

Managing your Weight

Modern culture requires less physical activity and encourages the consumption of large amounts of calories. Because of sedentary lifestyle and the abundance of high calorie foods, the prevalence of overweight adults in North America has increased by >50% in the past decade. 66% of US adults are now overweight and 30% are obese. Severe obesity may reduce life expectancy by as much as 22%. The number of deaths due to poor diet and physical inactivity rose 33% during the last decade and will soon overtake tobacco as the leading preventable cause of death. Obesity is often associated with hypertension, cholesterol problems & increased blood glucose all of which can be improved with proper diet, exercise and weight loss.

Not everyone can be thin. But you *can* reach and maintain your best weight! Your genes may affect your susceptibility to obesity, but often people simply eat too many calories and burn too few. “Battling the buldge” requires a plan that includes developing and maintaining a healthy diet and active lifestyle.

Here is a plan that may work for you:

1. Invest in yourself.
 - a. We spend most of our time worrying about our jobs, money, family, friends and material possessions. You need to make a decision to invest some time and effort in your own health.
 - b. Use the materials made available by your doctor though this plan to learn about a heart healthy diet and healthy, active lifestyle.
2. Assess your current lifestyle.
 - a. Take a week to estimate your current calorie consumption / day and amount of time you devote to exercise each week.
 - b. Compare your current lifestyle with what you have learned about healthy diet and physical activity.
 - c. Identify some of the unhealthy choices you are making
 - i. Examples: eating fast food and deep fried foods frequently, taking little/no time for exercise.
3. Identify your goals:
 - a. Time devoted to exercise.
 - b. Sticking to a heart healthy diet >90% of the time.
 - c. Losing a certain number of pounds in a month.
4. Replace your bad habits with new ones.
 - a. Diet
 - i. Develop a shopping list based on your knowledge of a heart healthy diet. Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, fish, fat-free or low-fat dairy products and substituting liquid and tub margarines, canola and olive oil for butter, stick margarines and foods high in saturated and trans fats.
 - ii. Snacks: Substitute fruits, vegetables and nuts & whole grain products for foods high in sugar and fat.
 - iii. Minimize eating out. When you do: avoid deep fried foods & foods with high saturated fat and sugar.
 - iv. Substitute water or diet soda for full calorie sodas.
 - v. Use the link provided on the web-site to find delicious, healthy recipes though the American Heart Association web-site.
 - vi. Use the formula provided on the diet tips page to estimate your goal calorie intake.
 - b. Exercise:
 - i. Dedicate a certain amount of time each week to exercise, which can be as simple as walking. Recommended goal is >120 minutes / week. Would recommend trying to find at least four 30 minute blocks that you can dedicate to exercise each week.
 - ii. Find something that you enjoy (walking or exercising with a friend, playing a sport, watching TV while using a treadmill)
 - iii. Remember all the benefits of exercise and how much better you feel once you have been doing it.
5. Monitor your progress
 - a. record your weekly exercise minutes and weights on the 3 month calendar provided.
 - b. get feedback from your doctor, whether this be a pat on the back or recommendation on how to do better.
6. Embrace your healthy lifestyle.
 - a. Be a positive influence on your friends and family. This type of lifestyle is beneficial for everyone, not just those of us with coronary heart disease.