

Diets and weight control

There are many different types of weight loss diets and often the best approach is to start with foods that you are comfortable with and work out your own individual program.

To lose weight you will need to reduce calorie intake to less than your normal daily expenditure. If the amount of weight to be lost is not too much, you may just change your present meals to lower energy healthy foods and reduce quantities. Many people will however need to follow a **controlled portion meal plan**. This means set predetermined quantities for all your meals and snacks. It will require some homework on your part initially, but you will then have a reference point with which to progress your weight loss program. The following pages will show you how to write up your meal plan in a simple format.

If you can reduce fat content without overly compromising taste, this will assist weight loss, but keep the **main focus on portion control at this stage**. If you need more information about nutrition or food recipes you could follow the link to "Living Lite" which has excellent recipes as well as a weekly meal plan template. Alternatively, a dietician can often help at this stage.

The following pages will show you how to work out set quantities (controlled portions) for all the foods you normally eat and to put together a meal plan to cover all possible options. Once you have made up this plan you should aim to **never eat outside your plan**. If you later think of food items that are not in your plan you should rewrite your plan. This is a good habit to get into. **Always have a written meal plan that is up to date**.

Most people will need to continue controlled portion meals even when healthy weight is achieved, though the portion sizes may be a little different.

Key Points

- ✓ **Controlled portion size, set quantities**
- ✓ **Reduce portion sizes till weight is lost**
- ✓ **Low fat**

Food quantities can be measured in various ways:

Weight

- A 200gram steak

Volume

- One metric cup cereal, 300mls soup

Calories

- One Mars bar (250 calories)

Discrete items

- One Weet Bix

Answers to some common questions

I don't want to measure food portions. Can't I just eat healthy foods?

This approach can work for some people, particularly if the amount of weight to be lost is relatively small. The more weight you have to lose and the more longstanding your problem is, the more you will need to practice careful portion control.

Should I try a low carb keto diet?

This approach can work but is not generally recommended by medical experts and nutritionists. It is a high protein diet and fat intake might be hard to control. Cholesterol levels may rise and intakes of some vitamins and antioxidants may be reduced, so transition back to a normal diet will also be needed.

Shouldn't I be focussing on exercise first.

Exercise is an important weight loss accelerator, but can also increase appetite. It can take a fair amount of exercise to burn off a few unnecessary snacks, so it is better to get energy intake under control first.

I eat larger meals and I'm not sure I can reduce to the size of meals recommended in the examples?

The first step is to reduce the size of your meals, even if they are bigger than those in the examples. Your body will adjust to the change and you can progressively reduce portion sizes till weight loss occurs. You may need to be patient for a month or so. High fibre foods can help in this situation. Your doctor or dietician can provide further information.

What if I have to eat meals prepared by someone else such as in a restaurant?

Plan in advance how you will deal with all common situations. Try to buy similar items each time. Some restaurants serve large portions and you may need to leave part of your meal on the plate.

I've heard that liquid meal replacements are effective (eg. optifast). Should I try these instead?

Products such as Optifast can be used as low calorie meal alternatives within your plan. For rapid weight loss you could follow the Optifast total meal replacement program but medical supervision is required.