tsp. ground ginger
 4 (4-oz.) skinless salmon fillets
 ⅛ tsp. salt
 ¼ tsp. pepper

In small bowl, whisk together maple syrup, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar and ground ginger.

Sprinkle salmon fillets with salt and pepper.

Place salmon in 12-in. nonstick skillet; brush with some glaze. Cook on medium heat 9 to 10 min. or until just opaque throughout, generously brushing often with glaze and turning over once.

Side for One: ⅔ c. cooked quinoa mixed with 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds and 10 baby carrots, steamed and sprinkled with ½ tsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce.

PER SERVING 
 Calories 500 | Protein 32 g | Carbohydrate 48 g | Total fat 21 g
 Sat fat 3 g | Fiber 8 g | Sodium 480 mg

