



X-Plain *Weight Management* **Reference Summary**

Introduction

If you are overweight, you are not alone. About two thirds of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese.

There are a lot of weight loss diets, but many of them only work temporarily because people start and stop them repeatedly. A successful weight management program allows overweight people to lose weight and keep from gaining it back.

This reference summary discusses how to lose weight and keep it off. It explains general principles of weight loss that can help you lose weight, if you are overweight or obese, by focusing on healthy living. It also includes sections about why we gain weight, benefits of losing weight, how to lose weight by eating healthy and exercising, and tips for getting started.



Why We Gain Weight

During the caveman era, gaining weight was a good thing! It was the body's way of guarding against starving to death when there wasn't enough food. When cavemen ate more than they needed, the excess food was stored as fat in their bodies. When they ate less than what their bodies needed, the body converted stored body fat to energy.

Nowadays, since we have refrigerators and plenty of food in grocery stores, we don't need to use our body as a storeroom! While many people want to lose extra weight for appearance, the right motivator should be good health. Being overweight or obese is associated with heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and some cancers.

The food we eat is our source of energy, just like gas is the source of energy for most cars. The body is always using energy to keep the body temperature normal, to move and to maintain bodily functions such as heartbeat.

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Energy is measured in calories.

- 1 gram of carbohydrate or sugar has 4 calories
- 1 gram of protein has 4 calories
- 1 gram of fat has 9 calories

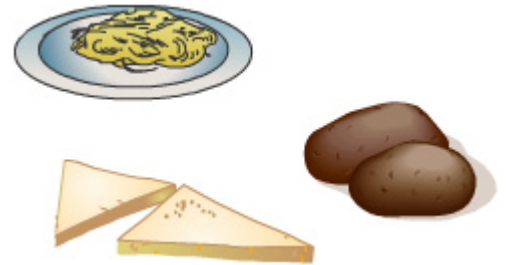
The number of calories a person needs depends on many factors such as gender, age, body size, activity level and body metabolism.

Children need relatively more energy per unit of body weight than adults because they are growing. A 200-pound man needs more energy than a 150-pound man that has the same activity level and metabolism. A construction worker needs more energy than someone with a desk job who is the same age, sex and body type.

People of the same age, size and activity level may require different amounts of calories per day because some people have a fast metabolism; they burn more calories in a day than others.

Carbohydrates are “sugary” foods. They include:

- sugar
- rice
- bread
- cereals
- pasta
- potatoes
- beets



Proteins are very important for the body. Protein is in:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Fish
- Dry beans
- Eggs
- Nuts



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Benefits of Losing Weight

Being overweight or obese is associated with heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease and blood infections. Managing your weight can help you live longer and have a better quality of life.

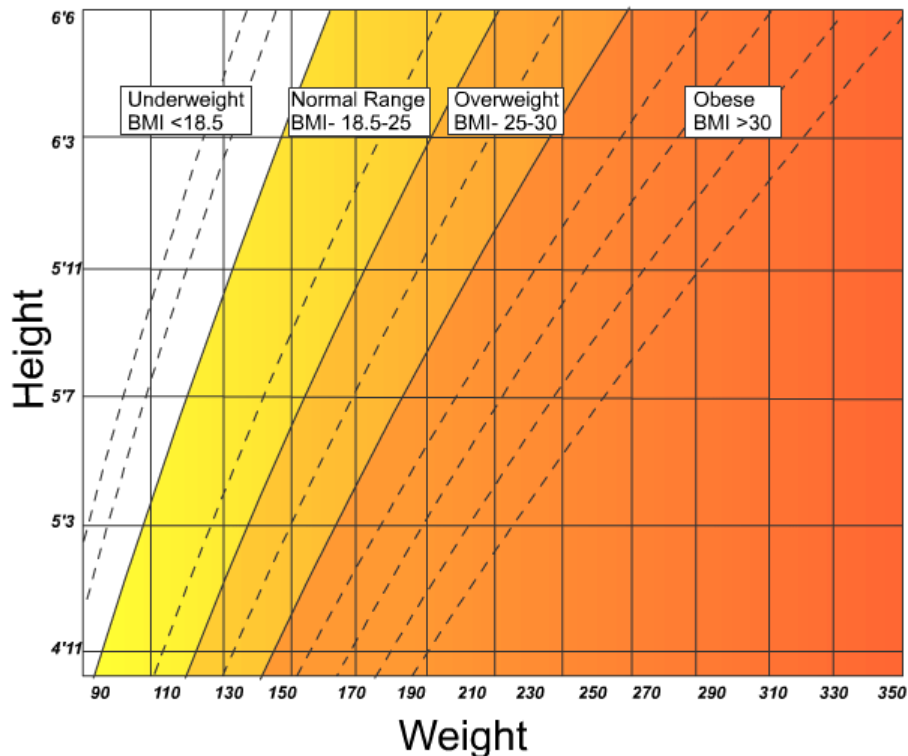
People who are overweight and lose weight notice immediate changes in their quality of life, which include:

- Sleeping better and longer
- Feeling more energetic and relaxed
- Being more flexible and strong

Needless to say, overweight people who lose weight feel better about themselves and about their social life. However, people who lose weight just to look better tend to gain it back while people who commit to a healthy lifestyle usually keep the weight off.

A Healthy Weight

Healthcare providers use several measurements to analyze your weight. They may use body mass index, or BMI, percent body fat, waist size or other methods.



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You can use the graph on the previous page to find your BMI. Find your weight on the bottom of the graph. Go straight up from that point until you come to the line that matches your height. Then look to find your weight group. A healthy BMI for an adult is between 18.5 and 24.9.

Even if your body mass index falls within the healthy ranges, you are at a greater health risk if your waist size is larger than your hips or thighs.

A simple way to determine body fat is called bioelectrical impedance. A machine delivers a harmless electrical current through your body. A trained technician gets readings from the machine and calculates body fat by taking the difference between body weight and lean tissue. Other ways of measuring body fat include fat scales, skin calipers or water-replacement methods.

A healthy body fat percentage for a woman is between 31% and 34% and for a man is between 19% and 22%. The lower end of these ranges is for younger adults, and the higher end is for older adults.

Healthcare providers also look at weight-related risk factors before determining whether the weight you are at is healthy. Such factors include:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- High blood sugar
- Arthritis
- Breathing problems
- Smoking
- Lack of exercising

If you are overweight without risk factors, your healthcare provider may suggest that you just maintain the weight you are at instead of trying to lose weight.

If your weight falls at the higher end of a healthy weight range and you have some risk factors related to weight, you may be advised to lose 5-10% of your body weight to improve or lessen your risk factor. Research shows that such weight loss has significant health benefits, even if you are still overweight.

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How To Lose Weight

If you are overweight there are only 3 ways to lose weight:

1. Decrease the number of calories you eat.
2. Increase the number of calories you burn.
3. Have surgery to suck the body fat out.



In addition to its risks, surgery will only solve the problem temporarily. The body will gain the weight back if the person continues to eat more calories than his or her body needs for energy. The best and healthiest way to lose weight is to decrease the number of calories you eat AND increase the number of calories you burn.

Most people already know that diet and exercise reduce weight. The question is how to do it and how to get started. We will list some tips for starting, but first let's look closer at how calories, exercise and weight are related.

Your body reaches an equilibrium and stops gaining weight when the amount of calories in the food you eat is equal to the amount of energy your body needs and uses.

$$\text{Food calories} = \text{body metabolism} + \text{body activity}$$

If you eat more calories than your body needs, the extra calories are stored as body fat. Every 9 extra calories are stored as 1 gram of body fat.

If you eat a piece of fatty rib roast, which has 900 calories, when your body already has taken in the amount of calories it needs for the day, those 900 calories are stored as 100 grams of fat. 100 grams of body fat is almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pound! Imagine sticking a quarter-pound hamburger somewhere on your body!

The good news is that most fruits have very few calories. For example, a small apple only has about 50 calories. To take in 800 calories, you would need to eat about 16 apples! That is why we should eat as many fruits and vegetables as we want; they have a lot of vitamins and fiber and very few calories!

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It may not be easy for you to know exactly how much energy your body needs and how many calories you need to cut to reach a certain weight, but it can be done. This program explains the basic principles of weight loss. You should check with your nutritionist or doctor to figure out a program that is best for you.

Tips for Starting

In order to lose weight and keep it off, you have to start with the right attitude. For example, if you think to yourself, “If I can just be on this diet for a few weeks, I will lose 5 to 10 pounds,” you will probably gain the weight back. Instead, think to yourself, “I am committed to healthy living.”

Here are some beginning attitudes to start you off on the right foot.

- Be ready to make a lifelong commitment and permanent changes towards healthier life habits.
- Do it for yourself and for health reasons; not for appearances or to please others.
- Be realistic and set realistic goals that can be slowly and gradually achieved.
- Believe that long-term permanent health benefits from a healthy diet are more important than frequent short-term satisfaction from indulging in food you like.

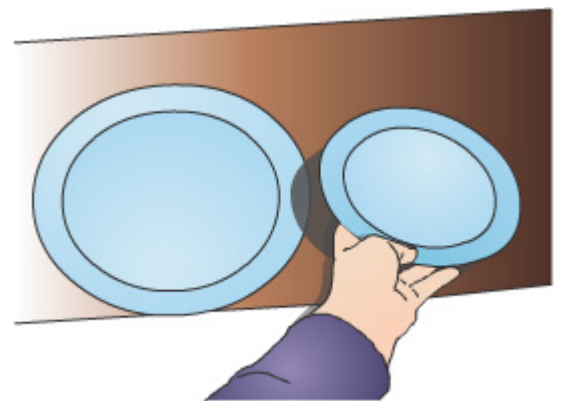
Eating Habits

In order to lose weight, it is important to change your eating habits. There are 2 main ideas to remember as you transform your eating habits.

1. Decrease portion sizes
2. Increase fruits and vegetables

By decreasing your portion sizes, you usually reduce the amount of calories you are taking in. An easy way to get started eating correct portions is to eat off of smaller plates.

When you eat at home, dish food onto the plates in the kitchen and carry it to the table; when all the food is served at the table, it is much easier and more tempting to have seconds. When you have to eat away from your home, order a child size meal rather than a super size one.



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When you eat more fruits and vegetables, your stomach will feel fuller, leaving little room for high-calorie foods. Substitute high-calorie snacks with low-calorie fruits and vegetables. For example, instead of a high-calorie bag of chips, get the same crunch with more vitamins and less calories from a carrot or some celery!

You lose weight by eating fewer calories than your body needs. By eating 250 fewer calories per day, you will lose about ½ pound a week! That is 26 pounds in a year!

It is better to lose weight gradually than to lose it fast. On a diet that requires you to eat too few calories, you run the risk of not getting all the nutrients your body needs. These diets are also more likely to fail. Even if they help you to lose weight, you are more likely to gain it back.

Here are 4 healthy eating guidelines that apply at all times, whether you are on a diet or not.

- 1) Eat a variety of foods. No one category of food can give you all the nutrients you need. A healthy diet always includes food from different food groups.
- 2) Eat a lot of vegetables, fruits and grain products. Dietitians recommend plant foods because they include fewer calories and have a lot of fiber, vitamins and minerals. They also have no cholesterol and very little fat.
- 3) Eat a diet low in fat and cholesterol. No more than 30% of the calories you eat should come from fat.
- 4) Have certain foods and drinks in moderation. Sugars, such as candy, salt and alcohol, should be consumed in moderation.

Exercising More

The goal of exercising for weight loss is to burn more calories. Exercise also helps you prevent disease, reduce stress and strengthen your muscles. The amount of calories you burn depends on how often, how long and how intense your activities are.

People with more muscle are able to consume more calories than people with less muscle without gaining weight. This is because the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn, even at rest! Therefore, building your muscles through exercise and activity is a good way to constantly burn more calories. That is why your healthcare provider says, “Exercising will increase your metabolism rate.”

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Even though regularly scheduled aerobic exercise is best for losing fat, any extra movement helps burn calories. Any extra activity that you can fit into your day burns more calories.

Think about ways you can increase your physical activity throughout the day. Here are some examples, some of which may apply to you.

- Walk to your phone to answer it instead of using the wireless phone.
- Take the stairs instead of using the elevator at work.
- Walk to the mall instead of driving there.
- Walk to your coworker's office instead of calling on the phone.
- Take the stairs instead of using the escalator at shopping malls and the airport.
- Mow the lawn and shovel the snow instead of hiring people to do it.
- Wash your car.
- Vacuum the carpet and do housework more frequently.
- Pick up your order instead of ordering through delivery.
- Do some gardening and rake the lawn.



When you decide to start exercising regularly, choose activities you enjoy. This will keep you motivated to continue doing them. Try to exercise for about 30 minutes each day. If you need to, divide the time into three 10-minute sessions instead of one 30-minute session.

Tips for Succeeding

The following are additional tips for succeeding as you embark towards living a healthier life through weight management and exercising.

1. If you crave a certain food, don't ignore the craving by eating lots of other food. Have a small serving of the food you crave and get past it.
2. Don't skip breakfast; your body needs fuel to move and think. Eat a healthy breakfast such as whole-grain cereal with low-fat or skim milk.
3. Read the nutrition facts on food labels. A sweetened bottle of juice, which sounds healthy, could be about 200 calories!



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Salad dressings have a lot of calories if they are not light or fat-free.

4. Drink alcohol in moderation. Alcohol is a source of energy to the body and every gram of alcohol provides 7 calories! A light beer or a glass of wine is about 100 calories.
5. Dish up food in the kitchen and don't put serving bowls on the dinner table. This reduces the chance of you having seconds.
6. Eat slowly because it takes 20 minutes after your stomach is full for the brain to recognize that and stop the hunger signals!
7. If you were taught to clean your plate when you eat, it is okay to unlearn that habit! You don't have to clean your plate if you are not hungry any more. Wasting \$1 of extra food on your plate is a better choice than paying hundreds of dollars in health care later.
8. Don't super-size your order at restaurants. Restaurants give large portions full of calories. Order the regular or kid-size and don't finish a large plate at restaurants.
9. Drink lots of water before, after and in between meals. The body needs it and it usually reduces the feeling of hunger.
10. Snack on healthy foods between meals, such as fruits you like. They fill your stomach and give you energy and vitamins. They also help you avoid the severe hunger which can cause you to overeat.

Summary

Managing your weight makes good sense. It helps you stay healthy, prevent diseases and save money on healthcare treatments. People who maintain a healthy weight usually eat healthy foods and stay active.

It's not enough to eat healthy foods and exercise for only a few weeks or even several months. You have to commit to living healthy for life. Otherwise, you risk gaining the weight back.

As you explore diet programs, focus on losing weight gradually and maintaining it over the long run – not on losing weight as fast as possible. Choose a variety of healthy foods and allow yourself an occasional indulgence; just have it in moderation.

Try to be active by incorporating extra activity into your daily routine. When choosing exercises, pick things you enjoy doing. Maintain flexible, realistic goals that allow you a longer period of time to achieve.

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As you start your weight management program, you will probably have an occasional setback. Instead of giving up, simply start fresh the next day. Remember that you're changing your lifestyle. It won't happen all at once, but stick to your healthy lifestyle and the results will be worth it!



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