

Weight Loss for Life

There are many ways to lose weight, but it is not always easy to keep the weight off. The key to successful weight loss is making changes in your eating and physical activity habits that you can keep up for the rest of your life. The information presented here may help put you on the road to healthy habits.

Can I benefit from weight loss?

Some

weight-related health problems:

- diabetes
- heart disease or stroke
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- gallbladder disease
- some types of cancer
- osteoarthritis (wearing away of the joints)
- sleep apnea (interrupted breathing during sleep).

Health experts agree that you may gain health benefits from even a small weight loss if:

you are obese based on your body mass index (BMI) (

you are overweight based on your BMI and have weight-related health problems or a family history of such problems, or

you have a waist that measures more than 40 inches if you are a man or more than 35 inches if you are a woman.

A weight loss of 5 to 15 percent of body weight may improve your health and quality of life, and prevent these health problems. For a person who weighs 200 pounds, that means losing 10 to 30 pounds.

Even if you do not need to lose weight, you still should follow healthy eating and physical activity habits to help prevent weight gain and stay healthy as you age.

Find your weight on the bottom of the graph. Go straight up from that point until you come to the line that matches your height. Then look to find your weight group.

* Without shoes ** Without clothes

How can I

lose weight?

Calories needed to maintain weight

-about 1,600 calories a day for inactive women

-about 2,200 calories a day for inactive men and active women

-about 2,800 calories a day for active men.

Your body weight is controlled by the number of calories you eat and the number of calories you use each day. To lose weight you need to take in fewer calories than you use. You can do this by creating and following a plan for healthy eating and a plan for regular physical activity. You may also choose to follow a formal weight-loss program that can help you make lifelong changes in your eating and physical activity habits. See below for more information on weight-loss programs.

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Your plan for healthy eating

The Nutrition Facts label from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is found on most packaged foods. It tells you how many calories and how much fat, protein, carbohydrate, and other nutrients are in one serving of the food. For more information on the Nutrition Facts label, see "Other Resources" at the end of this brochure.

A weight-loss "diet" that limits your portions to a very small size or that excludes certain foods may be hard to stick to and not work over the long term. Instead, a healthy eating plan takes into account your likes and dislikes, and includes a variety of foods that give you enough calories and nutrients for good health.

Make sure your eating plan contains:

Appropriate calorie level. The calorie level of your eating plan should let you lose about 1/2 to 2 pounds per week.

This means eating about 300 to 500 fewer calories a day than the levels needed to maintain weight. You can find out how many calories are in the foods you eat by reading the Nutrition Facts labels on food packaging.

Enough vitamins and minerals. It may be hard to get all of the vitamins and minerals you need on a low-calorie eating plan. If you eat less than 1,600 calories a day, you may want to add fortified foods such as breakfast cereal to your plan, or take a daily vitamin and mineral supplement.

Enough protein. If you are a woman aged 19 years and older, you should get about 46 grams of protein each day. If you are a man of the same age, you should get about 56 grams a day. Enough protein is important to make repairs to the body and prevent muscle breakdown.

Enough carbohydrates. About 55 percent of your daily calories should come from carbohydrates like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. If you eat 1,500 calories a day, that means eating about 200 grams of carbohydrates. Although popular low-carbohydrate diets may suggest lower levels, you need at least 130 grams of carbohydrates each day to prevent fatigue and nausea.

No more than 30 percent of calories, on average, from fat per day. Limiting fat may help you limit calories, which in turn may help you lose weight. Limiting fat to 30 percent of calories would mean that if you eat 1,500 calories a day, you should eat no more than 50 grams of fat.

The Food Guide Pyramid from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) can help you make your daily food choices and tell you how many servings you should eat from each food group to meet your nutritional needs. The number of servings is based on your age and the amount of physical activity you

do. For more information on the Food Guide Pyramid, see "Other Resources" at the end of this brochure.

Your plan for regular physical activityRegular physical activity may help you lose weight and keep weight off. It may also improve your energy level and mood, and lower your risk for developing diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

Any amount of physical activity is better than none. Experts recommend doing 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most or all days of the week for good health. To lose weight or maintain a weight loss, you may need to do more than 30 minutes of physical activity a day, as well as follow your healthy eating plan.

You can get your daily 30 minutes or more all at once, or break it up into shorter sessions of 20, 15, or even 10 minutes. Try some of these moderate-intensity physical activities:

- walking (15 minutes per mile or 4 miles per hour)
- biking
- tennis
- aerobic exercise classes (step aerobics, kick boxing, dancing)
- energetic house or yard work (gardening, raking, mopping, vacuuming).

What types of weight-loss programs are available?There are two different types of weight-loss programs-clinical and non-clinical. Knowing what a good program will offer and what to watch out for may help you choose a weight-loss program that will work for you.

Non-clinical program

What it is: A non-clinical program may be commercially operated, such as a privately owned weight-loss chain. You can follow a non-clinical program on your own by using a counselor, book, website, or weight-loss product. You can also join others in a support group, worksite program, or community-based program. Non-clinical weight-loss programs may require you to use the program's foods or supplements.

What a safe and effective program will offer:

- Books, pamphlets, and websites that are written or reviewed by a licensed health professional such as a medical doctor (M.D.) or registered dietitian (R.D.).

- Balanced information about following a healthy eating plan and getting regular physical activity.

- Leaders or counselors who show you their training credentials. (Program leaders or counselors may not be licensed health professionals.)

Program cautions:

- If a program requires you to buy prepackaged meals, find out how much the meals will cost-they may be expensive. Also, eating prepackaged meals does not let you learn the food selection and cooking skills you will need to maintain weight loss over the long term.

- Avoid any diet that suggests you eat a certain formula, food,

or combination of foods for easy weight loss. Some of these diets may work in the short term because they are low in calories. But they may not give you all the nutrients your body needs and they do not teach healthy eating habits. Avoid programs that do not include a physical activity plan.

Talk to your health care provider before using any weight loss product, such as a supplement, herb, or over-the-counter medication.

Clinical program

What it is: A clinical program provides services in a health care setting, such as a hospital. One or more licensed health professionals, such as medical doctors, nurses, registered dietitians, and/or psychologists, provide care. A clinical program may or may not be commercially owned.

Clinical programs may offer services such as nutrition education, physical activity, and behavior change therapy. Some programs offer prescription weight-loss drugs or gastrointestinal surgery.

Prescription weight-loss drugs

If your BMI is 30 or more, or your BMI is 27 or more and you have weight-related health problems, you may consider using prescription weight-loss drugs. Drugs should be used as part of an overall program that includes long-term changes in eating and physical activity habits. Only a licensed health care provider can prescribe these drugs. See "Additional Reading" for more information about prescription medications for the treatment of obesity.

Gastrointestinal surgery

If your BMI is 40 or more, or your BMI is 35 or more and you have weight-related health problems such as diabetes or heart disease, you may consider gastrointestinal surgery (also called bariatric surgery). Most patients lose weight quickly, and many keep off most of their weight with a healthy eating plan and regular physical activity. Still, surgery can lead to problems that require more operations. Surgery may also reduce the amount of vitamins and minerals in your body and cause gallstones. See "Additional Reading" for more information about gastrointestinal surgery.

What a safe and effective program will offer:

- A team of licensed health professionals

- A plan to help you keep weight off after you have lost it.

Program cautions:

- There may be side effects or health risks involved in the program that can be serious. Discuss these with your health care provider.

For more detailed information about choosing a safe and successful weight-loss program, see "Additional Reading" at the end of this brochure.

It is not always easy to change your eating and physical activity habits.

You may have setbacks along the way.

But keep trying-you can do it!

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