



Why Should I Lose Weight?

People who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke, even if they have no other risk factors.

Obesity is unhealthy because excess weight puts more strain on your heart. It can raise blood pressure and blood cholesterol and can lead to diabetes. Losing weight is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of heart problems and other diseases.



How can I lose weight?

It's easy to start a diet. Staying on one is harder! Prepare yourself by setting goals, thinking ahead to roadblocks along the way, and deciding how to deal them.

Talk to a nutritionist or registered dietitian about creating an eating plan that's right for you. It's never wise to follow fad diets, go without eating, or try to lose weight too fast.

- **Think about your eating habits.** It may be helpful to pick a certain room in the house and not eat anywhere else.
- **Decide how to handle temptation.** When you're offered high-calorie foods, turn them down nicely, but firmly. Try to eat out at places where there are low-calorie foods to choose from.
- **Plan ahead.** If a bad mood, stress or boredom makes you want to eat a lot, decide in advance what action to take. You could take up a new hobby, go for a walk, call a friend or read a book.
- **Be realistic and expect setbacks.** If you go off your diet, don't quit and don't get mad at yourself. Just get back on track.

How should I change my eating habits?

- Eat slowly, take smaller portions and avoid "seconds."
- Eat a few light meals each day instead of one main meal. Don't skip meals.
- Choose a variety of healthy foods like fruit, vegetables, whole-grain cereals and pastas, dried peas and beans, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, lean meat, fish and skinless poultry.
- Cook foods in ways that help remove fat, like baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing. Don't fry foods in oil.
- Read food labels and avoid foods that are high in added sugars, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and calories.
- Avoid pastries, sugar-sweetened beverages, candy bars, pies and cakes.
- Drink lots of water. Limit alcohol and other high-calorie drinks.

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How can physical activity help?

Physical activity is as important as your diet in helping you lose weight! Regular physical activity helps lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure and other health problems. If you have a chronic condition, ask your doctor or health professional for a physical activity plan that's right for you.

The amount of physical activity needed to maintain a healthy body weight depends on caloric intake and varies greatly. To achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, you should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, such as brisk walking. Increase your amount of physical activity gradually over time and decrease your caloric intake to a point where your input and output can achieve energy balance.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How much weight should I lose?

What type of physical activity is best for me?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!

