

Weight Control

Losing weight and keeping it off

Why don't diets seem to work?

"Going on" a diet isn't the answer to losing weight. This is because the weight is soon regained after you "go off" your diet. If diets really worked, there wouldn't be so many of them! Instead, your usual eating and exercise patterns need to be changed so that your weight stays right for you.

How much should I weigh?

This is a tough question. Even though everyone talks about weight, it's really how much fat you have that matters. Two people can be the same height and weigh the same, but one person may look overweight and the other may look fine. Someone who exercises regularly and has more muscle looks thinner than someone who is inactive and has more fat.

You may think you should weigh less when your weight is really all right. Pictures of models in magazines pressure people into thinking that they should be very thin. This isn't true. Talk to your family doctor about what weight is right for you.

How can I lose weight?

The best way is to work on the things that have contributed to your being overweight. A new diet plan may help you lose weight for a little while. But the weight often comes back unless you find new ways to deal with the things that have contributed to your weight problem. This may include learning new ways to deal with your stress, finding ways to feel less lonely or talking with a counselor about how you're feeling.

To lose weight and keep it off, start with these 3 things:

1. **A regular exercise program.** Few people lose weight and keep it off without exercise. Your doctor can help you plan an exercise program that will be right for you.
2. **A regular eating pattern.** For most people, this will be 3 meals a day. The 3 meals should be about equal in size and should be low in fat.
3. **Support.** Support from family or friends is very important for long-term success in losing weight.

Some causes of being overweight

- Having weight problems in your family
- Eating when lonely, sad or stressed
- Being pressured to eat by friends or family
- Using food for recreation
- Taking medicine that makes you feel hungry

- Having a low metabolism (the rate you burn calories)
- Having problems with hormone levels

Why is exercise a big deal?

Because it has so many benefits for people who want to lose weight. Regular exercise helps you burn calories faster, even when you're sitting still. It does this by raising your metabolism. It also helps you burn fat and build muscle. So, even if you don't lose pounds, you may lose inches.

Exercise also tends to curb your appetite. It's a healthy alternative to eating for entertainment. It can help reduce stress. And it's good for the health of your heart and bones.

What's the best type of exercise?

Any exercise is better than none at all. The best kind of exercise is exercise that you'll keep doing. Choose something you can enjoy doing so you'll stick with it.

Aerobic exercise raises your heart rate and helps burn calories. The longer you exercise, the more your body will burn fat. Working out for 30 minutes or more at a time, 4 to 6 times a week, will help you get the most benefit from aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercises include swimming, brisk walking, jogging and bicycling.

Walking, even if you don't walk fast, can be very helpful. If you choose this as your exercise, work up to walking for 1 hour, 5 times a week.

Weight training along with aerobic exercise or walking is good because it will add muscle mass to your body. Muscle burns calories faster than fat.

Tips on losing weight

- Begin meals with soup, broth or something light.
- Eat vegetables, grains and protein foods at each meal.
- Eat slowly so your body has time to know when it's full.
- Exercise.
- Stock your desk and home cupboards with low-fat snacks. Don't buy high-fat foods.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Let yourself indulge now and then. This helps you not feel deprived, which may cause you to eat too much later.

How can I change my eating habits?

You've learned your eating habits over time. Don't expect to change them overnight. Change them one by one.

Start by training yourself to eat without doing anything else at the same time. Focus on what you're doing and try to eat slowly. For example, don't eat while you watch TV. Then try adding one new healthy habit (like taking the stairs instead of the elevator or starting a walking program).

What's so bad about high-fat foods?

Fat has almost twice the calories of carbohydrates and protein. Also, your body more easily uses fat calories to make body fat, compared with calories from carbohydrates or proteins. Fat in your diet may also confuse your appetite, not letting it tell you when you're full.

Why is skipping meals not helpful?

Though skipping meals may work for a while, it backfires in the long run. This is because you get hungry and frustrated, and then eat too much at once.

You may be so used to skipping meals that you don't feel hungry at normal mealtimes. But after about a month of eating a normal breakfast and lunch and a light dinner, your body will readjust.

What can I say when my friends or family pressure me to eat?

Sometimes a direct explanation and a request for support are enough to get people to understand that you are working on your weight. When that doesn't seem to be enough, telling them it's your "doctor's orders" may do the trick. If not, you may have to avoid those people until you feel comfortable enough with your new eating habits to take the pressure.

Will diet drugs help?

Although diet drugs may help you lose weight at first, they generally don't help you keep the weight off. This is because taking drugs does not help you learn to change your eating and exercise habits. Making permanent changes in your eating and exercise habits is the way to lose weight and keep it off.

Foods high in fat

- Pastries, doughnuts, cakes, cookies, sweet rolls, pies
- Most crackers
- Most chips (potato chips, corn chips)
- Cheeses (other than cheeses made from skim milk)
- Nuts, peanuts, peanut butter
- Cooking oils
- Margarine, butter, lard, shortening
- Cream, ice cream
- Fried foods

- Hot dogs, luncheon meats

Special Instructions: