



Managing Your Weight

Each year, Americans spend billions of dollars on strategies to lose weight. Despite this, obesity in the United States is on the increase and has been on the increase for decades.

Carrying too much weight is bad for your health. It means, among other things, an increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

The Epidemic of Obesity

Obesity in the United States is now a leading public health problem. The United States has the highest rates of obesity in the developed world. From 1980 to 2002, obesity doubled in adults and overweight prevalence tripled in children and adolescents. This problem continues to get worse. Consider:

- Obesity is now an issue for one in every three adult Americans
- Obesity causes at least 300,000 deaths in the U.S. each year
- The cost of obesity in the U.S. alone amounts to more than \$100 billion each year.

Measures of Weight

There are several ways in which weight is measured and obesity is determined. The most common measure today is something known as “Body Mass Index” or “BMI.” Another important measure is the size of your waist. Both can help predict problems down the road.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

How do you know whether or not you’re at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese? You can use a tool—called the Body Mass Index or BMI—to help find out. It is a calculation that takes both your weight and your height into account. It’s not foolproof, but it is helpful in determining whether or not you need to do something about your weight.

An easy way to determine your BMI is to use a BMI chart, which is shown below. Find your height and weight on this chart, and determine your BMI results and health status (healthy, overweight, or obese) in a matter of seconds.

Body Mass Index (BMI)												
Height	Healthy		Overweight					Obese				
	19	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	35	40	45	50
Weight in Pounds												
4'10"	91	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	167	191	215	239
4'11"	94	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	173	198	222	247
5'0"	97	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	179	204	230	255
5'1"	100	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	185	211	238	264
5'2"	104	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	191	218	246	273
5'3"	107	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	197	225	254	282
5'4"	110	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	204	232	262	291
5'5"	114	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	210	240	270	300
5'6"	118	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	216	247	278	309
5'7"	121	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	223	255	287	319
5'8"	125	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	230	262	295	328
5'9"	128	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	236	270	304	338
5'10"	132	167	174	181	188	195	202	210	243	278	313	348
5'11"	136	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	250	286	322	358
6'0"	140	177	184	191	199	206	213	220	258	294	331	368
6'1"	144	182	189	197	204	212	219	226	265	302	340	378
6'2"	148	186	194	202	210	218	225	232	272	311	350	389
6'3"	152	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	279	319	359	399
6'4"	156	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	287	328	369	410

People with a BMI between 25 and 29.9 are considered overweight while people with a BMI of 30 or above are considered obese. For example, as shown in this table, an adult who is 5 feet 9 inches tall and weights 196 pounds will have a BMI of 29, meaning he/she is overweight and almost to the “obese” category.

A BMI of less than 18.5 indicates that a person is underweight. A BMI nearing 15 is usually used as an indicator for starvation and the health risks involved, with a BMI below 17.5 being an informal criterion for the diagnosis of anorexia nervosa.

Waist Size

Where you store fat in your body is very important.

- **Pear-shaped people** tend to store fat around their hips.
- **Apple-shaped people** tend to store fat around the belly.

It's better to be "pear-shaped" than "apple-shaped." Those with apple shapes are more likely to have weight-related diseases.

Measure the size of your waist—right at the top of your hip bone and across your belly button. You are at higher risk if you are:

- A man with a waist larger than 40 inches
- A woman with a waist larger than 35 inches

Another technique is to take your height in inches and divide by 2. That should be your target waist size (or below). For example, a six-foot man would be 72 inches in height. He should try to keep his waist size at 36 inches (72 divided by 2 = 36) or lower.

Eating Healthier Foods

Eating healthier foods is important to your overall health and well-being. It's especially important to eat healthier foods to control weight. For example, the more whole grains and fiber in your diet, the more "full" you will feel and you'll be less inclined to overeat.

Watching Portion Sizes

Many of us eat more than our bodies need. Often, it's because we eat too fast (not letting our stomachs tell our brain in time that we're getting full) or because we simply eat portion sizes that are too large. Even when eating healthy foods, you can gain weight if you eat too much.

Here are a few tips to help:

1. **Pay close attention to how much food is on your plate.** Do you really need to completely fill a plate in order for you to be satisfied?
2. **Use smaller plates.** It's been pointed out that the size of American dinner plates is often larger than the plates used in other parts of the world. This causes us to put more on our plates than we really need.
3. **Eat more slowly and chew your food well.** This will help you realize when you're really getting full.
4. **If you eat out, be especially careful of portion sizes.** Don't be afraid to ask for a "doggie bag" if you find you are served too much. Many restaurants also offer lunch-size portions for dinner and, for many people, this smaller size is more than enough to satisfy them. Finally, try to avoid buffets where the inclination is to load up a plate to "get your money's worth." If you do go to a buffet, ensure you're filling your plate with healthier foods.

The graphic on the following page illustrates portion sizes to keep in mind.

Keep Your Portions In Proportion!

1/2 your plate should be fruits and vegetables

1/2

(5-9 Serving Portions Each Day)

Apples, oranges, pears
(the size of a tennis ball)

A potato
(the size of a computer mouse)

1/2 cup of chopped/cooked/raw vegetables
(the size of a baseball)

A cup of raw leafy vegetables
(the size of a softball)

1/2 cup of juice



Use fats, oils, and sweets sparingly. A teaspoon of butter is 36 calories!

1/4 or less should be lean meat or protein

1/4

(2 serving portions each day)

A fish, poultry or lean meat serving
(the size of a deck of cards)

One egg

1/2 cup of cooked dry beans

1/3 cup of nuts
(a small handful)



1/4

(6 Serving Portions Each Day, 3 Should Be Whole Grains)

One slice of bread

1/2 English muffin or small pita pocket

1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
(the size of a fist)

3/4 cup cold cereal



You'll Keep Down Your Weight!

Tips for Controlling Your Eating

Here are some tips for controlling your eating:

- Eat a good, healthy breakfast every day, and do so within two hours of getting up. This starts your day off right and often helps reduce hunger throughout the rest of the day. Studies have shown that those who skip breakfast often have weight problems.
- Don't skip meals. This just slows down your metabolism and often can make you very hungry for when the next meal is served. You might even consider a light, healthy snack an hour or so before a meal to avoid overeating later.
- Drink water or nonfat milk with meals instead of soda.
- Drink water throughout the day. Often, what we believe is hunger is really thirst. By drinking water, you'll not only help your body function better, but you'll feel fuller throughout the day.
- Use a small dinner plate.
- Replace unhealthy foods with healthier ones. After a period of time, you'll start to wonder why you ever liked the unhealthy foods in the first place!
- Keep only healthy foods around the house. If you are to indulge in less-healthy foods from time to time, do so when only you are not at home.

Getting Active

This subject will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but getting and staying active is key to weight loss. For example, if you just add a 30-minute brisk walk to your routine four days a week, you may increase the rate at which you lose weight.

Remember, however, that if you are going to start an exercise program, it might make sense to check with your doctor first. You might not need to see a doctor if you're simply adding some modest exercise (such as walking) to your daily routine, however.

When starting any sort of exercise program, it's always a good idea to start out slowly. That way, the exercise will be more enjoyable and you'll be more likely to continue it. You can increase the intensity or duration of the exercise later as your fitness level improves.

Steps to Lose Weight

Here are some key steps for those who want to lose weight.

- **Make a commitment.** Focus on all the good things about losing weight. You might even share your weight loss plans with friends and family you know will be supportive.
- **Set a realistic goal.** Don't try to lose 30 pounds in one month. You didn't become overweight overnight and won't lose weight in a healthy and permanent way if you try to lose too much weight at once. Aim to lose 1 or 2 pounds per week. And make sure your goal should be attainable as well. If you have 50 pounds to lose, even losing 10 pounds can do wonders for your health and mental outlook and motivate you to keep going.
- **Talk to your doctor.** Your doctor can help you determine how much weight is healthy for you to lose.
- **Eat healthier foods.** It's amazing how just this step can result in weight loss over time.
- **Stay active.** Just cutting calories won't help you lose weight permanently. And regular activity can help you lose body fat and build muscle. Muscle burns more calories than fat does.
- **Change your lifestyle.** This isn't as hard as it might sound, but you have to change the behaviors that made you overweight in the first place. Look at your daily routines (e.g., not eating at breaks, eating unhealthy snacks while sitting in a chair and watching sporting events) and decide to make changes where needed.

Resources You Can Use

Here are some organizations and websites you can go to for more information:

Organization	Website
5 A Day for Better Health	<u>www.5aday.gov</u>
American Council on Exercise	<u>www.acefitness.org</u>
FoodFit	<u>www.foodfit.com</u>
Healthier US Initiative	<u>www.healthierus.gov</u>
Kidnetic.com	<u>www.kidnetic.com/</u>
KidsHealth	<u>www.kidshealth.org</u>
Shape Up America	<u>www.shapeup.org/shape/steps.php</u>
Small Step	<u>www.smallstep.gov/</u>