

# Overweight and Weight Loss Maintenance<sup>1</sup>

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## What is considered overweight?

Overweight and obesity, both degrees of excess body fatness, are significant health problems. Body fatness is estimated using the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is found using an individual's height and weight. Table 1 lists the categories we use to define body fatness in adults using BMI.

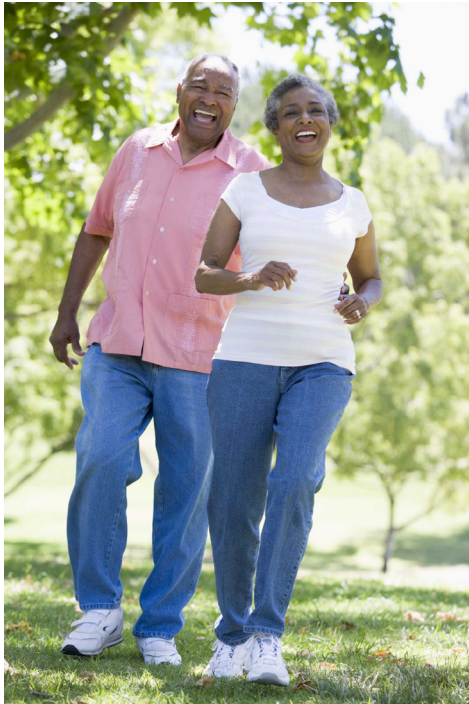


Figure 1. Exercising and staying active will help increase your metabolism throughout the day. Credits: Thinkstock.com

Table 1. Body Mass Index

Status	BMI
Underweight	≤ 18.5
Normal	18.5- 24.9
Overweight	25.0-29.9
Obese 1	30-34.9
Obese 2	35-39.9
Extremely Obese	≥40

## What about overweight kids?

The growing rate of obese children is particularly troubling, considering many obese adolescents will become obese adults (Goldhaber-Fiebert et al. 2012). Overweight and obese adults are at a much higher risk for many chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer, and hypertension.

## What can we do to take action?

Knowing when to institute a weight management plan is the first step in preventing further weight gain. Table 2 lists the recommended treatments for individuals based on their BMI and co-morbid conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Practical Guide: Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults 2000).

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Table 2. Recommended Treatment for Overweight and Obesity

	Diet/Exercise	Pharmacotherapy	Bariatric Surgery
<b>Overweight</b>	Yes, if Comorbidities		
<b>Obese I</b>	Yes	Yes, If Comorbidities	
<b>Obese 2</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes, If Comorbidities
<b>Extremely Obese</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes

## How do we lose weight?

For many people, weight loss is a chronic battle. Popular diets are often unsuccessful because they cannot be followed permanently. There is no magic diet to make you instantly shed pounds, but some good tips for steady, long-term weight loss are listed below.

- 1. Portions matter:** Weight loss and weight maintenance are all about balance and moderation. Try using smaller plates and bowls to help decrease your portion size (Pedersen, Kang, and Kline 2007). Another tip is to wait at least 10 minutes after you finish eating before going back for seconds.
- 2. Be active:** Exercising and staying active will help increase your metabolism throughout the day.
- 3. Everyone's different:** In order for you to maintain long term weight loss, you must be familiar with your body and eating habits. Identify which situations or foods are particularly tempting for you and try to modify them, without denying yourself completely.
- 4. Make half your plate fruits and veggies:** Following the MyPlate guideline is a great way to reduce your fat and calories while increasing the nutrient density of your meals. Fruits and vegetables have lots of fiber and water to help you stay satisfied.
- 5. Do you eat when you're not hungry?** At times this is ok, but if you do it too often, it can contribute to weight gain. Keep a log for a few days. Record your level of hunger and satiety before and after each time you eat. Add notes about your mood. Being aware of when boredom, frustration, stress, or sadness contributes to overeating is the first step to gaining control.

- 6. Weigh yourself regularly:** Studies show that regular self-weighing (once/week) is associated with a decreased body weight and weight maintenance (Van Wormer et al. 2009).
- 7. Don't skip meals:** Distribute the calories you consume over the entire day, with the consumption of 4 to 5 meals/snacks per day including breakfast. Consumption of greater energy intake earlier in the day may help you control your hunger so that you eat less over the course of the day (de Castro 2004).
- 8. Surround yourself with support:** Talk to your family, friends, and co-workers and tell them specific ways they can help, for instance, by not offering you second helpings, or by providing salad and fruit options along with or instead of the pizza and cake at parties.
- 9. Set goals to stay motivated:** After you've lost weight and the compliments end, it may feel like there is no incentive to continue your good habits. The key is to find ways to make *staying at* your goal weight as rewarding as *getting to* your goal weight. Sign up for a community walk. Explore new activities you might enjoy, such as gardening or hiking, tennis or water aerobics, kayaking or biking—or simply add a relaxing after-dinner walk to your family's evening routine. Focus on the quality of your diet, and reward yourself with non-food rewards when you achieve your weight maintenance goals.

## Why is weight maintenance so elusive?

Maintaining weight loss is complicated by many factors that make it seem like an impossible task. A successful loss is often followed by a steady weight gain. Dieters tend to return to previous habits and decrease daily activities as they lose the "diet mentality." Losing weight can also induce hormonal changes or reduce lean body mass, making it more difficult to maintain weight loss. However, physical activity can offset these changes.

## Is long term weight loss possible?

Yes! One in 6 adults have kept about 10% of their highest weight off for at least 1 year. What is their secret? According to the National Weight Control Registry (Wing and Hill 2001):

- 78% eat breakfast every day.
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week.

- 62% watch less than 10 hours of television per week.
- 90% exercise, on average, about 1 hour per day.

## Where can I get more information?

The Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent at your local county Extension office may have more written information and nutrition classes for you to attend. Also, a registered dietitian (RD) can provide reliable information to you.

Reliable nutrition information may be found on the Internet at the following sites.

<http://fyics.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu>

<http://www.nutrition.gov>

<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/>

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