

Healthy Weight



Everyone needs some body fat to stay healthy. But too much, particularly around the waist, puts your health at risk. Carrying weight around your middle can make it harder for your body to use a hormone called insulin, which controls your blood glucose (sugar) levels. This can lead to Type 2 diabetes. Having high levels of glucose in your bloodstream damages your arteries and increases your risk of heart and circulatory diseases. Making a commitment to achieve a healthy weight is one of the best things you can do for your health and are likely to enjoy these quality-of-life factors too:

- Fewer joint and muscle pains
- More energy and greater ability to join in desired activities
- Better regulation of bodily fluids and blood pressure
- Reduced burden on your heart and circulatory system
- Better sleep patterns
- Reductions in blood triglycerides, blood glucose, and risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Reduced risk for heart disease and certain cancers

Keep in mind that some medications or medical conditions can lead to weight gain. Speak to your doctor, health practitioner, or an Accredited Practising Dietitian if you're concerned about your weight.

Is your Weight Healthy?

There are two measurements commonly used to assess if your weight is putting your health at risk - Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist circumference. BMI is a useful tool which can give you an idea if you are a healthy weight for your height. It's most suitable for people over 18 years old. You can find out your BMI with the Australian Heart Foundation BMI Calculator <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-your-risks/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator>. Your BMI score will place you into one of four categories: underweight, healthy, overweight or obese.

BMI is only an estimate and it doesn't take into account gender, age, ethnicity and body composition. This is why it's important to use other measurements to assess your health risk, like waist measurement. To measure your waist, place a tape measure halfway between the bottom of your ribs and top of your hips, breathe out normally and hold the tape measure firmly just above your belly button to take the measurement

The recommended waist measurements are:

- below 94cm (37 inches) for men
- below 80cm (31.5 inches) for women.

Adults of South Asian origin are at very high risk of health problems if their waist measurements are higher than the recommended measurements.



Steps to a Healthy Weight

If you do need to lose weight, plan to do it the healthy way. Think about the small changes you can start making every day that will not only help you control your weight, but also be healthier so that you can get the most out of life. This can be done by nourishing your body with fresh foods, reducing or removing highly processed foods, and taking every opportunity to be as active as you can. It's easier if you have a bit of support, so get your family and friends on board. You might even inspire them to manage their weight. Here are some tips to help you get started on reaching your health weight.

Set Realistic Goals: Reducing your weight by just 3 to 5 percent can help decrease your triglycerides (bad cholesterol) and blood sugar (glucose), and reduce your risk of diabetes. Set yourself up for success with short-term goals to achieve a weight loss of about 0.5-1kg (1-2pounds) per week.

Mindful Eating: Use a food diary or tracking app to understand what, how much, and when you're eating. Being aware of your eating habits and aware of your roadblocks and excuses can help you get real about your goals. If you notice that you seek out food when you're feeling sad or bored – replace food with healthier habits like talking to a friend or going for a walk to help deal with your emotions in a healthier way.

Portion Control: Smaller portions can help prevent eating too much. Try to use a standard 9-inch plate as it's easy to overeat on bigger plate sizes and aim to cover half the plate with vegetables.

Be Physically Active: Physical activity is anything that gets your heart rate up, like walking. While the goal is 150 minutes of moderate activity a week any activity that will help you move more, with more intensity, and sit less is a great start. It all adds up!

Eat Smart: Don't fall for fad diets, quick fixes, or miracle cures. They don't work long term. Fill up on high fibre foods and non-starchy vegetables. Limit food that contains added sugars. For example, use an artificial sweetener in drinks instead of sugar or drink diet/sugar-free fizzy drinks.

Regular Meal Patterns: Start the day with a healthy breakfast. Eating 3 meals per day helps your body have the energy it needs so you feel satisfied, not full.

Hydrate with Water: People who drink plenty of water are more likely to lose weight. Aim for a minimum of 6-8 glasses of water each day.

Be a Smart Shopper: Plan ahead for meals. Use a list and avoid shopping when you are hungry. Avoid buying sweet treats as snacks to remove temptation of having them in reach when at home.



Conquer Cravings the Healthy Way with These Healthy Substitutions

You don't have to give up all your favourite foods. Learn to make smart food choices and simple substitutions instead. Discover healthy snacks and how fruits, vegetables, and whole grains help keep you fuller longer.

Junk Food V's Healthy Food



Creamy

Instead of this: While ice cream may come to mind first, there are a variety of other smooth snacks that can be just as satisfying.

Try munching on this:

- Fresh avocado spread on whole grain bread OR ½ avocado eaten plain with a spoon
- Warm 1 tablespoon creamy peanut butter in the microwave for 10 seconds and drizzle over ½ cup low-fat, no added sugar frozen yogurt.
- Puree some berries and swirl into a cup of low-fat greek yogurt with no sugar added.



Crunchy

Instead of this: Chips have a crunchy texture that you may crave, but they can come with a lot of extra sodium that you don't need.

Try munching on this:

- ¾ cup whole-grain cereal, no added sugar
- Crunchy unsalted nuts
- Whole grain crisp breads
- Plain popcorn; to add some flavour, experiment with various spices like cinnamon or your favourite spice or herb



Liquid

Instead of this: Sugary teas, coffees and fizzy drinks may sound refreshing, but it can take a while to work off all those empty calories.

Try sipping on this:

- Plain iced tea made with a squeeze of lemon. You can sweeten with berries or a non-caloric sweetener
- Add fruit slices to a glass and fill with club soda
- Instead of a regular latte (135 calories), choose a small latte made with non-fat milk and topped with cinnamon (25 calories).



Keeping the Weight Off

Maintaining weight loss can take just as much effort as losing it. Here are some tips:

- Keep a list of your reasons why you began your weight lost journey and remind yourself of these when you need motivation to keep on track. This is a long-term effort. The first year or two after significant weight loss may be the hardest, but if you can stick it out you're more likely to make it in the long run.
- Learn from others who've succeeded and follow their example.
- Make sure you have a social support network of friends, family and health professionals who will support your new healthy habits.

- Find healthy ways to motivate yourself to stick with it such as trying out new hobbies you might enjoy like swimming or new health recipes.
- Remember that having a lapse or relapse is not failing. You can get back on track. Try to find new, healthier ways to handle life's stresses besides overeating such as taking a walk, talk with a friend, or do something to help someone else. Just don't give up!



Content Sources:

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