



How to Lose Weight—And Keep It Off! *Develop a Healthy Lifestyle, Enjoy a Healthy Weight*

Looking to shed some pounds? Good for you! According to the National Institutes of Health, attaining and maintaining a healthy weight is not only important for your overall health, it can also prevent disease and give you more energy to enjoy life.

So how do you get started? Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say the secret to a healthy weight is a lifestyle that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses.

Healthy Eating

There are a lot of fad diets out there that promise fast results, but in the end, there's really no magic bullet when it comes to weight loss. The NIH recommends the following dietary guidelines for attaining and maintaining a healthy weight:

- Increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables. When you eat a variety of colorful fruits and veggies, you're providing the means for your body to absorb essential vitamins and minerals.
- Avoid processed foods, refined flours, and refined sugars, all of which are high in calories and low in nutrients.
- Favor whole grains and lean protein sources like chicken, fish, beans, and nuts.
- Decrease your consumption of saturated fats and trans fats; favor plant-based fats like olive oil and vegetable oils.

Regular Physical Activity

The amount of physical activity you engage in increases the amount of energy your body "burns off," helping you to lose weight. Ideally, healthy adults should do 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, or a mix of the two every week.

- Moderate activities include: brisk walking, casual biking, actively playing with your children or dog, light yard work, etc.
- Vigorous activities include: jogging, running, swimming laps, jumping rope, competitive sports, aerobics classes, etc.

Keep Track of Calories

A calorie is a unit of energy supplied by food. Everything you eat contains calories, whether carbohydrates, fats, sugars, or proteins. Reducing the number of calories you consume daily—along with burning calories through physical activity—creates a "calorie deficit" that results in weight loss.

As a general guideline, the average adult will need to reduce his/her caloric intake by 500-1000 calories each day to lose 1-2 pounds per week. To get a sense for how many calories you are currently eating, start a food journal. Write down the foods and beverages you consume each day. Measure that against the physical activity you're doing each week, and you'll start to see whether or not your caloric intake/output levels are working towards weight loss.

Make a Commitment—And Stick With It

Losing weight is the first step. Once you've lost that weight, you can keep it off by maintaining the healthy new lifestyle you've established. A study from the National Weight Control Registry found that people who maintained a significant weight loss reported improvements in their physical health, energy levels, physical mobility, general mood, and self-confidence. So make a commitment and stick with it!