



WEIGHT LOSS AND HEALTHY LIVING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

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[William Shiel Jr., M.D., F.A.C.P.](#)

Chief Medical Editor, MedicineNet.com

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INTRODUCTION

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Introduction to Weight Loss

Whether you are trying to lose 5 pounds or more than 50, the same principles determine how much weight you lose and how fast your weight loss will occur. Remembering the following simple guidelines and putting them into practice can lead to weight loss without the aid of any special diet plans, books, or medications.

Our body weight is determined by the amount of energy that we take in as food and the amount of energy we expend in the activities of our day. Energy is measured in calories. If your weight remains constant, you are probably taking in the same amount of calories that you burn each day. If you're slowly gaining weight over time, it is likely that your caloric intake is greater than the number of calories you burn through your daily activities.



Everyone is in control of the amount of food he or she consumes each day, so our intake of calories is something we can control. To a major degree, we can also control our output of energy, or the number of calories we burn each day. The number of calories we burn each day is dependent upon

- our basal metabolic rate (BMR), the number of calories we burn per hour simply by being alive and maintaining body functions
- and our level of physical activity.

For some people, due to genetic (inherited) factors or other conditions, the resting metabolic rate (BMR) can be slightly higher or lower than average. Our weight also plays a role in determining how many calories we burn at rest -- **the more calories are required to maintain your body in its present state, the greater your body weight.** A 100-pound person requires less energy (food) to maintain body weight than a person who weighs 200 pounds.

Lifestyle and work habits partially determine how many calories we need each day. Someone whose job involves heavy physical labor will naturally burn more calories in a day than someone who sits at a desk most of the day (a sedentary job). For people who do not have jobs that require intense physical activity, [exercise](#) or increased physical activity can increase the number of calories burned.

As a rough estimate, an average woman 31-50 years of age who leads a sedentary lifestyle needs about 1,800 calories per day to maintain a normal weight. A man of the same age requires about 2,200 calories. Participating in a moderate level of physical activity (exercising three to five days per week) requires about 200 additional calories per day.

How Do You Lose Weight?



The most effective method for weight loss is reducing the number of calories you consume while increasing the number of calories you burn through physical activity. To lose 1 pound, you need an expenditure of approximately 3,500 calories. You can achieve this either by cutting back on your food intake, by increasing physical activity, or ideally, by doing both.

For example, if you consume 500 extra calories per day for one week without changing your activity level, you will gain 1 pound in weight (seven days

multiplied by 500 calories equals 3,500 calories, or the number of calories resulting in a 1-pound [weight gain](#)). Likewise, if you eat 500 fewer calories each day for a week or burn 500 calories per day through exercise for one week, you will lose 1 pound.

Examples of calorie content of some popular foods and beverages include the following:

- one slice of original-style crust pepperoni pizza - 230 calories
- one glass of dry white wine - 160 calories
- one can of cola - 150 calories
- one quarter-pound hamburger with cheese - 500 calories
- one jumbo banana nut muffin - 580 calories

Any activities you do throughout the day are added to your BMR (basal metabolic rate) to determine the total number of calories you burn each day. For example, a 170-pound person who spends 45 minutes [walking](#) briskly will burn about 300 calories. The same time spent on housecleaning burns about 200 calories, and mowing the lawn for 45 minutes consumes around 275 calories. For more, please read the [Calories Burned During Fitness Activities](#) article.

How Fast Should You Expect to Lose Weight?

Most experts agree that a safe, healthy rate of weight loss is one to 1 ½ pounds per week. Modification of eating habits along with regular exercise is the most effective way to lose weight over the long term. It is also the ideal way to ensure that the weight stays off.



Starvation diets may result in rapid weight loss, but this weight loss is almost impossible to maintain for most people. When food intake is severely restricted (below approximately 1,200 calories per day), the body begins to adapt to this state of poor [nutrition](#) by reducing its metabolic rate, potentially making it even more difficult to lose weight. It is also possible to experience hunger pangs, bouts of [hypoglycemia](#), [headaches](#), and mood changes from overly stringent [dieting](#). These symptoms can result in binge eating and weight gain. Since a highly restrictive diet is almost impossible to maintain for a long time, people who attempt to starve themselves thin often start to gain weight again when they stop dieting.

The No-diet Approach to Weight Control

By adopting sensible eating habits and practicing portion control, you can eat nutritious foods so that you take in as many calories as you need to maintain your health and well-being at your ideal weight. Often, weight loss occurs on its own simply when you start making better food choices, such as avoiding

- processed foods,
- sugar-laden foods,
- white bread and pasta (substitute whole-grain varieties instead),
- foods with a high percentage of calories from fat,
- and [alcoholic drinks](#).



While nothing is absolutely forbidden, when you do succumb to temptation, keep the portion size small and add a bit more exercise to your daily workout.

By replacing some unwise food choices with healthy ones, you'll be cutting back on calories. If you add some moderate physical activity, you have the perfect weight-loss plan without the need for special or inconvenient (and often expensive) diet plans.

Read full article:

http://www.medicinenet.com/weight_loss/article.htm

Diet Plans and Programs



A calorie is a calorie, the advice goes. Eat too many ... gain weight. Eat fewer ... lose weight. But many believe weight loss is more than a calorie equation, with so-called new-and-improved ways to lose weight being ever popular. Americans spend an estimated \$42 billion annually on weight loss foods, products, and services. With that much money at stake, it's no surprise there are an overwhelming number of "fad" diets and other weight-loss products on the market.

The following review examines the advantages and disadvantages of several popular diet plans. Many of the diets emphasize the restriction of one nutrient as the basis for their plan. The other food groups and nutrients are allowed in limited or unlimited quantities, depending on the plan. Weight loss is impossible without a calorie restriction, so each diet has to provide fewer calories than your body needs to maintain your weight. Any diet that claims otherwise can end up causing weight gain. Various diet plans are summarized below to help you learn to review them for safety and effectiveness.

The Atkins Diet

The Zone Diet

Ornish Diet

Nutrisystem

The Pritikin Principle

The South Beach Diet

Jenny Craig

Weight Watchers

Review all diet plans:

http://www.medicinenet.com/diet_plans_and_programs/article.htm

Healthy Eating



Most Americans consume too many calories and not enough nutrients, according to the latest revision to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Currently, the typical American [diet](#) is low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar. As a result, more Americans than ever are overweight, [obese](#), and at increased risk for chronic diseases such as [heart disease](#), [high blood pressure](#), [diabetes](#), and certain [cancers](#).

Of course old habits are hard to break, and the notion of change can seem overwhelming. But it can be done with planning and a gradual approach, says Dee Sandquist, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and manager of [nutrition](#) and diabetes at the Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver, Wash.

"Some people can improve eating habits on their own, while others need a registered dietitian to guide them through the process," Sandquist says. You may need a dietitian if you are trying to lose weight or if you have a health condition such as [osteoporosis](#), high blood pressure, high [cholesterol](#), or diabetes.

So what if you're feeling trapped by a diet full of fast-food burgers and cookies? You can work your way out slowly but surely. Here are tips to move your eating habits in the right direction.

Look at What You Eat Now

Write down what you eat for a few days to get a good picture of what you're taking in, suggests Cindy Moore, director of nutrition therapy at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. "By looking at what you eat and how much you're eating, you can figure out what adjustments you need to make," she says.

Sometimes she asks patients to write down what they are feeling. Were you nervous, happy, or sad when you ate five slices of pizza in one sitting? "The very nature of writing things down in a food diary can help patients make changes," Moore says. "Someone will tell me, 'I didn't want to have to write that I ate nine cookies, so I ate two instead.'"

Start With Small Changes

You don't have to go cold turkey. In the end, you want to achieve a long-term healthy lifestyle. Small changes over time are the most likely to stick. "If you want to eat more vegetables, then try to add one more serving by sneaking it in," Moore says. "Add bits of broccoli to something you already eat like pizza or soup. If you need more whole grains, add barley, whole wheat pasta, or brown rice to your When you think about what you need to get more of, the other things tend to fall into place, Moore says. "If you have some baby carrots with lunch or add a banana to your cereal in the morning, you're going to feel full longer." You won't need a food that's high in sugar or fat an hour later, she adds.

Also, look for healthier versions of what you like to eat. If you like luncheon meat sandwiches, try a reduced-fat version. If you like the convenience of frozen dinners, look for ones with lower sodium. If you love fast-food meals, try a salad as your side dish instead of french fries.

"Pick one or two changes to start with," Moore says. "Once the changes have become habits, which usually happens in about two to four weeks, then try adding one or two more. In six to 12 months, you'll find that you've made substantial changes."

Read full article:

<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=61982>

Nutrition, Food & Recipes

"You are what you eat." It's an expression we've heard all of our lives. But is it really that simple? In a word, "yes." Our choice of foods has a major impact on our health and the health of our families. Did you know that there are such things as healthy snacks? There are, and you should know where to find them.

A home stocked with healthy foods starts with a head stocked with the knowledge of proper nutrition. Knowing what ingredients to buy is a good start, but knowing how to find those foods at the grocery store, how to read food labels properly, and how to prepare your meals in the most healthful way is important, too.

You don't have to give up taste and satisfaction in order to eat healthy. We have helpful information on the fundamentals of healthy cooking, complete with tips, tricks, and tools to help you create delicious and nutritious meals in your own kitchen.

Browse a comprehensive collection of articles related to nutrition, food and recipes in our A-Z list:

http://www.medicinenet.com/nutrition_food_and_recipes/article.htm

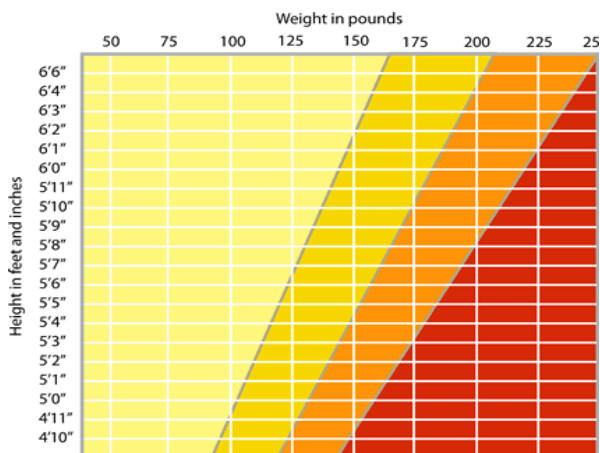
Exercise and Fitness

Are you getting started with an exercise program? Hoping to improve your existing routines or find new workout options? Did you know that a complete plan consists of three basic elements: aerobic fitness, muscle strength/endurance and flexibility? How do you assess your current fitness level before you begin? How do you know how much exercise you should do, or whether you should see a doctor before you start?



Our Healthy Living channel provides in-depth answers to these questions, along with guidelines to help you develop a fitness program that's right for you. With these exercise and fitness tips, you can learn to gauge how hard and how often you should exercise, and get yourself started on the road to better fitness today.

Why do you use the BMI, and is it useful for weight lifters?



The [Body Mass Index \(BMI\)](#) is a simple way for men and women to estimate body fat based on their height and weight. From the BMI, it is possible to determine your healthy weight range.

One of the limitations of BMI is that it can overpredict overweight or obesity in people who are lean and muscular. For instance, someone who is 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs 220 pounds, with 12% body fat, would be considered obese based on BMI standards. Obviously, someone with 12% body fat is not obese.

The scientists who developed the BMI guidelines readily admit to this limitation. But their rationale is that most Americans are not lean and muscular and so for most people, the BMI is an accurate assessment of body fat and increased health risk.

It is important to know that people who are classified as overweight or obese can still be healthy as long as they are fit. In one well-known study, fit people with BMIs that classified them as overweight or obese were healthier and lived longer than unfit people who were at normal weight.

The BMI, for the majority of Americans, is the most up-to-date and scientifically sound method available for determining healthy weight.

Should I hold off on weight training until I lose weight?

Absolutely not. Lifting weights will not only help you lose weight, but maintain the loss. Here's why:

- Muscle keeps your metabolism revved up, burning calories, fat, and glucose (sugar).
- When you lose weight, up to 25% of the loss may come from muscle, resulting in a slower metabolism. Weight lifting will help preserve or rebuild any muscle you lose by dieting.
- Muscle helps you with aerobic exercise. The stronger you are, the better you will be at any aerobic activity.
- Weight training improves your body's muscle-to-fat ratio (you end up with less body fat and more muscle), which improves both your health and your fitness level.
- Gaining muscle will help you look better as you define and tone your physique.
- Building strength helps you feel good about yourself. Although the scale may show a slight weight gain when you start lifting weights (usually five pounds or less), you probably won't look heavier because the gain is in muscle, and your clothes may even fit more loosely.

Read full article:

<http://www.medicinenet.com/exercise/article.htm>

Workout Routines and New Ideas for Fitness

Fitness isn't just a plan you embark on, along with a diet, to lose weight. It's a lifelong love of movement that will help you maintain good health and the physique you want. We've compiled some workout routines and ideas to help you along your way.

These recommendations will help you evolve your workout routine and activity plan. The theme is picking something you love doing, and nurturing your feelings every step of the way.

After you read through these workout options, consider journaling to explore your fitness habits, desires, and goals.

- Level One Workout Ideas: Expand Your Definition of Exercise
- Level Two Workout Ideas: Find an Entry-level Activity
- Level Three Workout Ideas: Choosing the Right Exercise Program
- Level Four Workout Ideas: Maintain the Workout Routine

Read full article:

http://www.medicinenet.com/workout_routines_and_ideas/article.htm

Types of Exercise

What if someone told you that a thinner, healthier, and longer life was within your grasp? Sound too good to be true? According to a wealth of research, exercise is the silver bullet for a better quality of life.

Not only does regular exercise aid in weight loss, it reduces your risk for several chronic diseases and conditions. Finding activities that you enjoy and that become part of your daily routine is the key to a long and healthy life.

Aerobic Exercise	Walking
Cycling	Weight Lifting
Interval Training	Mind & Body Fitness
Pedometers	Pilates
Running	Tai Chi
Senior Exercise	Yoga
Swimming	



Browse a comprehensive collection of articles related to exercise and fitness in our A-Z list:

http://www.medicinenet.com/exercise_and_fitness/article.htm

Healthy Habits

Do a Little, Get a Lot

The notion that good health can come in small tidbits is not really new. Research showing that making small changes can add up to a big difference has been quietly accumulating for a while.

For example, a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2004 found that adding just 30 minutes of walking per day was enough to prevent weight gain and encourage moderate [weight loss](#).

And if 30 minutes is still too big a bite? Another study, published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, found that three brisk 10-minute walks per day were as effective as a daily 30-minute walk in decreasing risk factors for [heart disease](#).

But it's not only in [fitness](#) where small changes can make a difference. The same principles apply at the kitchen table (and the office snack bar).

"Reducing fat intake, cutting down on sugar, eating a piece of fruit instead of a candy bar -- over time, these things can make a difference," says Nutritionist and [diabetes](#) educator Fran Grossman, RD, CDE.

Stealth Health Approach: Get Healthy Without Really Trying

Tempted to give "Stealth Health" a try? Pick any three of the following 12 changes and incorporating them into your life for four days. When you feel comfortable with those changes, pick three others. Once you've incorporated all dozen changes, you should start to feel a difference within a couple of weeks.

To Improve Nutrition:

1. Buy whole foods -- whether canned, frozen, or fresh from the farm -- and use them in place of processed foods whenever possible.
2. Reject foods and drinks made with corn syrup, a calorie-dense, nutritionally empty sweetener that many believe is worse for the body than sugar, says Katz.
3. Start each dinner with a mixed green salad. Not only will it help reduce your appetite for more caloric foods, but it also will automatically add veggies to your meal.

To Improve Physical Fitness:

1. Do a squat every time you pick something up. Instead of bending over in the usual way, which stresses the lower back, bend your knees and squat. This forces you to use your leg muscles and will build strength.
2. Every time you stop at a traffic light (or the bus does), tighten your thighs and butt muscles and release as many times as you can. (Don't worry, no one will see it!) This will firm leg and buttock muscles, improve blood flow -- and keep you mildly amused!
3. Whenever you're standing on a line, lift one foot a half-inch off the ground. The extra stress on your opposite foot, ankle, calf and thigh, plus your buttocks, will help firm and tone muscles. Switch feet every few minutes.

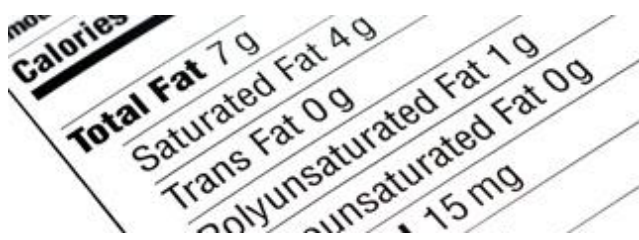
To Improve Stress Control:

1. Give your partner a hug every day before work. Studies show this simple act can help you remain calm when chaos ensues during your day, Katz says.
2. Have a good cry. It can boost your immune system, reduce levels of stress hormones, eliminate [depression](#), and help you think more clearly.
3. Twice a day, breathe deeply for three to five minutes.

To Improve Sleep:

1. Sprinkle just-washed sheets and pillowcases with lavender water. The scent has been shown in studies to promote relaxation, which can lead to better sleep.
2. Buy a new pillow. Katz says that studies show that pillows with an indent in the center can enhance sleep quality and reduce [neck pain](#). Also, try a "cool" pillow -- one containing either all-natural fibers or a combination of sodium sulfate and ceramic fibers that help keep your head cool.
3. Eat a handful of walnuts before bed. You'll be giving yourself a boost of [fiber](#) and essential fatty acids along with the amino acid tryptophan -- a natural sleep-inducer.

Diet and Nutrition Quiz



Q: According to the USDA, there is no difference between a "portion" and a "serving."

A: False.

A "portion" is how much food you choose to eat at one time, whether in a restaurant, from a package, or in your own kitchen. Versus a portion, a "serving" size is the amount of food listed on a product's Nutrition Facts. Sometimes, the portion size and serving size match; sometimes they do not.



Q: People with a body mass index (BMI) value of _____ or more are considered obese.

A: 30.

BMI values between 18.5 and 24.9 are considered to be a "normal" or "healthy" weight. BMI values between 25 and 29.9 are considered "overweight," while BMI values of 30 and above are considered "obese." BMIs above 25 are unhealthy and have been shown to increase the risk of certain chronic diseases. BMIs under 18.5 are considered "underweight."



Q: Diet is a major contributor to overweight and obesity. How many U.S. adults would you guess are overweight or obese?

A: Nearly 70% of all U.S. adults are overweight or obese.

More than two-thirds (68%) of all U.S. adults are overweight or obese. This breaks down to 64.1% of U.S. women and 72.3% of U.S. men.

Take the Diet and Nutrition Quiz:

http://www.medicinenet.com/diet_and_nutrition_quiz/quiz.htm

Diet & Weight Loss Pictures Slideshow: The Best Diet Tips Ever



Tip No. 13: Lose weight slowly

If you're losing weight but not as fast as you'd like, don't get discouraged. Dropping pounds takes time, just like gaining them did. Experts suggest setting a realistic weight loss goal of about one to two pounds a week. If you set your expectations too high, you may give up when you don't lose weight fast enough. Remember, you start seeing health benefits when you've lost just 5%-10% of your body weight.

http://www.medicinenet.com/diet_pictures_slideshow/article.htm

Related Slideshows



Weight Gain Shockers: Surprising Reasons You're Gaining Weight

What if you're doing everything the same as you always do (even dieting and exercising) and your weight still goes up? Watch this slideshow which explains the possible causes of sudden weight gain such as medications, sleep issues and more.

http://www.medicinenet.com/weight_gain_shockers_pictures_slideshow/article.htm



7 Most Effective Exercises

Does your workout work? These seven exercises deliver results - whether you do them at a gym or at home. Watch this slideshow workout and pay close attention to the form demonstrated by the personal trainer in these slides to start your weight loss and training to better physical health.

http://www.medicinenet.com/7_most_effective_exercises_slideshow/article.htm



10 Ways to Boost Your Metabolism

Boosting metabolism is the holy grail of weight watchers, but how fast your body burns calories depends on several factors. Watch this slideshow to increase your metabolism and speed up the rate at which you burn calories and lose weight.

http://www.medicinenet.com/weight_loss_boost_metabolism_pictures_slideshow/article.htm

Suggested Reading on Healthy Living

Health & Living Center



Butt Exercises Pictures Slideshow

Want a rear view that kicks butt? Watch this slideshow to learn the right exercises, cardio, and style choices that can help in the quest for the perfect butt.

[View the butt exercises pictures slideshow»](#)

Health & Living Topics	Health & Living Medications	Slideshow Pictures	Images & Quizzes	Vitamins
Benefits of Exercise				
Caffeine				
Caffeine FAQs				
Celiac Disease: Gluten Free Diet				
Cellulite				
Cleansing and Detox Diets				
Compartment Syndrome				
Cycling (Biking or Bicycling)				
Diet & Nutrition FAQs				



Weight Loss

Successful weight loss and healthy weight management depend on sensible goals and expectations. Most people should lose weight gradually and check with your physician before beginning a weight loss program.

[Read more about weight loss »](#)

Visit the MedicineNet Healthy Living Center:

http://www.medicinenet.com/health_and_living/focus.htm

Suggested Reading on Healthy Living Across the WebMD Network



Living Healthy on WebMD.com

<http://www.webmd.com/living-healthy>



Health & Living Center on MedicineNet.com

http://www.medicinenet.com/health_and_living/focus.htm



Health Topics on eMedicineHealth.com

http://www.emedicinehealth.com/health-topics/article_em.htm



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