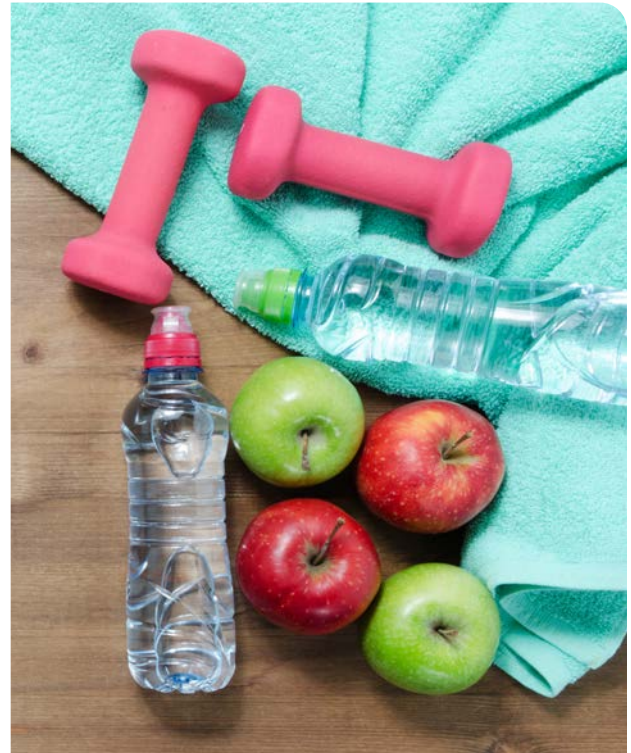




How Can I Lose Weight?

It's important to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese can increase your chance of developing conditions that are risk factors for heart disease. These include high blood pressure, high LDL (bad) cholesterol, low HDL (good) cholesterol, diabetes and sleep apnea. You're also at greater risk of stroke, atrial fibrillation and heart failure.

You may have tried to lose weight before without long-term success. Be assured, you're not alone. To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use up through normal metabolism and physical activity. The key is to create healthy eating and exercise plans that provide the right balance of calories, nutrition and regular physical activity.



What are some steps to successful weight loss?

It's easy to start a nutrition or exercise plan. But sticking to it can be hard. Prepare yourself by setting goals, thinking ahead and deciding how to deal with roadblocks.

- **Decide how much weight you should lose.** You may want to start with a goal to lose 5% to 10% of your body weight and keeping it off. Then, create eating and physical activity plans that will subtract enough calories for you to lose one to two pounds a week.
- **Set realistic goals.** Don't let unreasonable expectations set you up to fail. Allow yourself enough time to reach your goal.
- **Work with an expert.** It's never wise to follow fad diets, go without eating or try to lose weight too fast. Talk to a nutritionist or registered dietitian about creating an eating plan that's right for you.
- **Decide how to handle temptation.** Plan how you'll react in settings where you may be tempted to have foods that aren't part of your eating plan. Look up restaurant menus before you go out to eat so you can select a meal that fits into your nutrition plan.

- **Plan ahead.** If a bad mood, stress or boredom make you want to eat a lot, decide in advance of these emotions what you'll do instead of eating. You could go for a walk, call a friend or read a book.
- **Expect setbacks.** If you go off your diet, don't quit. Instead, focus on getting back on track.
- **Be more active.** Getting more physical activity is good for your heart, and it can help you lose weight, too. Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of both.

How should I change my eating habits?

Follow these simple guidelines to make good food choices.

- Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole-grain foods.
- Eat healthy sources of lean protein, mostly from plants.
- Eat skinless poultry, fish, legumes, nontropical vegetable oils and nuts.
- Limit your intake of red and processed meats.

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- Limit how much saturated fats are in your food. Avoid trans fats.
- Select fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- Limit beverages and foods high in calories and low in nutrition, such as sugar-sweetened soft drinks and processed foods with added sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Look for lower sodium options for prepared and packaged foods.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation. If you don't drink, don't start.
- Cook foods in healthier ways, such as baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing. Don't fry foods in oil.
- Read food labels and avoid foods high in added sugars, saturated and trans fats, sodium and calories.

What else can I do?

- Keep an exercise log and a food diary to track your physical activity and eating habits. Use your entries to understand your choices and set short- and long-term goals.
- Learn what motivates you. Losing the first few pounds is exciting. Find a way to turn that enthusiasm into the willpower to stick with it.
- Celebrate as you achieve short- and long-term goals.



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:

How much weight should I lose?

What type of physical activity is best for 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.