



Facts About Healthy Weight

Why Is a Healthy Weight Important?

Being overweight or obese increases your risk for many diseases and conditions. The more you weigh, the more likely you are to suffer from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, gallbladder disease, sleep apnea, and certain cancers. On the other hand, a healthy weight has many benefits: It helps you lower your risk for developing these problems, helps you feel good about yourself, and gives you more energy to enjoy life.

What Is Your Risk?

Body Mass Index

Do you know your body mass index, or BMI? Your BMI accurately estimates your total body fat. The amount of fat that you carry is a good indicator of your risk for a variety of diseases.

To check your BMI, use the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) BMI calculator at www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/.

Although BMI can be used for most men and women, it does have some limitations:

- It may *overestimate* body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build.
- It may *underestimate* body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle.

Waist Circumference Measurement

Your waist circumference is also an important measurement to help you figure out your overall health risks. If most of your fat is around your waist, then you are more at risk for heart disease and diabetes.

This risk increases with a measurement that is greater than 35 inches for women or greater than 40 inches for men.

How To Lose Weight and Maintain It

Most people who try to lose weight focus on one thing: weight loss. However, if you set goals, eat healthy foods, and are physically active, then you may be more successful at losing weight.

Weight Loss Goals

Setting the right goals is an important first step to losing and maintaining weight.

- Losing just 5–10 percent of your current weight over 6 months will lower your risk for heart disease and other conditions.
- Losing 1–2 pounds per week is a reasonable and safe weight loss.
- Maintaining a modest weight loss over a longer period of time is better than losing a lot of weight and regaining it. You can think about additional weight loss after you've lost 10 percent of your current body weight and have kept it off for 6 months.

Maintaining a healthy weight calls for keeping a balance of energy. You must balance the calories or energy you get from food and beverages with the calories you use to keep your body going and to be physically active.

A Healthy Eating Plan

A healthy eating plan gives your body the nutrients it needs every day and helps you stay within your daily calorie level. Such an eating plan also will lower your risk for heart disease and other conditions.



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* fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars
- Controls portion sizes

Cutting back on calories is also part of a healthy eating plan to lose weight. In general, eating plans that contain 1,000–1,200 calories each day will help most women lose weight safely. Eating plans that contain 1,200–1,600 calories each day are suitable for most men and also may be appropriate for women who weigh 165 pounds or more or who exercise regularly.

Physical Activity—How Much Should You Aim For?

Staying physically active and eating fewer calories will help you lose weight and keep the weight off over time. But people vary greatly in how much physical activity they need to reach their weight goals.

Some people can reach a stable weight by doing 150–300 minutes (2.5–5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity activity. Others need to do more than 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity

activity to lose more than 5 percent of body weight and keep the weight off.

Either way, you don't have to do physical activity all at once. You can break up your physical activity into periods of at least 10 minutes and spread it throughout the week.

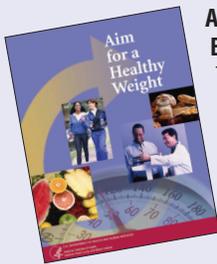
Learn More

More information on maintaining a healthy weight, and on overweight and obesity, is available from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov (under Health Information for the Public) and at the Aim for a Healthy Weight Web site at <http://healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov>. Podcasts and Spanish-language articles also can be found in the online Diseases and Conditions Index at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci.

Information on overweight prevention strategies for children and families can be found on the *We Can!* (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition) Web site at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

You also can order or download NHLBI materials on overweight and obesity from the NHLBI Web site or by calling the NHLBI Health Information Center at 301–592–8573 (TTY: 240–629–3255).

Want More Information? These NHLBI resources will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight!



Aim for a Healthy Weight Booklet (#05-5213)

This booklet provides practical, easy-to-use guidance for losing and maintaining weight. It includes portion and serving size information, sample reduced-calorie menus, a weekly food and activity diary, and more.

Visit the **Aim for a Healthy Weight** Web site at <http://healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov> to find an online BMI calculator and menu planner, as well as additional materials and resources for patients, the public, and health professionals.



Also of interest:

- **Facts About Healthy Weight (#06-5830)**
This fact sheet provides key information for losing and maintaining weight, including weight loss goals and tips on healthy eating and physical activity.



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**National Heart
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To Order: Visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov or <http://email.nhlbihin.net> or call **301–592–8573**