



Travel lighter

Weight reduction tips

Losing weight, or maintaining a healthy weight, can help you feel better and boost energy levels. You can also decrease the risk of developing health conditions associated with being overweight or obese including stroke, heart problems, incontinence, breathing problems, depression, pregnancy complications and some types of cancer.

And if you already have high blood pressure, arthritis or diabetes, you may find these conditions improve as you lose weight. Your doctor might even be able to reduce the medication you take to manage these conditions as you lose weight and your health improves.

There's no quick fix for losing weight and keeping it off — but these tips can help you take steps in the right direction.

Be realistic

If you are trying to lose too much weight, you might be disappointed when you don't reach your goal. Make sure you are more focused on getting healthy rather than the number on the scale. In most cases, the biggest health benefits come from losing the first 5 to 10 percent of your weight.

Set a timetable

Even though you may want to see big results quickly, it's best not to lose weight too fast. A good target is to lose ½ to 1 kg per week (1 to 2 lbs.). To do this, you'll need to reduce the calories in the food you eat by 500 to 1,000 fewer calories a day. If you follow this guideline, you could lose anywhere between 6 to 12 kg (12 to 24 lbs.) after three months.

Plan ahead

Planning can help you get to your target weight.

Here's what you can do:

- Make a list of healthy foods to buy when you shop — and avoid shopping when you are hungry.
- Find healthy recipes and plan nutritious meals ahead of time.
- Bring along healthy snacks when you travel to avoid high-calorie take-away foods.
- Plan regular mealtimes and try not to skip meals. Skipping meals can cause you to eat unhealthy snacks or overeat at your next meal.

Make healthy choices

It may sound obvious, but eating a balanced diet and making healthy choices is key to successful weight loss. Make sure each meal is balanced. Half your plate should be made up of fruit and/or vegetables. A quarter of the plate should contain meat, fish, beans or other protein sources. The other quarter should contain starchy carbohydrates such as rice, pasta, potatoes or bread. A balanced meal will provide you with all the nutrients you need while keeping your blood sugar levels steady and satisfying your hunger.

- Eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily.
- Cut back on fatty meats and cheeses, whole milk, and fried or salty foods.
- Aim for several servings of lean meats, poultry or fish weekly.

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Keep track of what you eat

One way to help you lose weight is to keep a food diary of what you eat. You should note when, what, how much, where and why you ate. You might be surprised to see how much you eat on a daily basis.

Change your habits

Sometimes, it's how you eat that can cause weight gain.

Here are some healthy habits to consider:

- Establish an easy-to-follow routine for eating meals such as eating at the same time every day. Avoid other activities, like watching TV or working, while eating.
- Resist the temptation to eat everything on your plate. Eat only until you are full.
- Use smaller plates as a guide to help you serve — and eat — smaller amounts.
- Share meals, order half portions or order a starter as a main meal when eating out.

Quench your thirst

Sugary drinks such as cola, tea or coffee with sugar add empty calories. Switch to water as your main drink. Keeping a supply of chilled water in the fridge makes this easy to do.

Get physical

You put on weight if the amount of energy in what you eat is more than the amount of energy you use. This extra energy changes into fat which stores in the body.

Here are some steps you can take to get healthier:

- Talk with your doctor before making any changes to your activities.
- If you're able, aim for at least 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity, like walking.
- Make physical activity part of your everyday routine. Take the stairs instead of using the lift. Walk or cycle to work instead of driving. When you do drive, park so that you have to walk a longer distance to your destination.

Know your triggers

The smell of food coming from the kitchen might set off the urge to overindulge. Emotional stress may cause you to turn to comfort foods and overeat. Recognise your triggers and plan strategies to help you deal with them. Simply brushing your teeth can help you resist a fattening snack. And listening to relaxing music, taking a walk or talking with a friend might help you cope with feelings.

Consider your options

Everyone is different and there's no "right" way to lose weight. There are many options available. It is important to research them carefully and speak to your doctor to discuss other options that could be a good choice for you.

A support group might also be helpful, especially when you're trying to keep off weight that you've already lost. Your doctor may be able to provide information on local groups.

Take charge of your weight — get on the path to a healthier you today.

Source: Patient UK, Weight Reduction: How to Lose Weight. Available at www.patient.co.uk/health/Weight-Reduction-Howto-Lose-Weight.htm. Accessed 1 March 2017.

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