

Healthy Weight Loss



If you want or need to lose weight, work with your doctor to make a plan that's safe

for you. Be honest about your goals and what kinds of changes you're willing to make. Share any big distractions or stresses in your life—job or money worries, marriage or family stress, etc. Also tell your doctor about any negative feelings you have about food or your body.

Remember, you lose weight the same way you gain it—one pound at a time. You didn't become overweight overnight, so you won't lose it that way either. Instead, focus on setting and meeting small goals that will add up over time.

Changing How You Think

Losing weight isn't about finding the right quick-fix fad diet. These diets promise big results in short periods of time, but they aren't a long-term solution. To lose weight and keep it off, commit to living a healthy lifestyle. Start by changing the way you think about your diet, and then work on changing your eating and exercise habits.

Think about your attitude toward your body and food. Dieting can be stressful—so instead of thinking about it as a diet, think of it as your new and better way of living. Instead of focusing on what you're giving up, remind yourself what you'll gain like a stronger, healthier body and a better sense of self.

If your eating feels out of control or is related to feelings of anger, sadness or depression, talk to your doctor about seeing a psychologist and nutritionist as part of your weight-loss plan.

Set goals. It's important to be realistic about how much weight you need to lose and how long it will take. If your doctor tells you your body mass index (BMI)—a measure of fat based on height and weight—is too high, ask him how much you need to lose to get into a healthy range.

Start with small changes, and set short-term goals that focus on making healthy choices every day. Losing even 5 to 10 percent of your weight over six months (that's just 2 to 4 pounds a month for someone who weighs 250 lbs.) can lower your risk of heart disease and other health problems.

Make losing weight a priority. Your life doesn't have to be all about what you do or don't eat. But it's still important to commit to these positive changes. Try to plan for special times like parties and eating out—rather than using them as an excuse to “cheat.”

Changing Your Habits

To lose weight, you have to take in fewer calories from food and burn more calories through exercise. Try these tips:

Choose healthy foods. Depending on how much weight you need to lose and what other health conditions you have, your doctor may suggest a specific kind of diet (such as high-fiber or low-sodium). In general, a healthy diet is low in saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, sodium and sugar. Try not to take in any calories from liquids, and choose water whenever possible. Visit www.choosemyplate.gov for general nutrition guidelines, as well as sample meal plans, calorie trackers and other helpful tools.

Watch portion sizes. Read nutrition labels, and measure your food so you know what one portion looks like. And remember, even healthy foods can be unhealthy if you eat too many of them.



To learn more, visit:

- **The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: Aim for a Healthy Weight**
www.healthyweightnhlbi.nih.gov
- **USDA: ChooseMyPlate**
www.choosemyplate.gov

Make physical activity part of your daily life. Exercise can help you lose weight by burning extra calories you can't cut just by eating less. Choose something you enjoy like yoga, riding a bike, walking, swimming, or taking a dance class. It's okay if you don't like going to the gym. What's most important is to choose something you enjoy so you want to stick with it.

Build exercise into your daily or weekly routine, and treat your exercise "date" with yourself or a buddy just as you would any other commitment.

Prescription Medicines and Surgery Options

Your doctor may recommend medicines or surgery—in addition to changes in diet and exercise—to help you lose weight.

Weight-loss medicines can be helpful if you are very overweight (BMI of 30 or more) or have heart disease or other health conditions. Some medicines work by reducing the amount of fat, fat calories and certain vitamins your body takes from your food. Others, called appetite suppressants, make you want to eat less.

Your doctor may recommend surgery if you're very obese (BMI of 40 or more). The two most common types of weight-loss surgery are banded gastroplasty and gastric bypass. They work by limiting how much you can eat or how many calories your body can take from your food.

Both medicine and surgery have serious risks. You'll also need to schedule regular follow-up appointments with your doctor to check in on your progress and watch for side effects.

Remember:

- Be honest about your eating and exercise habits and your feelings about your weight, so your doctor can help you deal with them.
- You don't have to change everything about your diet and activity level in one day. Set small goals, and record your progress.
- If you slip up, recommit to your new lifestyle the next day. Change takes time. Stick with it!

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