Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan

Better Health and You

TIPS FOR ADULTS

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES • USA

NIH National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

WIN Weight-control Information Network

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LIFESPAN TIP SHEET FOR ADULTS (see tear-off)

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is part of the Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Across Your Lifespan Series from the Weight-control Information Network (WIN). The series offers health tips for readers at various life stages, including adulthood, pregnancy, parenthood, and later life. The entire series is also available in Spanish.

Visit WIN's website to view all WIN publications at *http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov.*

How can I use this booklet?

This publication is one of many handy guides from WIN that can help you and your family. This booklet gives you tips on how to eat better and be more active.

Eating healthy foods and doing physical activity on a regular basis may help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. They may also help prevent some health problems.

Start taking steps now to move more and eat better—for yourself and your family!

Practice staying physically active as a family.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

More than two-thirds of American adults are considered overweight or obese. Excess weight may lead to heart disease and diabetes. Creating and following plans for healthy eating and physical activity may help you improve your health.

What is a healthy weight?

Body mass index (BMI) measures your weight in relation to your height.

Body mass index (BMI) is one way to tell whether you are at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese. It measures your weight in relation to your height.

A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is in the healthy range. A person with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 is considered overweight, and someone with a BMI of 30 or greater is considered obese.

LEARN MORE

Go to the tear-off tip sheet at the back of this booklet to find a BMI table you can use to find your BMI score. You may also check the Resources section at the end of this booklet for a link to an online tool for measuring BMI.

Another way to find out if you are at risk for health problems caused by overweight and obesity is to measure your waist. If you are a woman and your waist is more than 35 inches, or if you are a man and your waist is more than 40 inches, your risk of disease may be higher.

HEALTH RISKS OF BEING OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE DURING PREGNANCY

Extra weight can cause these health problems with pregnancy:

- gestational diabetes (high blood sugar during pregnancy)
- high blood pressure
- increased risk for cesarean section (C-section)

Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns. You may also want to see the WIN brochure *Fit for Two: Tips for Pregnancy* available at *http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov*.

What are the health risks of being overweight or obese?

Extra weight may increase your risk for

- type 2 diabetes
- heart disease and stroke
- high blood cholesterol
- high blood pressure
- kidney disease
- non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (a fat buildup in the livers of people who drink little or no alcohol)
- problems with pregnancy (see box)
- certain cancers

Excess weight may increase your risk for heart disease and diabetes.

Why do people become overweight?

Over time, if you eat and drink more calories than your body uses or "burns off," your body may store the extra energy, leading to weight gain. Many factors may play a part in weight gain.

The World around You

Communities, homes, and workplaces can all affect people's health decisions. Foods high in fat, added sugar, and calories are easy to find. They also often cost less than healthier choices like fruits and vegetables. Also, many people lack access to safe places where they can be physically active. On top of that, many tools and devices, like remote controls and drive-in banks, make it easy to be inactive.

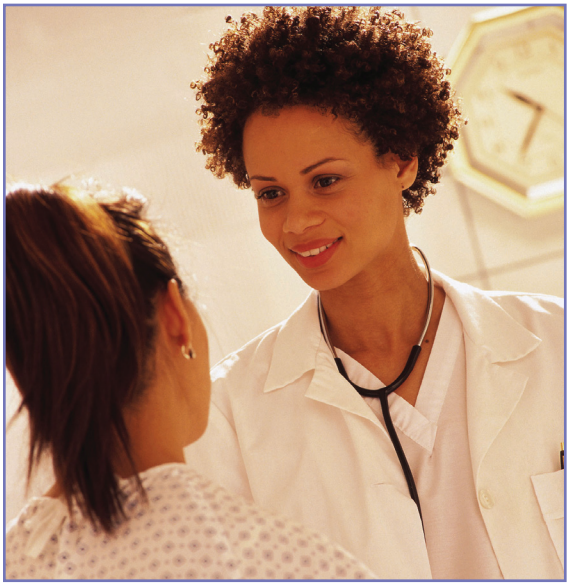
Check out your local farmers market for deals on fruits and vegetables.

Families

Overweight and obesity tend to run in families. Research shows that genes can play a role in obesity. Families also share eating habits that can affect how, when, and what we eat.

Medicine

Some medicines, such as steroids (drugs used to reduce swelling) and some drugs for depression and other psychiatric disorders, may lead to weight gain. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about the side effects of any medicines you are taking.



Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about the side effects of any medicines you are taking.

Emotions

Many people eat when they are bored, sad, angry, or stressed, even when they are not hungry.

Although you may not be able to control all the factors that lead to overweight, making small changes to your eating and physical activity habits may improve your health.

HEALTHY EATING

Paying attention to what, when, how often, and how much you eat can be the first step to helping you eat better.

What kinds of foods should I eat?

Every 5 years the Government releases dietary guidelines that recommend what kinds of food to eat and to limit so you can have a healthy eating plan.

Eat more of these nutrient-rich foods

Nutrients—like vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber—nourish our bodies by giving them what they need to be healthy. The guidelines advise adults to eat the following foods because they are rich in nutrients:

- fruits and vegetables
- whole grains, like oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice
- seafood, lean meats, poultry, and eggs

Eat more nutrient-rich foods like the ones pictured here.

- fat-free or low-fat milk and cheese, or substitutes (like soy or rice milk) that are high in vitamin D and calcium
- beans, nuts, and seeds

Eat less of these foods

Some foods have many calories but few of the vitamins, minerals, or fiber your body needs. Added sugars, solid fats, and refined grains pack a lot of calories into food but do not add nutrients. The Government's dietary guidelines recommend that you limit foods such as these:

- sugar-sweetened drinks and desserts
- foods with butter, shortening, or other fats that are solid at room temperature
- white bread, rice, and pasta that are made from refined grains

How can I follow a healthy eating plan?

These tips may help you stay on track with your plan to eat better:

- **Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand.** Whether you are at home, at work, or on the go, healthy snacks may help to combat hunger and prevent overeating.
- **Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day.** Choose dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, collards, and mustard greens, and reds and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes.

EASY SNACK IDEAS

- low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- fresh, canned, or dried fruit
- sliced vegetables or baby carrots

- **Eat breakfast every day.** People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day.
- **Choose whole grains more often.** Try whole-grain breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur.
- **Choose fresh fruit more often than fruit juice.** Fruit juice has little or no fiber, the calories may be high, and many juices have added sugar.
- **Use fats and oils sparingly.** Olive, canola, and peanut oils; avocados; nuts and seeds; olives; and fish provide heart-healthy fat as well as vitamins and minerals.
- **Limit foods and beverages that are high in sugar.**

QUICK BREAKFAST IDEAS

- oatmeal with low-fat or fat-free milk or a soy-based drink, topped with walnuts and fresh or dried fruit
- a slice of whole-wheat toast with a thin piece of low-fat cheese
- fruit smoothie made with frozen fruit and low-fat yogurt
- high-fiber, low-sugar cereal with a soy-based beverage or fat-free milk

How much should I eat?

How much you should eat depends on your genes, sex, age, and how active you are. In general, men need more calories than women do, and younger adults need more calories than adults in midlife and older. At all ages, adults who are more physically active need to eat more calories than those who are less active.

What if I need to lose weight?

What defines a healthy weight varies from person to person. Ask your health care provider about what a healthy weight is for you.

What defines a healthy weight varies from person to person.

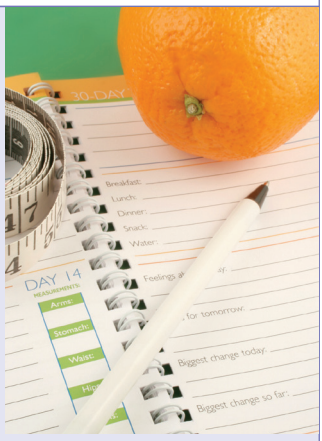
If you are overweight or are experiencing health problems linked to overweight or obesity, ask your health care provider if a modest weight loss would be helpful. A weight loss of 5 to 7 percent of your body weight over 6 months or longer has been shown to improve health.

Use a food diary to track what you eat

To keep a food diary, write down all the food you eat in a day. Also write down the time you eat and your feelings at the time. Writing down your feelings may help you identify your eating triggers. For example, you may notice that you sometimes overeat when you are in a big group, simply because everyone around you is eating. The next time you are eating with a big group, be mindful of that trigger and try to limit how much you eat.

IDEAS TO SUPPORT YOUR WEIGHT-LOSS EFFORTS

EATING



- **Keep a food diary.** To get started, see the sample food diary on page 11.
- **Make a shopping list and stick to it.** Don't shop when you're hungry.
- **Don't keep many foods high in fat or sugar in your home.**
- **Dish up smaller servings.** At restaurants, eat only half your meal and take the rest home.
- **Eat at the table.** Turn off the TV so you don't overeat.

BEHAVIOR

- **Be realistic about weight-loss goals.** Aim for a slow, modest weight loss.
- **Seek support** from family and friends.
- **Expect setbacks** and forgive yourself if you regain a few pounds.
- **Add moderately intense or vigorous physical activity** to your weight-loss plan. This kind of activity increases your heart rate and makes you break a sweat. Examples are brisk walking, swimming, and dancing.

SAMPLE FOOD DIARY			
TIME	FOOD	FEELINGS	HOW I CAN IMPROVE
8 a.m.	Coffee with sugar and cream, oatmeal with low-fat milk and banana	Hungry. Ate my usual breakfast.	
11 a.m.	Low-fat yogurt	Stomach starting to rumble.	Adding fresh fruit or whole grains will help keep me from overeating later.
12:30 p.m.	Roast beef and cheese sandwich on whole-wheat bread, potato chips, can of soda	Probably ate more than I was hungry for because of the "lunch deal" the deli offered me.	If I pack my lunch, I won't be tempted in the lunch line.
2:30 p.m.	1/2 chocolate bar from coworker, large coffee with sugar and cream	Feeling bored, not truly hungry.	A snack like veggie slices with salsa is more nutritious.
7:30 p.m.	Caesar salad, dinner roll, ravioli (didn't finish the whole serving), 1/2 slice of chocolate cake	Out to dinner with friends, so we all ate big portions! We split dessert, which made me feel healthy.	Next time, I'll have a salad with low-fat dressing. Sweet, fresh fruit is good as a light dessert.
10:30 p.m.	Decaf herbal tea	Had trouble falling asleep.	

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

How much physical activity do I need?

LEARN MORE

According to the Government's physical activity guidelines, healthy adults should regularly do aerobic and strengthening activities. See the Resources section at the end of this brochure for more information on how to find these guidelines.

Aerobic Activity

Aim for at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity each week.

Aerobic activity uses your large muscle groups (chest, legs, and back) to increase your heart rate. This activity may cause you to breathe harder. You should be able to speak several words in a row while doing aerobic exercises, but you should not be able to have a long chat.

Aim for at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) each week.

BENEFITS OF AEROBIC ACTIVITY

Regular aerobic activity may help you…

- **Control weight.** Aerobic activity burns calories, which may help you manage your weight.
- **Prevent heart disease and stroke.** Regular aerobic activity can strengthen your heart muscle and lower your blood pressure. It may also help lower "bad" cholesterol and raise "good" cholesterol.
- **Maintain strong bones.** Weight-bearing aerobic activities that involve lifting or pushing your own body weight, such as walking, jogging, or dancing, help to maintain strong bones.

Studies suggest that being fit at midlife may help prevent heart disease and stroke as you get older. To get more health benefits or to lose weight, you may need to do more activity. Aim for 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate activity like walking at a pace of about 4 miles an hour.

Choose aerobic activities that are fun. People are more likely to be active if they like what they are doing. Getting support from a friend or a family member may also help. Try one of these activities or others you enjoy:

- brisk walking or jogging
- bicycling (with a helmet)
- swimming
- playing basketball or soccer

Choose aerobic activities that are fun. People are more likely to be active if they like what they are doing.

Activity to Strengthen Muscles

These activities make you push or pull against something, such as gravity, weights, or exercise bands.

Aim for at least 2 days a week.

Strengthening exercises should focus on working the major muscle groups of the body, such as the chest, back, abdominals, legs, and arms. Allow at least 1 day of rest for your muscles to recover and rebuild before working the same muscle groups.

Try these options:

- Lift weights.
- Use canned food or books as weights.
- Do push-ups or pull-ups.
- Work with resistance bands (large rubber bands).
- Do heavy gardening (digging, lifting, carrying).

Strengthen muscles by doing heavy gardening.

Stronger muscles improve balance and support your joints, lowering the risk of injury.

BENEFITS OF ACTIVITY TO STRENGTHEN MUSCLES

Doing regular activities to strengthen your muscles may help you…

- **Use more calories.** Not only do strengthening exercises burn calories, but having more muscle means you will burn slightly more calories throughout the day—even when you are sitting still.
- **Reduce injury.** Stronger muscles improve balance and support your joints, lowering the risk of injury.
- **Maintain strong bones.** Doing strengthening exercises regularly helps build bone and may prevent bone loss as you age.

How do I get started?

You don't have to be an athlete to benefit from regular physical activity. Even modest amounts of physical activity can improve your health.

If you have been inactive for a while, you may want to start with easier activities, such as walking at a gentle pace. This lets you build up to more intense activity without getting hurt.

Start with easier activities, such as walking at a gentle pace.

Start with small, specific goals, like walking briskly 10 minutes a day, 3 days a week, and build up slowly from there. Keep an activity log to track your progress. You can refer to the sample activity log on page 17. As you become more fit, slowly increase your pace, the length of time you are active, and how often you are active.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY LOG			
DATE	ACTIVITY	TOTAL TIME	HOW I FELT
Mon., Mar. 1	Walking Free weights at home	2 x 15 minutes 20 minutes	I kept a good pace.
Tues., Mar. 2	Walking Stretching	30 minutes 15 minutes	Stretching felt great.
Wed., Mar. 3	Extra walking at work—used the stairs 3 times Yoga video at home	About 20 minutes total 20-minute video	I was busy, so I just tried to move more all day. Yoga helped me relax.
Thurs., Mar. 4	Walking	15 minutes at lunch and 15 minutes after work	Walking with my coworker was fun and relaxing.
Fri., Mar. 5	Walking Free weights at home	30 minutes at lunch 20 minutes	My coworker and I picked up the pace today!
Sat., Mar. 6	Water aerobics class Stretching	45 minute class 15 minutes	This class is fun but exhausting.
Sun., Mar. 7	Gardening	60 minutes	A surprisingly good workout.

Try these activities to add more movement to your daily life:

- Choose parking spots that are farther away from where you are going and walk the last few blocks. (Make sure the places you park and walk are well lit.)
- Walk around the inside of a mall in bad weather.
- Rake the leaves, wash the car, or do brisk housecleaning.

Try activities such as raking leaves to add more movement to your daily life.

- Visit museums or the zoo. Many of these places are free. You and your family can walk for hours and not realize it.
- Take a break from sitting at the computer or TV. Go for a short walk or stretch.
- If your time is limited, do 10 minutes of exercise at a time. Spread these bursts of activity out throughout the day. Every little bit counts!

BEING GOOD TO YOURSELF

Many people feel stress in their daily lives. Stress can cause you to overeat, feel tired, and not want to do anything. Healthy eating and regular physical activity may help offset the effects of stress.

Healthy eating and regular physical activity may help offset the effects of stress.

Try some of these other ideas to help relieve stress and stay on track with improving your health:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Practice deep breathing while relaxing your muscles one at a time.
- Take a break and go for a walk.
- Add short stretch breaks to your day.
- Try a new hobby or any activity that sparks your interest.
- Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy.

A balanced eating plan, regular physical activity, and stress relief may help you stay healthy for life.

Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy.

RESOURCES

Additional Reading from the Weight-control Information Network

The following publications are available online at *http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications* and also by calling WIN toll-free at 1–877–946–4627.

Active at Any Size explains the benefits of regular physical activity and describes activities that people who are overweight or obese can enjoy safely.

Just Enough for You: About Food Portions explains the difference between a portion and a serving and offers tips to help readers eat healthy portions.

The World Around You provides tips on how to use the world around you, no matter who you are or where you live, to stay healthy and fit.

Additional Resources

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
http://www.health.gov/paguidelines

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
http://www.eatright.org

Aim for a Healthy Weight
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt

Diabetes Prevention and Control Publications
National Diabetes Education Program
http://www.yourdiabetesinfo.org

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010
HHS and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines

Food and Nutrition Information Center
USDA
http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic

MyPlate
USDA
http://www.choosemyplate.gov

National Diabetes Education Program
http://www.yourdiabetesinfo.org

National Kidney Disease Education Program
http://nkdep.nih.gov/

Online Body Mass Index Calculator
NHLBI
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/BMI/bmicalc.htm

The President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition
http://www.fitness.gov

USDA Website on Nutrition
http://www.nutrition.gov

Inclusion of resources is for information only and does not imply endorsement by NIDDK or WIN.

Why should I participate in clinical trials?

Clinical trials are research studies involving people. Clinical trials look at safe and effective new ways to prevent, detect, or treat disease. Researchers also use clinical trials to look at other aspects of care, such as improving the quality of life for people with chronic illnesses. To learn more about clinical trials, why they matter, and how to participate, visit the NIH Clinical Research Trials and You website at *http://www.nih.gov/health/clinicaltrials*. For information about current studies, visit *http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov*.

Weight-control Information Network

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The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a national information service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). WIN provides the general public, health professionals, and the media with science-based, up-to-date, culturally relevant materials and tips. Topics include healthy eating, barriers to physical activity, portion control, and eating and physical activity myths.

This publication was produced by WIN and reviewed by NIDDK scientists.

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This publication is also available at *http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov*.

Photos on pages 14, 15 and 18 courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Amanda Mills.

LIFESPAN TIP SHEET FOR ADULTS

- Eat breakfast every day. People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day.
- Choose whole grains more often. Try whole-wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, or brown rice.
- Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day. Vegetables of different colors provide different nutrients. Try collards, kale, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.
- Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand at home, at work, or on the go to combat hunger and prevent overeating.
- At restaurants, eat only half your meal and take the rest home.
- Visit museums, the zoo, or an aquarium. You and your family can walk for hours and not realize it.
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- Get plenty of sleep.

LEARN MORE

Find more tips on healthy eating and physical activity for adults within *Better Health and You* available at *http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/better_health.htm.*

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WIN Weight-control Information Network

Instructions: Find your height (in inches) in the left-hand column and move across the row to find the weight closest to yours. If you are in the overweight or obese range on the chart, you may be at risk for certain health problems.

BODY MASS INDEX TABLE

	Normal						Overweight					Obese									
BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Height (in)	Body Weight (lbs)																				
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179	184	189	194	199
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271
71	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250	257	265	272	279
72	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287
73	144	151	159	166	174	182	189	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265	272	280	288	295
74	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272	280	287	295	303
75	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279	287	295	303	311
76	156	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287	295	304	312	320

Source: Adapted from *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults. The Evidence Report.* NIH Publication No. 98–4083: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, 1998.

The Lifespan Series includes the following publications:

- Fit for Two: Tips for Pregnancy
- Helping Your Child: Tips for Parents
- Better Health and You: Tips for Adults
- Young at Heart: Tips for Older Adults

Spanish-language publications in the Lifespan Series include the following:

- Consejos para la futura mamá
- Cómo ayudar a su hijo
- Cómo mejorar su salud: consejos para adultos
- Sugerencias para personas mayores

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