

Weight Management

Do you need to attain an ideal weight to be healthy?

There is a lot of scientific data that tells us a modest weight loss of 5 to 10% can be good for your health. A modest weight loss can improve and even control many common health concerns. Some of these concerns include high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and sleep problems.

What is a good diet to follow?

For many of us, a diet means we deprive ourselves of food and push ourselves to be on a rigid eating and exercise program. This often implies a short-term change, which takes only a minor effort over a short amount of time. What is really needed is a change in lifestyle. This means making slow changes in eating and working out that can be maintained over the long term. It involves starting new habits and it will take a bit of hard work to make these new habits a part of your daily life.

How much weight am I likely to lose?

Most people have high hopes that make it hard to measure success. More people are able to lose, and maintain, a 10% weight loss than a 30% weight loss. Do not forget that the body seems to defend its weight. But if you make changes that you can maintain in your eating and workout habits, you will likely lose weight.

Weight change rarely occurs at the same rate over time. There will be weeks when your weight will not change even with your best efforts. You can even expect your weight to increase at times. This occurs mainly with changes in your routine such as a vacation, a birthday or a holiday party. A small amount of weight gain is a minor setback in a long-term plan or goal.

Try not to be too concerned about weight gain or the lack of progress. We often expect too much of ourselves. What matters is what your weight is today, compared with what your weight was when you started.

If I increase exercise will I lose weight?

Many people report losing less weight than expected through programs that focus only on working out. Most studies show that a “working out only” weight loss plan results in an average loss of 4 to 6 pounds. This is good because chances are that the pounds lost are from fat. But, in order to lose more, you have to combine eating less with moving more. Eat less to take off the pounds, move more to keep the pounds from coming back over time.

Exercise has many helpful benefits such as better moods and energy level. Working out is a habit. If you are just starting to exercise, getting in the habit is more important than what you do and how much you do. It may take you weeks or even months to get into the habit of walking 4 to 5 days a week for 30 to 45 minutes. Regular exercise is a must in order to have better health and long-term weight goals. It will also help to improve:

- Muscle tone
- Bone health
- Cardiovascular fitness
- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar and cholesterol levels

What about all the diets I read about?

Any claims that you can lose weight with ease are false. Very low-calorie diets are very risky. They should be done only under medical advice and support. They can deplete you of needed nutrients and could be harmful.

Fad diets rarely have any long-lasting effects. Sudden and major changes in your eating patterns are hard to sustain over time. Also, so-called “crash” diets often send people into a cycle of quick weight loss, followed by a “rebound” weight gain once normal eating resumes. Most experts agree that for weight loss to last, you must change your lifestyle and behavior.

How do I get started?

- Focus your efforts on working out. Find a workout program that you are most likely to stick with.
- Work to remove (not eliminate) certain foods from your diet. Limit high fat foods and high sugar drinks.
- Eat regular meals. Be sure to include breakfast in your eating plan. Think about eating smaller portion sizes.
- Be aware of your problem areas (emotional eating, stress eating and social eating).
- Accept slow but steady rates of weight loss progress.
- Find ways to stay on track despite roadblocks such as an injury, work, and family demands.
- Enlist support of helpful people around you. Recruit people who have healthy lifestyles to support you in these healthy changes.

- If you have more than 20 pounds to lose, consult with your health care provider. Ask about meeting with a dietitian and a workout expert to support you during this time.
- Goal-setting: Set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals.
- Plan ahead: Schedule your workouts and plan your meals and snacks.

Efforts should be focused on both exercise and nutrition for long term progress.

Who to Call

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics and American Family Children’s Hospital (AFCH)
(608) 890-5500.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation **(608) 287-2770.**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Clinical Nutrition Services Department and the Department of Nursing. HF#409