

## **Healthy Weight: Why we need to know about it?**

Being overweight or obese increases your risks for many illnesses and health conditions. The heavier you are, the more likely you are to suffer from heart conditions, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep apnea and injuries to your joints. Even more, there are some cancers which are rooted to being overweight or obese. On the other hand, when you reach a healthy weight you can enjoy the many benefits that come with it. A healthy weight helps you lower your risk for developing the illness mentioned above in addition to giving you more energy and making you feel good about yourself and your environment.

There are two tools used to determine a person's risk for illness linked to his/ her weight: Body Mass Index (BMI) and Waist Circumference Measurement.

The BMI is a tool used to estimate your total body fat. The amount of fat that you carry is a good indicator of your risk for many health conditions. If you are interested about knowing your BMI check the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at: [www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/](http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/).

Keep in mind that although BMI is a useful tool to determine body fat for most men and women, it does have some limitations:

- BMI may overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build.
- BMI may underestimate body fat in older persons and other who have lost muscle.

Waist Circumference Measurement is another tool used to help you figure out your overall health risks. If most of your fat is around your waist, then you are more at risk for heart condition, high blood pressure, and diabetes. This risk increases with a measurement that is greater than 35 inches for women or greater than 40 inches for men. If you are interested in knowing your waist circumference measurement to determine your risk visit: <http://www.myhealthywaist.org/home/index.html>.

## **How to get to a healthy weight and maintain it**

When trying to achieve a healthy weight DO NOT just focus in trying to lose weight. In order to get to YOUR healthy- weight you need to start by:

- **Setting realistic goals:** in other words, goals that you know can be achieved and maintained. Losing 1pound per week is a reasonable and a safe way to get to your healthy weight.
- **Eat healthy foods:** try by making one change at a time. Changing your eating habits too quickly can lead to failure. It is better to substitute sugary drinks for natural juices or mixing them with water; in this way, you will reduce the calorie intake while hydrating your body.
- **Become physically active:** start by taking baby steps. Do not try to run a marathon if you have never exercised before. It is more realistic if you decide to start walking 15 minutes every day and build your skills little by little. The day will come you can walk 30 to 45 minutes a day without feeling tired.

Maintaining a healthy weight calls for keeping a balance of your food intake and your level of physical activity. You must balance the calories (energy in) you get from food and beverages with the calories you use (or energy out) to keep your body working and moving. If you consume more calories (extra energy in) and do not spend them through physical activity (energy out) then you will gain weight. On the other hand, if you spend more calories than you consume then you will lose weight. For example, consuming 150 calories a day more than you burn in activity can lead to a gain of 10 pounds in a year. To avoid this from happening, you can either eliminate those extra calories or increase your level of physical activity. Keep in mind, a small bag of potato chips has over 150 calories, so stay alert when eating those snacks.

### **A Healthy Eating Plan**

A healthy eating plan gives your body the nutrients it needs every day and helps you stay within your daily calorie level. It also helps to lower your risk for heart disease and other conditions.

When planning a healthy eating plan keep these tips in mind:

- Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free (or low fat) milk and milk products.
- Eat lean proteins, such as chicken breast or turkey, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.
- Your healthy eating plan should be low in saturated fats (butter, fried foods) and low in sodium (processed meats, meals, and/ or salty snacks).
- Control your portion sizes; if you need help finding the correct portion size please visit: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

### **Becoming Physically Active – How much exercise do you need?**

Before you start any type of physical activity remember to consult with your health provider. Staying physically active while eating fewer calories can help you achieve a healthy weight and keep it off over time. Remember that the amount of physical activity needed is not the same for every single person. Some people may reach a stable weight by exercising 2.5 hours of moderate exercise a week; others, may need 5 hours a week to achieve the same results. The important point is that any type of physical activity or exercise is BETTER than no activity at all. Remember to not pressure yourself; you can make small changes to make your day a more physically active and improve your health. If time is an issue, break out your sessions into periods of 10 minutes and continue throughout the week or take a 3-5 minute breaks at work a few times a day. Appreciate what you CAN DO, even if you think it is a small amount; each activity you do is a step closer to a more active lifestyle. To obtain some general guidelines please visit: [www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html)

### **I would like to know more about Healthy Weight and Healthy Lifestyles**

There are plenty of website resources that can help you to learn more about healthy lifestyles, eating healthy, moving more, and feeling better. Here are some websites that can help you to achieve your healthy goals:

- [www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)
- [www.justmove.org](http://www.justmove.org)
- [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/index.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/index.htm)
- [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm)
- <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/quiz>