

ADULTS 18 years and older

Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan

Better Health and You

Tips for Adults



Weight Control Information Network



A balanced eating plan and regular physical activity are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and physical inactivity may lead to overweight and related health problems. By eating right and being active, you may reach or maintain a healthy weight. You may also improve your physical health, mental well-being, and set an example for others. Do it for yourself and your family!

Healthy Eating

What is a healthy eating plan?

A healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

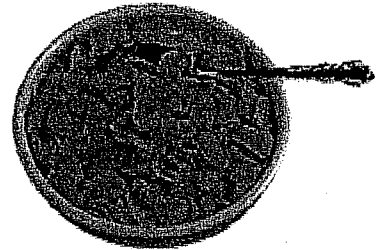
For more specific information about food groups and nutrition values, visit: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines

Tips for Healthy Eating

- **Eat breakfast every day.** People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day. Breakfast also gives you energy and helps you get your day off to a healthy start.
- **Choose whole grains more often.** Try whole-wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur.
- **Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day.** Vegetables of different colors provide different nutrients. Choose dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collards, and mustard greens, and reds and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes.
- **Choose fresh, canned, or frozen fruit more often than fruit juice.** Fruit juice has little or no fiber, and the calories may be high. Fresh, canned, or frozen fruit is often better for you. If you eat canned fruit, opt for fruit packed in water rather than syrup.
- **Use fats and oils sparingly.** Olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocados, nuts and nut butters, olives, and fish provide heart-healthy fat as well as vitamins and minerals.
- **Eat sweets sparingly.** Limit foods and beverages that are high in added sugars.
- **Eat three meals every day.** If you skip meals or replace a meal with a snack, you might overeat later on.
- **Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand.** Whether you are at home, at work, or on the go, healthy snacks may help to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

Quick Breakfast Ideas

- low-fat yogurt sprinkled with low-fat granola
- oatmeal with low-fat or fat-free milk, or soy-based beverage
- a slice of whole-wheat toast with a thin spread of peanut butter
- fruit smoothie made with frozen fruit, low-fat yogurt, and juice
- high-fiber, low-sugar cereal with soy-based beverage or low-fat milk



Easy Snack Ideas



- low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- rice cakes
- fresh or canned fruits
- sliced vegetables or baby carrots
- dried fruit and nut mix (no more than a small handful)
- air-popped popcorn sprinkled with garlic powder or other spices
- high-fiber, low-sugar cereal



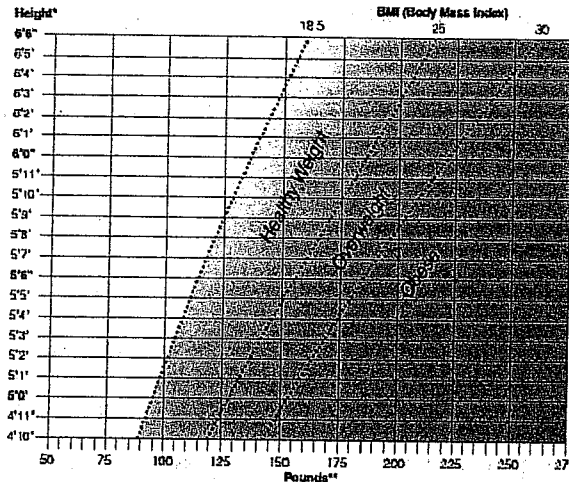
Healthy Weight

What is a healthy weight?

Body mass index (BMI) is one way to tell whether you are at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese. It measures your weight in relation to your height.

A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is in the healthy range. A BMI of 25 to 29.9 is overweight, and a BMI of 30 or greater is considered obese.

In the chart below, find your height in the left-hand column and move across the row to find your weight. If you are in the overweight or obese range on the chart, you may be at risk for certain health problems.



* Without Shoes
 **Without Clothes

Sources

George Bray, M.D., Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: The Evidence Report*.

Another way to find out if you are at risk for health problems caused by overweight and obesity is to measure your waist. If you are a woman and your waist is more than 35 inches, or if you are a man and your waist is more than 40 inches, your risk of disease is higher.

What are the health risks of being overweight?

Extra weight may put you at higher risk for:

- type 2 diabetes (high blood sugar)
- high blood pressure
- coronary heart disease and stroke
- some types of cancer
- sleep apnea (when breathing stops for short periods during sleep)
- osteoarthritis (wearing away of the joints)
- gallbladder disease
- irregular periods
- problems with pregnancy, such as gestational diabetes (high blood sugar during pregnancy), high blood pressure, or increased risk for cesarean section (c-section)

Many factors may play a part in why people gain weight.

- **Habits.** Eating too many calories may become a habit. You may also develop a habit of doing sedentary activities like watching TV instead of being physically active. Over time, these habits can lead to weight gain.
- **Genes.** Overweight and obesity tend to run in families. Although families often share diet and physical activity habits that can play a role in obesity, their shared genes increase the chance that family members will be overweight.
- **Illness.** Some diseases may lead to weight gain or obesity. These include hypothyroidism, Cushing's syndrome, and depression. Talk to your health care provider if you think you have a health problem that could be causing you to gain weight.
- **Medicine.** Some medicines may lead to weight gain. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about the side effects of any medication you are taking.
- **The world around you.** You can find food and messages about food at home, at work, at shopping centers, on TV, and at family and social events. People may eat too many foods high in fat, sugar, and salt just because they are always there. On top of that, our modern world—with its remote controls, drive-in banks, and escalators—makes it easy to be physically inactive.
- **Emotions.** Many people eat when they are bored, sad, angry, or stressed, even when they are not hungry.

Although you may not be able to control all the factors that lead to overweight, you *can* change your eating and physical activity habits. And by changing those habits, you may be able to improve your weight and your health.

A weight loss of as little as 5 to 15 percent of your body weight over 6 months or longer has been shown to improve health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 5 percent of your body weight means losing 10 pounds. Losing 15 percent of your body weight means losing 30 pounds. A safe rate of weight loss is 1/2 to 2 pounds per week.

Try some of these ideas to support your weight-loss efforts:

- Keep a food diary. To get started, see the sample food diary below.
- Shop from a list and shop when you are not hungry.
- Store foods out of sight, or do not keep many high-fat, high-sugar foods in your home.
- Dish up smaller servings. At restaurants, eat only half your meal and take the rest home. See the Weight-control Information Network (WIN) brochure *Just Enough for You: About Food Portions* for more tips on controlling portion size.
- Eat at the table and turn off the TV.
- Be realistic about weight-loss goals. Aim for a slow, modest weight loss.
- Seek support from family and friends.
- Expect setbacks and forgive yourself if you regain a few pounds.
- Add moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity to your weight-loss plan. Doing regular physical activity may help you control your weight.

SAMPLE FOOD DIARY

Time	Food	Feelings	How I Can Improve
8:00 a.m.	Coffee with sugar and cream, oatmeal with low-fat milk and banana	Hungry. Ate my usual breakfast.	
11:00 a.m.	Low-fat yogurt	Stomach starting to rumble.	Adding fresh fruit or whole grains will help keep me from overeating later.
12:30 p.m.	Roast beef and cheese sandwich on whole-wheat bread, potato chips, can of soda	Probably ate more than I was hungry for because of the "lunch deal" the deli offered me.	If I pack my lunch, I won't be tempted in the lunch line.
2:30 p.m.	1/2 chocolate bar from coworker, large coffee with sugar and cream	Feeling bored, not truly hungry.	A snack like veggie slices with salsa is more nutritious.
7:30 p.m.	Caesar salad, dinner roll, ravioli (didn't finish the whole serving), 1/2 slice of chocolate cake	Out to dinner with friends, so we all ate big portions! We split dessert, which made me feel healthy.	Next time, I'll have a salad with low-fat dressing. Sweet, fresh fruit is good as a refreshing dessert.
10:30 p.m.	Decaf herbal tea	Had trouble falling asleep.	

To keep a food diary, write down all the food you eat in a day. Also write down the time you eat and your feelings at the time. Writing down your feelings may help you identify your eating triggers. For example, you may notice that you sometimes overeat when you are in a big group, simply because everyone around you is eating. The next time you find yourself in this situation, be mindful of that eating trigger and try to limit your portion sizes.

Physical Activity

Getting Active

You do not have to be an athlete to benefit from regular physical activity. Even modest amounts of physical activity can improve your health. Start with small, specific goals, such as walking 10 minutes a day, 3 days a week, and build up slowly from there. Keep an activity log to track your progress. You can refer to the sample activity log below.

Try these activities to add more movement to your daily life:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Make sure the stairs are well lit.
- Get off the bus one stop early if you are in an area safe for walking.

- Park the car farther away from entrances to stores, movie theaters, or your home.
- Take a short walk around the block with family, friends, or coworkers.
- In bad weather, walk around a mall.
- Rake the leaves or wash the car.
- Visit museums, the zoo, or an aquarium. You and your family can walk for hours and not realize it.
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.

Are you ready to be even more active?



As you become more fit, slowly increase your pace, the length of time you are active, and how often you are active. Before starting a vigorous physical activity program, check with your health care provider if you are a man over age 40 or a woman over age 50, or if you have chronic health problems.

For a well-rounded workout plan, combine aerobic activity, muscle-strengthening exercises, and stretching. Do at least 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity physical activity on most or all days of the week. Add muscle-strengthening activities to your aerobic workout two to three times a week.

If you are trying to lose weight or maintain your weight loss, you may need to do more activity. Aim for 60 to 90 minutes on most days.

To reduce the risk of injury, do a slow aerobic warm-up, then stretch before aerobic or strengthening activities. Follow your workout with a few more minutes of stretching. See WIN's brochure *Walking...A Step in the Right Direction* for stretching exercises.

Aerobic activity is any activity that speeds up your heart and breathing while moving your body at a moderate or vigorous pace. (See below for examples.) If you have been inactive for a while, you may want to start with easier activities, such as walking at a gentle pace. This lets you build up to more intense activity without hurting your body.

Regular aerobic activity may help:

- **Control weight.** Aerobic activity burns calories, which may help you manage your weight.
- **Prevent coronary heart disease and stroke.** Regular aerobic activity can strengthen your heart muscle and lower your blood pressure. It may also help lower "bad" cholesterol and raise "good" cholesterol.
- **Maintain strong bones.** Weight-bearing aerobic activities that involve lifting or pushing your own body weight, such as walking, jogging, or dancing, help to maintain strong bones.
- **Improve your outlook.** Aerobic exercise relieves tension and decreases stress. It may also help build your confidence and improve your self-image.

Choose aerobic activities that are fun. People are more likely to be active if they like what they are doing. It also helps to get support from a friend or a family member. Try one of these activities or others you enjoy:

- brisk walking or jogging
- bicycling
- swimming
- aerobic exercise classes
- dancing (square dancing, salsa, African dance, swing)
- playing basketball or soccer

Strengthening activities include lifting weights, using resistance bands, and doing push-ups or sit-ups. Besides building stronger muscles, strengthening activities may help you:

- **Use more calories.** Not only do strengthening exercises burn calories, but having more muscle means you will burn slightly more calories throughout the day—even when you are sitting still.
- **Reduce injury.** Stronger muscles improve balance and support your joints, lowering the risk of injury.
- **Maintain strong bones.** Doing strengthening exercises regularly helps build bone and may prevent bone loss as you age.

Strengthening exercises should focus on working the major muscle groups of the body, such as the chest, back, abdominals, legs, and arms. Do exercises for each muscle group two or three times a week. Allow at least 1 day of rest for your muscles to recover and rebuild before another strengthening workout. (It is safe to do aerobic activity every day.)

Lifestyle activities are the day-to-day activities that you do. These activities can really add up and increase the number of calories you burn each day. They may also boost your energy and mood by getting your blood and muscles moving. Examples of lifestyle activities include:

- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walking to your coworker's office instead of using the phone or email.
- Gardening and doing household chores.
- Walking inside the bank rather than using the drive-through window.
- Parking farther from store entrances and walking the extra distance.
- Taking short breaks at work to get up, stretch, and walk.
- Playing with your children, nieces and nephews, and pets.

Be Good to Yourself

Many people feel stress in their daily lives. Stress can cause you to overeat, feel tired, and not want to do anything. Regular physical activity can give you more energy. Try some of these other ideas to help relieve stress and stay on track with your fitness and nutrition goals:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Practice deep breathing while relaxing your muscles one at a time.
- Take a break and go for a walk.
- Take short stretch breaks throughout the day.
- Try taking a yoga or tai chi class to energize yourself and reduce stress.
- Try a new hobby, like a pottery class or any activity that sparks your interest.
- Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy.

A balanced eating plan, regular physical activity, and stress relief can help you stay healthy for life.

Tips for Adults

- Eat breakfast every day. People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day.
- Choose whole grains more often. Try whole-wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur.
- Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day. Vegetables of different colors provide different nutrients.
- Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand at home, at work, or on the go to combat hunger and prevent overeating.
- At restaurants, eat only half your meal and take the rest home.
- Visit museums, the zoo, or an aquarium. You and your family can walk for hours and not realize it.
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- Get plenty of sleep.

Additional Reading From the National Institutes of Health and the Weight-control Information Network

Aim for a Healthy Weight
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Internet: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/

Diabetes Prevention and Control Publications
National Diabetes Education Program
Internet: www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/catalog.htm

Just Enough for You: About Food Portions
Phone: 1-877-946-4627
Internet: www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/just_enough.htm

Tips to Help You Get Active
Phone: 1-877-946-4627
Internet: www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/tips.htm

Walking...A Step in the Right Direction
Phone: 1-877-946-4627
Internet: www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm

Internet: www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/caminar.htm

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**Additional
Reading From
Other
Organizations**

2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Phone: 1-888-878-3256
Internet: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines

Exercise and Weight Control
The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
Internet: www.fitness.gov

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**Additional
Resources**

American Dietetic Association
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60606-6995
Phone: 1-800-877-1600
Internet: www.eatright.org

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20892-0105
Phone: 1-800-575-9355
Internet: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

National Diabetes Education Program
1 Diabetes Way
Bethesda, MD 20814-9692
Phone: 1-800-438-5383
Internet: www.ndep.nih.gov

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
Department W
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 738-H
Washington, DC 20201-0004
Phone: (202) 690-9000
Internet: www.fitness.gov

Food and Nutrition Information Center
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Service, National Agricultural Library
10301 Baltimore Avenue, Room 105
Beltsville, MD 20705-2351
Phone: (301) 504-5719
Internet: www.nal.usda.gov/fnic

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Weight-control Information Network

1 WIN Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3665
Phone: (202) 828-1025
Fax: (202) 828-1028
Toll-free number: 1-877-946-4627
Email: win@info.niddk.nih.gov

Internet: www.win.niddk.nih.gov

The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) of the National Institutes of Health, which is the Federal Government's lead agency responsible for biomedical research on nutrition and obesity. Authorized by Congress (Public Law 103-43), WIN provides the general public, health professionals, the media, and Congress with up-to-date, science-based health information on weight control, obesity, physical activity, and related nutritional issues.

Publications produced by WIN are reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts. This publication was also reviewed by Rena Wing, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Brown University, and F. Xavier Pi-Sunyer, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Obesity Research Center, St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center.

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