

NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT?

Losing weight and keeping it off is not easy. Before you get started on a weight loss program, consider the following tips. They should help you reach your goal of obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight.

Set the Right Goals Setting effective goals are an important first step. Most people trying to lose weight focus on just that one goal: weight loss. However, the most productive areas to focus on are the dietary and exercise changes that will lead to long-term weight control. Successful weight managers are those who select **two or three** goals at a time that they are willing to take on. Keep in mind that effective goals are specific, attainable and forgiving. For example, "exercise more" is a wonderful goal; however, it's not specific. "Walk five miles every day" is specific and measurable; however, is it attainable if you're just starting out? "Walk 30 minutes every day" is more attainable, but what happens if you're held up at work one day and there's a thunderstorm during your walking time another day? **"Walk 30 minutes, five days each week" is specific, attainable and forgiving.**

Reward Success But Not With Food Rewards that you can control can be used to encourage you to attain your weight control goals, especially those that have been difficult for you to reach. An effective reward is something that is desirable, timely and contingent on meeting your goal. Rewards may include treating yourself to a movie, music CD, taking an afternoon off from work or just an hour of quiet time away from family. Keep in mind that numerous small rewards, delivered for meeting smaller goals are more effective than bigger rewards requiring a long, difficult effort.

Balance Your Food Checkbook This means that you should monitor your eating behavior by observing and recording some aspect of your eating behavior such as how many calories you eat in a day, how many servings of fruits and vegetables you eat per day, how often and for how long you exercise, etc., or an outcome of these behaviors, such as weight. Doing this can really help you determine how you are doing and what you need to do to meet your weight control goals.

Avoid a Chain Reaction Identify those social and environmental cues that tend to encourage undesired eating and then work to change those cues. For example, you may learn that you're more likely to overeat while watching television or whenever treats are on display by the office coffee pot. Then work to sever the association of eating with the cue: don't eat while watching television, avoid or eliminate the cue by leaving the coffee room immediately after pouring coffee. In general, visible and accessible food items are often cues for unplanned eating.

Get the Fullness Message Changing the way you go about eating can make it easier to eat less without feeling deprived. It takes 15 or more minutes for your brain to get the message you've been fed. So slow down the rate that you eat food. That will allow satisfy fullness signals to begin to develop by the end of the meal. Eating lots of vegetables or fruit can also make you feel fuller. Another trick is to use smaller plates so that moderate portions do not appear meager. In addition, changing your eating schedule or setting one can help you reach your goal, especially if you tend to skip or delay meals and overeat later.

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