Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss

Taking Action

Weight loss diets often promise fast and easy weight loss. Unfortunately, they do not usually work. Diets often restrict many foods, making them hard to follow for the long term. Some diets limit nutritious foods, which means you do not get all of the nutrients you need to be healthy. Diets that are quick fixes often result in weight that is gained back.

To be successful, weight loss takes time. If you lose 0.5-1 kilogram (1-2 pounds) each week, you are probably on the right track. Eating healthy and watching portion sizes or eating less, combined with regular physical activity and exercising more, are lifestyle changes that will help you feel great and have a healthy weight for the long term.

Steps you can take

Eat Well and Feed your Body

Well balanced eating is the most important thing you can do to help lower your weight, and keep it there. Use "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guides.html to help you plan your meals.

REMEMBER: Your body needs food from all four groups from Canada's Food Guide every day. The four food groups are Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives. Aim to include at least three of the four food groups at each meal. Check that you are eating at least the minimum number of servings from all four food groups daily.

- Eat three meals every day, starting with breakfast. Adults who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight than adults who skip breakfast.
- If you are hungry between meals, try having a small snack. Examples of a small snack are: a piece of fruit, 250 mL (1 cup) vegetables with low fat dip, 175 mL (¾ cup) low fat yogurt, or 60 mL (¼ cup) of nuts. Having a snack may help prevent you from overeating during the next meal.
Eat more high fibre foods. High fibre foods may help with weight loss because they make you feel full, and more likely to eat less. High fibre foods include lentils and dried beans and peas, whole grain cereals and bread, brown rice and whole wheat pasta, and nuts and seeds. Look for products with at least 4 g of fibre per serving. Increase fibre slowly, and increase fluids at the same time (to help avoid digestive upset).

Choose low glycemic index foods often. Low glycemic index foods include lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, whole grain pumpernickel bread, sweet potato, apples, plums and oranges. Eating low glycemic index foods probably helps you to lose weight in the short term, but it is not known whether this helps to keep the weight off in the long term. For information on low glycemic index foods see "Glycemic Index: A New Way of Looking at Carbs" at www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/healthy-living-resources/diet-nutrition/the-glycemic-index

REMEMBER: the glycemic index is just one tool for healthy eating.

Choose lower fat foods and cook with less fat. Aim for low fat, but not no fat. Small amounts of fat are needed every day for health. The claims "low fat" and "fat free" on labels do not always mean the food is low in calories. Also, "low cholesterol" does not mean "low fat". Check the nutrient facts label, which lists the amount of fat in a serving of the food.

Limit "added" unsaturated fats to 30-45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) each day. This includes any fat that you use to cook with, spread on bread or rolls, add to hot vegetables, or that is in salad dressings, sauces and gravies.

You can also bake, broil, barbeque and steam foods, instead of frying.

Choose skim or 1% milk and yogurt, and reduced-fat fortified soy drinks. Select cheeses that contain less than 20% Milk Fat (M.F.).

Choose lean meat, poultry without the skin, and fish.

Get enough fluid. You need 2.2-3 L (9-12 cups) each day. Most should be water. Milk is also a good choice - lower fat milk is best - because it gives you important nutrients. Use caution with juice and sweetened drinks; calories can add up quickly and they do not fill you up. Tea and coffee (without cream or sugar) are calorie free fluids.
Enjoy high calorie foods in small amounts. Do not keep foods high in fat and/or sugar in your cupboard, such as donuts, pastries, cakes, cookies, and chips. The easier it is to get, the more you are likely to eat.

Watch your portion sizes. Eating a large meal does not mean that you will eat less later. Try smaller portions and include snacks. This can help you control the amount that you eat and prevent you from getting too hungry.

In the beginning, you may find that you need to measure your food with measuring cups or a scale until you know what a Canada's Food Guide serving looks like.

Eat whole vegetables and fruit at each meal and snack. Vegetables and fruits are low in calories, have fibre and can help you to feel full. Eat the fruit rather than drink juice. Juice does not contain fibre, and even unsweetened juices are high in sugar and calories.

Fill half your plate with vegetables, one quarter with meat or meat alternatives, and one quarter with starchy foods such as a small baked potato with skin or brown rice. But beware of supersized plates.

**Enjoy Active Living**

Healthy eating works best when combined with regular physical activity and active living. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that all adults aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every week, in periods of 10 minutes or longer. Physical activity can mean joining a gym, jogging or bicycling. Active living also includes walking the dog, mowing the lawn, taking the stairs, parking further from the mall or walking to the bus stop. To make exercise more enjoyable, choose activities you like to do, and plan activities with friends and family. Being active burns calories, and it helps you feel better and have more energy.

Check out the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines at [csepguidelines.ca/](http://csepguidelines.ca/). Talk to your doctor before starting any exercise plan, especially if you have not been active recently. Start slowly and work your way up.
Additional Resources

Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call 8-1-1) or at www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthy-eating:

- Lifestyle Steps for Healthy Weight Loss: Getting Started


Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines  csepguidelines.ca/

Dietitians of Canada, "Eating + Activity Tracker"  www.eaTracker.ca

EatRight Ontario- My Menu Planner

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