



# Greenville Medical Associates

## Weight Management

### Overview

Keeping a healthy weight is good for your overall health. Being overweight increases your risk for many types of diseases and health problems.

If you eat more calories than your body needs, the extra calories are stored as body fat. The best and healthiest way to lose weight is to decrease the number of calories you eat and increase the number of calories you burn.

Ask your health care provider to help you find a goal weight. You should also ask your health care provider to help you find out how much energy your body needs and how many calories you need to cut to reach your goal weight.

Write down everything you eat and drink. Think about how can you make healthier food and drink choices. You should also find ways to become more active. Ask your health care provider to help you create a diet and exercise plan that is right for you.

### Introduction

Keeping a healthy weight is good for your overall health. Being overweight increases your risk for many types of diseases and health problems.

Many weight loss diets only work temporarily. A successful weight management program allows overweight people to lose weight and not gain it back.

This health information explains weight management. It discusses how to lose weight and keep it off. It also covers why we gain weight, benefits of losing weight, how to lose weight by eating healthy and exercising and tips for getting started.

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## Why We Gain Weight

Having extra weight was helpful to people in the past. Gaining weight was the body's way of guarding against starving to death when there wasn't enough food.

When cavemen ate more than they needed, the extra food was stored as fat in their bodies. Their bodies used the stored body fat as energy when they ate less than what their bodies needed.

It is easier to get enough to eat in modern times. There are many more convenient sources of food now than ever before.

The food we eat is our source of energy, just like gas is the source of energy for most cars. The body is always using energy to:

- Keep the body temperature normal.
- Move.
- Maintain bodily functions, such as the heartbeat.

Energy is measured in calories.

- 1 gram of carbohydrate, or sugar, has 4 calories.
- 1 gram of protein has 4 calories.
- 1 gram of fat has 9 calories.

The number of calories a person needs depends on many factors, such as gender, age, body size, activity level and body metabolism.

## Benefits of Losing Weight

Being overweight or obese is linked with many health problems, such as:

- Cancer.
- Diabetes.
- Heart disease.
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- Kidney and liver disease.
- Stroke.

Managing your weight can help you live longer and have a better quality of life.

People who are overweight and lose weight notice changes in their quality of life right away. They tend to:

- Sleep better and for longer.
- Feel more energetic and relaxed.
- Become more flexible and strong.

Permanent lifestyle changes are needed to lose weight and keep it off.

## **A Healthy Weight**

Health care providers use several tests to analyze your weight. They may check your:

- Body mass index, or BMI.
- Percent body fat.
- Waist size.

To calculate your BMI, multiply your height in inches by your height in inches or your height in meters by your height in meters (number 1). Then multiply your weight in pounds by 703 or your weight in kilograms by 1 (number 2). Divide number 2 by number 1.

A healthy BMI for an adult is between 18.5 and 24.9.

A simple way to check body fat is called bioelectrical impedance. A machine sends a harmless electrical current through your body. Readings from the machine are used to measure body fat.

Other ways of measuring body fat include fat scales, skin calipers or water-replacement methods.

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A healthy body fat percentage for a woman is between 21% and 35%. For a man, a healthy body fat percentage is between 8% and 24%. The lower end of these ranges is for younger adults. The higher end is for older adults.

Health care providers also look at weight-related risk factors before determining if the weight you are at is healthy. Such factors include:

- High blood pressure.
- High blood cholesterol.
- High blood sugar.

Other factors include:

- Arthritis.
- Breathing problems.
- If you smoke.
- If you do not exercise.

Your health care provider may suggest that you just maintain the weight you are at instead of trying to lose weight if you are overweight without risk factors.

Your health care provider may recommend that you lose 5 to 10% of your body weight if your weight falls at the higher end of a healthy weight range and you have some risk factors related to weight. Weight loss has health benefits even if you are overweight.

## **How to Lose Weight**

There are only 3 ways to lose weight:

1. Decrease the number of calories you eat.
2. Increase the number of calories you burn.
3. Weight loss surgery.

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Surgery carries risks of complications. The body will gain the weight back if the person continues to eat more calories than his or her body needs for energy.

The best and healthiest way to lose weight is to decrease the number of calories you eat and increase the number of calories you burn.

Your body does not gain weight when the amount of calories in the food you eat is equal to the amount of energy your body needs and uses.

If you eat more calories than your body needs, the extra calories are stored as body fat. Every 9 extra calories are stored as 1 gram of body fat.

If you eat a 900 calorie item of food when your body already has taken in the calories it needs for that day, those 900 calories are stored as 100 grams of fat. 100 grams of body fat is almost a quarter of a pound (0.113 kg).

Fruits and vegetables are high in vitamins and fiber and low in calories. A small apple has about 50 calories. You should eat as many fruits and vegetables as you want.

Ask your health care provider to help you find a goal weight. You should also ask your health care provider to help you find out how much energy your body needs and how many calories you need to cut to reach your goal weight.

Ask your health care provider to help you create a diet and exercise plan that is right for you.

## **Tips for Starting**

Write down everything you eat and drink. Think about how you can make healthier food and drink choices. You should also find ways to become more active.

Be ready to make a lifelong commitment to healthier life habits. Staying healthy requires permanent changes.

Lose weight for yourself and for health reasons. Do not lose weight to please others.

Set realistic goals for weight loss and lifestyle changes that can be slowly and gradually achieved.

Ask your health care provider to help you set goals.

Even small changes can help you become healthier.

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## Eating Habits

Eating healthy can help you lose weight and keep it off. To transform your eating habits:

1. Decrease portion sizes.
2. Increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat.
3. Choose whole grains.

You usually reduce the amount of calories you are taking in by decreasing the size of the portion you eat. An easy way to start eating correct portions is to eat off of smaller plates.

Dish food out on plates in the kitchen and carry it to the table when you eat at home. It is easier and more tempting to have seconds when there is food served on the table.

You may want to avoid eating at restaurants. Restaurants usually give large portion sizes. When you have to eat away from your home, order a child size meal or half portion.

Your stomach will feel fuller when you eat more fruits and vegetables. This leaves less room for foods that are high in calories.

Replace snacks that are high in calories with fruits and vegetables.

You will lose weight by eating fewer calories than your body needs. By eating 250 fewer calories per day, you will lose about a half pound (0.23 kg) a week. You will lose 26 pounds in a year.

It is better to lose weight gradually than to lose it fast. You may not get all of the nutrients your body needs if you do not eat enough food.

Diets that require you to eat too few calories are also more likely to fail. Even if they help you lose weight, you are more likely to gain it back.

Here are 4 healthy eating guidelines that apply at all times, whether you are on a diet or not:

1. Eat a variety of foods. No one category of food can give you all the nutrients you need. A healthy diet always includes food from different food groups.
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2. Eat a lot of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products. Dietitians recommend plant foods because they have fewer calories and a lot of fiber, vitamins and minerals. They also have no cholesterol and little fat.
3. Eat a diet that is low in fat and cholesterol. No more than 30% of the calories you eat should come from fat.
4. Have certain foods and drinks only in moderation. Avoid foods and drinks that are high in sugar and salt. You should also only drink alcohol in moderation.

## Exercising More

The goal of exercising for weight loss is to burn more calories. Exercise also helps you prevent disease, reduce stress and strengthen your muscles. The number of calories you burn depends on how often, how long and how intense your activities are.

People with more muscle are able to consume more calories than people with less muscle without gaining weight. This is because the more muscle you have, the more calories you burn, even at rest.

Building your muscles through exercise and activity is a good way to constantly burn more calories. Exercise will increase the rate of your metabolism.

Regularly scheduled aerobic exercise is best for losing fat. But any extra movement helps burn calories. Any extra activity that you can fit into your day can help you burn more calories.

Think about ways you can increase your physical activity throughout the day.

Take the stairs instead of using elevators or escalators. Walk or bike when you run errands instead of driving.

Walk to your coworker's office instead of calling on the phone.

Mow the lawn and shovel the snow instead of hiring people to do it. Do some gardening and rake the lawn. Wash your car. Vacuum your carpet and do housework more often.

When you decide to start exercising regularly, choose activities you enjoy. This will keep you

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motivated to continue doing them. Try to exercise for about 30 minutes each day. If you need to, divide the time into 3 10-minute sessions instead of one 30-minute session.

## **Tips for Succeeding**

It is okay to have a small serving of a food that you are craving once in a while.

Don't skip breakfast. Your body needs fuel to move and think. Eat a healthy breakfast such as whole-grain cereal with low-fat or skim milk. Add fresh fruit, such as berries or a banana.

Read the nutrition facts on food labels to find out how many calories the foods have. Salad dressings have a lot of calories if they are not light or fat-free. Fruit juices are high in calories and do not contain a large amount of fiber.

Drink alcohol in moderation. A gram of alcohol has 7 calories. A light beer or a glass of wine is about 100 calories.

Dish up food in the kitchen and don't put serving bowls on the dinner table. This reduces the chance of you having seconds.

Eat slowly because it takes 20 minutes after your stomach is full for the brain to stop hunger signals.

If you were taught to clean your plate when you eat, it is okay to unlearn that habit. You don't have to clean your plate if you are not hungry anymore. Wasting \$1 of extra food on your plate is a better choice than paying hundreds of dollars in health care later.

Don't super-size your order at restaurants. Restaurants give large portions that are high in calories.

Drink lots of water before, after and in between meals. Drinking enough water every day usually reduces the feeling of hunger.

Snack on healthy foods between meals, such as fruits you like. They fill your stomach and give you energy and vitamins. They also help you avoid severe hunger that could cause you to overeat.

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## Summary

Maintaining a healthy weight is good for your overall health. Being overweight increases your risk for many types of diseases and health problems.

Many weight loss diets only work temporarily. A successful weight management program allows overweight people to lose weight and keep from gaining it back.

Being overweight or obese is linked with heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer.

If you eat more calories than your body needs, the extra calories are stored as body fat. The best and healthiest way to lose weight is to decrease the number of calories you eat and increase the number of calories you burn.

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