

Weight Loss: Set Yourself Up For Success

If you're looking to lose weight, it's important to focus on your overall health rather than just your pants size. Here are some tips on getting active and making healthy changes in your life. And always talk to your doctor before starting a weight-loss program.

Reaching Your Goal

Putting a healthy diet and exercise plan into action in the course of a busy week can be a challenge. Most people have to cut (or burn) 500 calories a day to achieve a healthy weight loss goal of one pound per week.⁴

With a few small changes to your daily routine, for example, drinking water instead of soda, skipping a trip or two to the vending machine^{3,5} and preparing healthier lunches instead of eating out, you can make progress toward your weight loss and fitness goals.

The second key to weight loss is increasing your activity. The good news is there are plenty of ways to squeeze more activity into your busy day without a trip to the gym. Simple strategies like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking in the back of the parking lot and taking quick walks at lunchtime and on breaks burn calories that add up.

Make sure you're doing the right kind of activities. A mix of aerobic and strength training can help you achieve a healthy weight. Best of all, these types of exercise continue to burn calories even after you stop exercising. Plus, regular exercise can help prevent and manage chronic conditions.



To keep yourself motivated, visit the American Dietetic Association at eatright.org, and sign up to receive their daily nutrition tips.

Healthy eating and physical activity tips¹

- 1 Don't skip breakfast – a healthy meal in the morning jump starts your metabolism.
- 2 If you are sitting at a desk, take a break every hour to move around.
- 3 Choose fresh foods first over processed or prepackaged meals and snacks.
- 4 Aim to get nine grams of lean protein per day for every 20 pounds of body weight.
- 5 Stay hydrated, and limit your alcohol consumption.
- 6 Eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- 7 Eat mindfully all day long – opt for several smaller, healthier meals.
- 8 Remember: balance and moderation. Control your portions and accompany rich foods with fruits and vegetables.



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Identify Your Target Numbers

There are a few measurements to keep in mind when determining whether you're a healthy: weight, waist size and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Waist size is important because of the link between fat around your waist and future health problems. Just a 10-centimeter increase in waist size is associated with a 15 to 18 percent greater risk of death.² Waist size is easy to measure and a good indicator of your body-fat accumulation.³

Your BMI is based on the ratio of your weight to your height, so it allows for the fact that taller people have more bone and muscle tissue and tend to weigh more than shorter people. Studies have shown that people with a BMI of 25 or above are at a higher risk of early death from heart disease or cancer, and people with a BMI of 30 or higher are at a dramatically higher risk.

Exercise: Make It Fun⁶

It's a lot easier to get the exercise you need if you enjoy what you're doing. To work more activity into your day, keep comfortable clothes and a pair of walking or running shoes in your car. Then, choose an activity from the list below and do it for at least 10 minutes at a time – your goal is to get 30 minutes of activity each day.

- Look for local leagues where you can join a team and play sports like softball, soccer, volleyball or even kickball.
- Discover new landmarks in your hometown and explore them on foot.
- Find hiking trails in your area and make it a family day.
- Take your dog to a park and toss a ball or Frisbee, or just walk or jog with them outdoors. Dogs can be great motivation!
- Host an impromptu dance party with your kids – they'll love it!
- Ask a friend to encourage you, or recruit a neighbor to walk with you every evening.

Making healthy changes in your diet and exercise habits can be overwhelming. Take it one day at a time, and don't be discouraged by minor setbacks. Be proud of the days when you eat healthfully and get in your 30 minutes of activity.

Source

- ¹ The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, 10 tips to healthy eating and physical activity for you. (Accessed November 19, 2009): fitness.gov
- ² E. B. Levitan, A. Z. Yang, A. Wolk and M. A. Mittleman, Adiposity and Incidence of Heart Failure Hospitalization and Mortality: A Population-based Prospective Study, *Circulation: Heart Failure*, Journal of the American Heart Association (Published online April 7, 2009)
- ³ The Harvard School of Public Health, The Nutrition Source (Accessed November 19, 2009): hsph.harvard.edu
- ⁴ National Institutes of Health, Aim for a Healthy Weight (August 2005): nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/aim_hwt.pdf
- ⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rethink Your Drink (June 5, 2009): cdc.gov
- ⁶ United States Department of Agriculture, Tips for increasing physical activity (April 6, 2009): mypyramid.gov