

Easy to Gain, Hard to Lose



Health care experts tell us that obesity is one of the worst health problems facing Americans today. As life becomes easier due to modern conveniences, we burn fewer calories on a daily basis than our parents and grandparents did. Processed, high-fat foods are readily available, and are often less expensive than healthier choices. Unfortunately, it is very easy for us to gain excess weight, but hard to get rid of it later. It is up to each individual to take responsibility to lose weight, and although it's a big job, the rewards are significant. By shedding your extra pounds, you can drastically cut your risk for common diseases, increase your ability to enjoy life in many ways, and simply look and feel better every morning when you get out of bed.

Am I Overweight?

Body Mass Index (calculated by entering your height and weight into a formula) is over 25, you are overweight for your size. The good news is that if you are only slightly overweight, you can probably get yourself into a healthy weight range with just a few minor lifestyle changes. Calculate your BMI online at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight>.

Becoming Overweight

Do you remember when you became overweight? It's not something that happens overnight; rather, obesity is the result of years of poor habits. Your body is a very efficient machine, and over time it learns what your normal lifestyle is like. If you consume a high number of calories on a regular basis, your body will not waste effort building muscles and bone strength that you don't use very often—instead, it will store those extra calories as fat. The key to losing that fat is reversing the process. By reducing the number of calories you eat and increasing your physical activity, your fat will disappear and your muscles will grow instead.

Making a plan is the first step to accomplishing a weight loss goal. Be sure that it includes healthy diet and exercise routines.



LEARN MORE

Make smart decisions about your health and visit a physician or health specialist for advice and questions.

American Society for Nutrition

www.nutrition.org

FDA Dietary Supplements Warning

www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements

LOSE WEIGHT, STAY HEALTHY



HEALTHY DIRECTIONS

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HEALTHY DIRECTIONS



Deciding to Lose Weight

The first step to losing weight is not hitting the gym or starting a diet— it is making the decision to start a program and stick with it until you have met your weight loss goals. People who jog once in a while or who eat a salad for lunch occasionally don't lose much weight because they are not changing their lifestyle. Only consistent diet and exercise will prompt your body to process calories differently and transform the way you look. The more you prepare for your journey and motivate yourself, the more likely you will be to reach your goals.

Wrong Ways to Slim Down

There are plenty of diets, procedures, and self-proclaimed experts that offer a fast way to lose unwanted weight. Testimonials, celebrity endorsements, and dramatic “before and after” photos seem to prove the effectiveness of these methods, but they all fail an important test: they do not change your lifestyle. Weight loss that is not accompanied by a change in lifestyle will always be temporary, and in just a few weeks or months you will be back to square one.

Extreme Diets

Diets that focus on a certain type of food, or that exclude certain foods, often lead to noticeable weight loss in the space of a short amount of time. Instead of unwanted fat, however, the pounds you lose under such a diet are mainly water and other nutrients stored in the muscles.

Starvation

Some people, frustrated with their own weight problems, try to lose weight by eating practically nothing. This is a very dangerous approach; your body must have certain nutrient levels for survival. Depriving it puts you in even more immediate danger than your excess weight.

Surgery

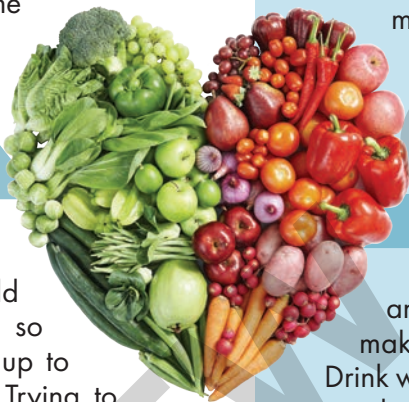
It is possible to physically extract excess fat from the body through surgical procedures, but it is expensive and only effective in the short term. Once the fat is gone, only a lifestyle change will keep it from returning.

Too Much Exercise

Exercising too hard or too fast is a sure way to suffer a painful injury. Your body needs to build up its endurance and strength, so start easy and work your way up to longer, more intense workouts. Trying to run a marathon right away or burn thousands of calories in a single workout will only hurt you.

The Right Way

In short, any method that seems like a shortcut to weight loss is probably not sound. You need to lose weight the same way you gained it: through habits that you develop over the course of weeks or months and maintain for the rest of your life.



Don't give in to the temptation of extreme dieting – it doesn't change bad habits and could cause major medical problems.

Gradual Changes

Losing weight in a healthy way takes patience. The more gradual your lifestyle changes are, the more likely you will be to adjust to them and make them your new normal. Understand your own strengths and weaknesses, and don't set yourself up for failure by ignoring them!

Diet

Instead of throwing out all of your food and replacing it with vegetables, start making small, healthy choices at each meal. Drink water instead of soda, prepare vegetables instead of potato chips as a side dish, and eat a piece of fruit instead of a candy bar in the middle of the afternoon. As you eat more of the right kinds of food, your body will get used to it and even crave it over unhealthy foods.

Exercise

Start with easy, low-impact exercises, and give yourself plenty of time to build your workout. Use a variety of techniques to build muscle strength, cardiovascular health, and endurance. Most importantly, stick with your exercise long-term. Even during a busy week, try to find some time to exercise. Your body needs to know that it should keep your muscles strong because you intend to keep them active on a regular basis.

Huge Healthy Benefits

Help prevent cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes with a healthy, well-rounded diet. Learn to get the most nutrition from your food by making smart choices. Make it your goal to eat a rainbow

of colors. Eat at least 2 cups of fruits and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables per day, giving your body plenty of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Try making half of your grains whole. Whole grains are higher in fiber than their refined white counterparts.

Get Heart Healthy!

The total amount of fat that you consume every day should not exceed more than 30% of your total daily calories, with no more than 10% made up of saturated fats and close to 0% from trans fats, which are bad for your heart. Heart-healthy mono-unsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats (such as canola or olive oil) should account for most of your fat intake.

Results!

You might not look different in the first week, but with a healthy weight-loss program, progress is inevitable. Your months of work will pay off, and people everywhere will notice the difference—including yourself!

