



Weight Loss & Nutrition

WHY DO I NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT IF I AM OVERWEIGHT?

Being overweight increases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. If you are overweight, losing just 5 to 10% of your weight and keeping it off lowers your risk for most of these diseases. Your health care provider can give you a good idea of how your weight increases your risk.

WHAT CAN I DO TO LOSE WEIGHT?

Losing weight most often means eating fewer calories avoiding some foods, and exercising more. However, a weight loss diet needs to give enough nutrition and a good variety of satisfying foods as well as fewer calories.

What works best is a gradual change in your habits of eating and physical activity—a change that you can continue the rest of your life. The ideal diet helps you lose weight slowly but steadily, so you can keep a healthy weight after you have reached your goal. The best weight loss plan is one that fits your needs and food preferences.

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I TRY TO INCLUDE?

In general, a healthy eating plan for weight loss is one that: Includes a lot of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans; includes fat-free or low-fat milk products; includes lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs or egg whites, nuts, seeds, and soy foods; low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars.

Food journals, calorie trackers, and online applications and programs are a great way to track and monitor calories. Most successful diet programs implement some form of food journaling.

KEEP TRACK OF EVERYTHING YOU EAT IN A FOOD DIARY. AS SOON AS YOU EAT OR DRINK [OR EVEN BEFORE]. WRITE IT DOWN. IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO USE A SMALL POCKET DIARY OR A SMART PHONE APPLICATION SUCH AS "MY FITNESS PAL". SEEING WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK WILL HELP YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR EATING PATTERNS AND FOOD HABITS, AND IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEIGHT LOSS TOOLS.

WHAT FOODS SHOULD I TRY TO AVOID OR LIMIT?

Refined grain products such as white rice and white flour (try to substitute whole grains for refined grains whenever you can).

Refined carbohydrates (sugar) and foods containing added sugars, such as sucrose, glucose, dextrose, corn syrup, corn sweetener, honey, and brown sugar.

Saturated fats such as butter, cream cheese, poultry skin, whole-milk dairy products (including cheese), and fat on meats. Other foods that often contain a lot of fat and trans fats, such as pastries, cakes, cookies, potato chips, and crackers.

Fried foods.

Packaged meats because they are often high in fat, salt, and preservatives (look for low-fat, varieties).

Alcoholic drinks add calories to your diet with very little nutrition.

WHAT ARE CALORIES?

A calorie is a way to measure the energy value of food. Your body burns calories for energy. Proteins, carbohydrates, and fats contain calories. To lose weight, eat fewer calories without giving up nutrition and burn more calories with more physical activity. If you are getting fewer calories from your food, your body will burn fat stored in your body to get the energy it needs and you will lose weight.

You can lose 1 pound a week by eating 500 fewer calories a day than you need to keep your present weight. Try to lose 1 to 2 pounds a week. If you lose more than that each week, you begin to lose muscle rather than fat. Most weight loss diets suggest 1200 to 1500 calories a day for women and 1500 to 1800 calories a day for men. However, calorie needs can vary a lot. They depend on your activity level and current weight. Ask your healthcare provider how many calories you need a day.

Don't lower your calories too much. If you get too few calories a day, your body will slow down your metabolism so that you can survive the lean time. This can happen if you go on a "starvation diet." The body's survival response will then stop you from losing weight.

There are weight loss medications and surgeries approved by the FDA to treat those who are significantly overweight and obese. Ask your healthcare provider if these treatments are indicated for you or safe with your other health concerns.



Weight Loss *continued*

How will physical activity help me lose weight?

In addition to diet, daily walking can help you manage your weight. Walking for 15 to 30 minutes, 3 to 6 times a week, is a good start. With your healthcare provider's approval, your goal should be to build up to 5 hours (300 minutes) of moderate exercise a week. (Moderate exercise means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat.) Or you may increase the intensity of exercise and try to get 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of vigorous activity a week. The increased level of exercise will have even more health benefits and improve the chance that you will lose weight and be able to keep a healthy weight. As you exercise you will burn calories.

What are some of the popular diets?

THERE ARE MANY POPULAR DIETS. SOME, CONSIDERED TO BE FAD DIETS, ARE UNSAFE FOR THE LONG TERM. OTHERS ARE HEALTHY AND MAY BE RIGHT FOR YOU. SOME BROAD CATEGORIES OF POPULAR DIETS ARE:

High-protein, low-carbohydrate diets result in a quick loss of weight right away. Two well known examples of this type of diet are the Atkins Diet and the South Beach Diet. Most of these diets allow unlimited amounts of high-protein foods and limit other food groups. Carbohydrate content varies but usually is very low at first. The amount of fat allowed in the diets can vary. Research has yet to determine the long-term benefits or risks of high-protein, low-carb diets. A possible risk is that this diet limits foods that help lower the risk for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems, such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. It is not clear if these diets are better than a calorie-controlled, low-fat diet for maintaining weight loss.

Specific food diets limit your diet to a few specific foods. They are a type of fad diet. These diets do not count calories, are boring, and depend mostly on willpower to follow a diet that has very little variety. You may start having vitamin and mineral deficiencies after just a few days on one of these diets. Examples of these diets are the grapefruit diet and the cabbage diet.

If you are unable to walk, ask your healthcare provider to recommend another type of exercise. Also do some form of strength training using gym equipment or your own body weight 2 or more days a week. Strength training will make your muscles stronger and able to work longer without getting tired. Muscle mass burns more calories than fat so as your muscle increases, so does your ability to burn calories. In addition to helping you lose weight or keep a healthy weight, regular physical activity lowers your pulse, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. It also increases your energy level and improves your sleep. Be sure to check with your healthcare provider before you start an exercise program.

Balanced nutrition diet plans are higher carbohydrate, low saturated-fat diets that more closely follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and guidelines recommended by the American Heart Association and Cancer Society. Examples of this type of diet are the Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Pyramid, American Heart Association, and Mediterranean diets.

Calorie-conscious commercial programs and weight loss clinics offer group support and motivation for the dieter, a wide variety of foods, and meal plans of 500 to 1500 calories a day. The cost for these programs vary. Some should not be followed without supervision by your healthcare provider. Some programs, such as Weight Watchers, can give excellent support for changing bad eating habits and sticking to your weight loss diet.

Each year more and more diet books are published, each promising great results. It is hard to keep up or know which diets are based on good science. You can read diet reviews by nutrition professionals on the American Dietetic Association Web site: <http://www.eatright.org/>