

A Healthy Weight

Being overweight or obese leads to an increased risk for developing many diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

There continue to be many fad diets and weight loss programs that promise quick results without long-term lifestyle changes. However, the key to effectively lose and maintain a healthy weight is still a reduced calorie, nutritionally-balanced diet combined with regular physical activity. Below are a few steps to get you started toward achieving your weight loss goals:

First, determine how much weight you need to lose. Weigh yourself, check your Body Mass Index (BMI) and talk with your physician to determine what a reasonable, realistic weight loss goal is for your body type. You can find a BMI chart located online at: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/bmi_tbl.pdf.

Next, one of the key behaviors for successful weight loss is eating regular meals, including breakfast. Plan your meals and snacks for the week ahead, emphasizing fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grain cereals and bread, lean cuts of meat, while low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars. Learn to read food labels and become familiar with what a serving size is for certain foods. For example, a single serving of cooked rice, pasta or potato is a ½ cup, or half of a baseball. It is okay to have small portions of your favorite foods, including sweets, but learn to sample

those foods and not consume entire or multiple servings. Also, look at how many calories you take in with the beverages you drink. There are many “hidden” calories in sweetened beverages, including alcohol, tea and coffee. Even fruit juices can contain a large number of calories. Instead, try to drink unsweetened beverages and drink at least 6 to 8 (8 oz.) glasses of water each day.

Exercise can be one of the more difficult lifestyle changes, but it is also one of the most important. Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as a brisk walk, most days of the week. Although aerobic exercise burns the most fat, simply becoming more active in your daily life can also make a difference. Look for ways to add activity into your day, such as parking your car at the far end of the parking lot, taking the stairs, walking or riding a bike to do errands, or try scheduling get-togethers with friends and family around activities, such as participating in a recreational sport, meeting at a park, dog walking or hiking, etc.

Finally, surround yourself with people who support your lifestyle changes, and be mindful not to let the occasional setback discourage you from achieving your weight loss goals.

To speak with an EAP professional, please call: **800.327-2384**
or visit www.apshelplink.com (company code: mccccd)

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