

Weight Management: Strategies for Success

Increase your chances for success by focusing on *managing your weight*. Weight management involves adopting a lifestyle that includes a HEALTHFUL EATING PLAN and REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. The key to managing weight throughout life is a positive attitude and the right kind of motivation. Internal motivators such as health, increased energy, self-esteem, and personal control increase your chances for lifelong weight management success. Your physician can help determine the appropriate type of weight management plan for you. A registered dietitian can tailor a plan to meet your individual needs and show you how to follow these strategies for long-term success.

STRATEGY 1: MAKE HEALTH, NOT APPEARANCE, YOUR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PRIORITY. A realistic goal is to achieve a healthy weight, not necessarily the lowest weight you can reach or an “ideal” weight from a chart.

STRATEGY 2: FOCUS ON A HEALTHY EATING STYLE, NOT ON “DIETING”. Dieting usually lasts for only the short term and rarely produces long-term success.

STRATEGY 3: EATING FOR GOOD HEALTH AND EATING TO CONTROL WEIGHT ARE VIRTUALLY THE SAME. Choosing a healthful eating plan that includes a variety of food choices from the Food Guide Pyramid can accomplish both objectives. All foods can fit into a nutritious, reduced-calorie eating plan, rich in foods with complex carbohydrates and fiber, like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and low in fat. You can feel full and satisfied with the suggested number of servings from each food group:

- 6-11 servings of bread, cereal, rice, or pasta
- 2-3 servings of fruits
- 3-5 servings of vegetables
- 2-3 servings of milk, yogurt, or cheese
- 5-7 ounces of lean meat, poultry, fish, or meat alternatives such as dried beans, eggs, peanut butter, or nuts

The number of servings you need depends on your age, gender, activity level, and weight loss goals. Usually for weight management you should choose serving amounts from the lower end of the range for each food group.

STRATEGY 4: PEOPLE WHO KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL AT LOSING AND KEEPING OFF EXTRA POUNDS. A physically active lifestyle offers many rewards in addition to weight management, such as heart health, strong bones, and stress relief. For weight management, experts recommend a combined total of 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days. Smaller amounts are OK, but try to accumulate at least 30 minutes a day. If you haven't been physically active, build up the time gradually. Focus on increasing daily physical activity, rather than setting unrealistic exercise goals.

Pick an activity that you enjoy and are likely to continue, such as a brisk walk in the morning or a swim after work. Before beginning any exercise program, however, be sure to consult your physician.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To make sure your weight management plan is safe and effective, ask yourself a few questions before you begin. Does your plan:

- include a variety of foods from all five major groups in the Food Guide Pyramid?
- include appealing foods you will enjoy eating for the rest of your life, not just a few weeks or months?
- include foods available at the supermarket where you usually shop?
- allow you to eat your favorite foods in moderation?
- recommend changes in your eating habits that also fit your lifestyle and budget?
- include at least the minimum number of servings from the Food Guide Pyramid?
- include regular physical activity?

If you answer yes to all these questions, changes are your weight-loss program will allow you to achieve long-term success.

[Recipes](#)

If you need further assistance with these recommendations, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian (R.D.) who can help you with additional nutrition education, cooking suggestions, shopping tips, menu planning, and individualizing a diet to meet your lifestyle needs.