

A Heart-Healthy Weight Feels Great



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Being at the weight that is best for you can help you look good and feel great. On top of that, a healthy weight lowers your risk for many diseases. It also makes healing after surgery easier.

When you weigh too much, your heart works harder to pump the blood in your body. This puts a strain on your heart. When you are at a healthy weight, your heart and body are less stressed.

If you are overweight, losing just 10 or 15 pounds can make you healthier! So if you need to lose weight, start now before more pounds creep on.

A healthy weight cuts your risk for:

- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- certain types of cancer
- stroke
- type 2 diabetes
- osteoarthritis
- gallbladder disease
- respiratory problems

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CALORIES COUNT

Our bodies contain billions of fat cells just waiting to store unused calories as fat. Filled fat cells give our bodies that extra padding. If you take in more calories than you use, the extra calories are stored as fat. This happens with calories from *any* kind of food, not just high-fat food.

Cutting fat from your diet is one way to cut calories. A gram of fat has about twice as many calories as a gram of protein or carbohydrate. One fat-filled meal and dessert could provide all the calories you will use in a *day*. So any other calories you eat that **day** would go to fat.

But when you read those food labels, don't stop when you read "Low in Fat." Look at "Calories," too. A half-cup of some fat-free frozen yogurts can have 10 *more* calories than a half-cup of regular ice cream!

Avoid foods with a lot of sugar and fat. These foods tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients. Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains instead. These foods are low in calories and rich in nutrients. Eating them leaves less room for high-calorie foods.

TAKE IT OFF AND KEEP IT OFF!

To lose weight, you need to use up the calories you eat each day *plus* some of the calories stored as fat. Your doctor and dietitian can help you plan a healthy way to lose weight.

You may begin by looking at some of your eating habits. For many of us, a lot of daily calories come from snacks. You may notice that you tend to snack when you watch TV or feel stressed. Finding other ways to handle those times can help you lose weight. A weight-loss counselor or books on the topic can offer more information on how to change eating and activity habits.

Losing weight is a long-term goal. Be patient and take it a day at a time. You will see results!

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Diet and Activity Changes You Can Make Now

- Eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Choose lower-fat, lower-calorie foods.
- Take the skin off chicken and cut the fat off meat.
- Use low-fat or fat-free dairy foods.
- Do not have seconds.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Avoid alcohol.
- Choose low-calorie, healthy snacks.
- Eat slowly. Sit down when you eat.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car farther out in the parking lot.
- Get out at a bus stop early and walk the last two blocks.
- Walk the mall.
- Doggy-bag half a big restaurant meal for another day.
- Treat yourself! Have a small serving of your favorite food once in a while.

A low-fat, reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity can make the pounds drop off. A safe weight-loss plan will include goals right for you. The diet will include all the nutrients you need for good health (and foods you enjoy eating!). This will result in the loss of about one pound per week. It may seem like more at first, because a lot of water is lost up front.

"Miracle" diets and drugstore diet pills may be unhealthy. They also don't help you make lasting changes in the way you will eat every day. Once you lose the weight, you will want to keep it off. That's why it is best to plan your weight loss with your doctor and dietitian. The result will be a way of living you can be happy and healthy with!