

Healthy Weight Loss

With the growing popularity of fad diets and quick weight loss gimmicks, one thing remains clear among most experts: A healthy diet combined with exercise is the key to losing weight and keeping it off.

Healthy Diet. When you're trying to lose weight, it's important to reduce the number of calories in your diet. You can do this by eating less fat and controlling your portion sizes. However, you shouldn't starve yourself or use fad diets. Talk with your doctor to find out how many calories you should be consuming every day. A healthy diet includes:

Low amounts of fat. Some fat in your diet is necessary for energy and vitamin absorption. However, no more than 30 percent of your total daily calories should come from fat. Be

aware of the types of fat you're eating, too. High levels of saturated fat, which mainly is found in animal and dairy sources, can lead to high blood cholesterol levels. This puts you at greater risk for heart disease and other health concerns. A healthier alternative is monounsaturated fat. This type is found in olives, olive oil, cashews and avocados. It actually has been shown to reduce the risk for heart disease.

Plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products. This is where most of your calories should come from. These low-fat foods provide vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates and other substances that are good for your health. Your diet also should be:

- High in fiber
- Low in cholesterol
- Low to moderate in sugars, salt and sodium

Exercise is an important component of any healthy weight loss plan. Try to include some moderate activity most days of the week. Walking, gardening, dancing, jogging and swimming are all great ways to keep moving.

Exercise reduces the risk of obesity, hypertension and heart disease. It also increases longevity, and reduces anxiety, depression and stress. With a regular exercise routine, most people start to see and feel results in about four to six weeks.

Before starting a weight loss routine, talk with your doctor—especially if you are age 40 or older, have a health condition or have been inactive for a while.

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