



How Can I Manage My Weight?

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight can be difficult. If you have tried to lose weight without much long-term success, you are not alone. But it's never too late to try again. Research shows that weight loss can benefit your health for up to five years afterward, even if you start to regain weight.

There is no magic weight-loss formula that works for everyone. The key is to find a plan that works for you and balances the calories you eat with the amount of your regular physical activity.



What are the keys to healthy weight loss?

To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use through normal metabolism and physical activity. To do this, you should:

- Watch what and how much you eat.
- Choose nutritious foods.
- Follow an overall healthy diet pattern.
- Get and stay physically active.
- Drink enough water.
- Get enough sleep.

How can I make better food choices?

- Make sure you eat the right amount of food and get enough exercise to keep your body at a healthy weight.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables and try different kinds.
- Choose whole-grain foods, such as whole wheat bread, instead of refined grains, like white bread.
- Pick healthy sources of protein, such as beans, nuts, fish, chicken, lean meats and low-fat dairy products.
- Use non-tropical oils, such as olive, canola, corn or sunflower oils, instead of butter and lard.

- Limit the number of sugary foods and drinks you have.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink to one drink per day for women and two for men. If you don't drink, don't start.

How can I stay at a healthy weight?

Maintaining weight loss can take just as much effort as losing it. Remember that maintaining a healthy weight is a long-term commitment.

The first year or two after significant weight loss may be challenging but sticking with it increases your chances of long-term success. To avoid sliding back into old habits:

- Get support from your friends, family and health care professionals.
- Find ways to motivate yourself, such as setting rewards or goals that keep you on track.
- Move more and sit less. Stay active by doing activities that make your heart beat faster, such as walking. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week.
- Set realistic goals. Break your goals into smaller, achievable steps.

(continued)



How Can I Manage My Weight?

- Keep track of what and when you eat using a food diary or an app. This can help you see patterns and make better choices.
- Control how much you eat by understanding the difference between a portion and a serving. Try to have reasonable portions to avoid overeating.
- Make smart food choices by learning about healthier alternatives and simple swaps for your favorite foods.
- Always keep healthy snacks around. Fruits, vegetables and whole grains can keep you satisfied.
- Eat unhealthy foods in smaller amounts and less often.
- Use a shopping list, and don't shop when you're hungry.
- Plan all your meals. When you're going to a party or out to eat, decide ahead of time what you can do to make it easier to eat right.
- When you're hungry between meals, drink a glass of water or eat a small piece of fruit.
- When you really crave a high-calorie food, eat a small amount of it.



What if I go back to old habits?

Old habits are hard to break. You might have a bad day and overeat or skip exercise. If that happens, remember that this is not a failure. Instead, recommit yourself to starting again and getting back on track. You can do it!

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at [HeartInsight.org](https://www.heartinsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://www.heart.org/SupportNetwork).

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

- What if I start gaining weight again?**
- How can my family help me?**

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.