

GETTING TO YOUR IDEAL WEIGHT

Do You Look As Good As You Feel?

Are you overweight? By how much? How do you know what your ideal body weight is? How do you feel? Is your body cooperating at your size, or is it breaking down and in revolt?

These are hard questions that confront people who want to be healthy. Weight loss needs to be a whole lot more about how your body is working, or not working, for you than about how you look and whether your clothes still fit you. After deciding to lose weight, you then want to compare the benefits of dieting to weight management. Healthy weight loss that stays off is a product of ongoing weight management.

Are You A Comfort Food Addict?

Alcoholics refer to their disease as alcoholism. There is a two-part recovery process. First, stop drinking alcohol. Second, make lifestyle changes that increase the likelihood that you will never drink again. Recovering alcoholics refer to this part as “the ism.” When an active alcoholic commits to both parts of the recovery, he attains abstinence. While this implies never drinking again, recovering alcoholics will tell you they are not going to drink “for today.” The One Day At A Time philosophy of recovery sustains an alcoholic and reminds him that he is one drink away from relapse.

Although not all obese people are food addicts, weight management and alcoholism recovery have a lot in common. Of course, abstinence is not a part of weight management. The body will not allow you to starve yourself by never eating again. And yet, as you commit to a weight management program, make lifestyle changes that promote healthy choices, and take it

one day at a time, your unhealthy weight comes off gradually and stays off. You reach your goal weight.

How Much To Lose?

Four factors go into calculating your goal weight: your height, weight, bone structure, and body mass index, or BMI. Insurance companies use height and bone structure to determine average range of weight. Bone structure is simply measured as large, medium, or small-boned by circling your wrist with your thumb and second finger. If your fingers do not meet, you are large-boned. If they meet, you are medium-boned. If they overlap, you are small-boned. Calculation of your BMI is more complicated. This is the formula:

Weight divided by height squared, then multiplied by 704

or

Weight times .45, divided by height times .024 squared

A normal BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9; underweight is less than 18.5, while overweight is between 25 and 29.9. Obesity is defined as being 25% over your average range of weight, or having a BMI over 30. Morbid obesity, indicating a life threatening condition, is defined as being 50% over your average range of weight or having a BMI over 40. Where obesity has compromised several medical systems, morbidity increases.

Excessive Weight is Never The Only Problem

The more body systems that are affected by your excessive weight, the greater the impact on your health. Often, people who are excessively overweight are also diabetic, have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart problems, and breathing problems. They also frequently have

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acid reflux and other gastrointestinal problems. You might have difficulty holding your bladder, difficulty sleeping, and suffer from chronic muscle and joint pain. You might have arthritis in your bones as well as joints, heel spurs, and your body may have trouble getting rid of excessive water. While all of these conditions can come about from other medical problems, if you are excessively overweight, you have a greater likelihood of having these other difficulties.

In addition to the physical issues, psychological issues plague people who are excessively overweight. If you see yourself as overweight, you might wrestle with embarrassment, humiliation, and shame. Over time, and without psychological help, these issues lead to self-hatred, self-contempt, depression, damaged self-esteem, and social withdrawal. Gradually, your world will become smaller and smaller as you get bigger and bigger in size.

Are You Having An Affair With Your Food?

God forbid you would ever have a love affair. If you did fall to that temptation, the affair would be passionate, illicit, and short-termed. Lovers are looking for a quick fix to their emptiness. They want the excitement without the commitment. The percentages of divorce go way up, when the marriage is the product of mutual infidelity. There is no shortcut to the completion and fullness of a healthy marriage. It takes hard work, continual assessment of feelings, commitment through the hard times, and an on-going communication. An affair gives you none of these things.

Dieting is like having an affair. There is an initial allure, many promises to yourself, and good intentions. The quick fix to weight loss works no better for the dieter than it does for the adulterer. Serial adultery leads to more emptiness. Chronic dieting dooms most people to failure to reach their goal weight. In fact, many people who stop dieting, out of frustration, find the lost

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weight coming back, and then they gain more weight! Dieting creates a state of deprivation and semi-starvation, leading to meal skipping, food preoccupation, cravings, and then over-eating just to try to make yourself feel better. Go figure.

So, Try Weight Management Instead of Dieting

Don't just lose the weight. Keep it off. This works by putting your whole mind, body, and spirit into the weight management process. You cannot think or pray yourself to your goal weight. The cognitive and spiritual dimensions follow the hard work of the physical dimension. Choosing to lose weight and keep it off requires that losing weight becomes your single-most important priority in your life.

Getting Started

Start by calculating your reasonable goal weight, given your age, height, bone structure, and body mass index. Crunch the numbers to find your goal weight. Next, use graph paper to chart your weight on a daily basis. The chart becomes your accountability partner, your guide to daily activities, and your source of pride in accomplishment even in the small amounts of weight loss that start the process. When you have lots of weight to lose, you won't notice a pound or two loss from one day to the next unless you mark it out, literally, on the graph paper.

Step One: Weigh Yourself Daily

Weigh yourself daily, at roughly the same time of the day, and chart your weight. We vary in weight from three to five pounds within a twenty-four hour period of time, so it is helpful to weigh yourself each morning after your bathroom routine and before breakfast. This will give you the most honest measure.

Step Two: Calorie Count

Next, there is no substitute for calorie counting. Nutritionists will tell you that weight gain is most likely when your daily count exceeds 3000 calories. Weight loss is possible when you consume 2000-3000 calories per day, with moderate exercise. Consuming less than 1200 calories per day results in feelings of starvation, excessive hunger, and becomes counter-productive. Not eating enough each day will lead to medical problems and may trigger binge eating.

Tips To Keep Your Calories Down

Several “tips” aid in making your calorie intake goals. Many studies encourage drinking water as your only beverage throughout the day. On average, this becomes 6-8, 8 oz, glasses of water daily. Also, eat your usual three meals per day, but reduced portions to stay within your calorie limits. Trick your mind by putting your meal on a smaller plate! Make sure your meals are balanced and nutritional.

Also, stick to meals only. Avoid the “3 S’s,” that is, avoid seconds, snacks, and scraps. I grew up with a mother who reminded me of all those starving children in India, as a way of guiltting me into cleaning my plate. I ate everything on my plate all right. As I grew up and had my own family, I cleaned my plate and all the others around the family dinner table as well. I still, however, haven’t figured out how my plate-cleaning behavior helped all those starving children in India! Sticking only to three meals and avoiding incidental eating will keep you in your calorie goal range.

Step Three: Move Your Body Lots

Finally, exercising is the regulator for your weight management program. It also is the gateway to the mind and spirit dimensions of weight control. If you “fudge” (pun intended) on

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your calorie intake, more exercise will burn off the excess calories. Exercise begins where your body allows. If you are able to walk, then walk. If you can power walk, then step it up. If you have resources to swim, the buoyancy makes the exercise easier, and swimming strokes involve all the body muscles at once, giving you a more complete workout.

If you have access to a stepper, stationary bike, or other exercise equipment or free weights, work your way up to a good workout. At whatever level of exercise, repetitive motion for twenty minutes will purge your cardiovascular system and increase your metabolism. This means that stored fat will begin to burn off.

For weight management purposes, ideally, a good workout includes twenty minutes to get your cardiovascular system pumping and forty minutes of concentrated, repetitive motion against whatever resistance you can tolerate. The saying “no pain, no gain,” is actually true. Of course, begin slowly and get cleared by your physician for your particular exercise regimen before getting started.

Good Feedback Keeps You Motivated

Use your weight chart to monitor your success. As a rule of thumb, if your weight stays the same for three days, or whenever your weight goes up, review your previous day’s weight management efforts. You will likely find the error of your ways. Then redouble your efforts for today to stay the course. Keep your calorie intake within weight loss parameters, but maybe add more exercise. Review your intake. Was it that glass of iced tea you had with lunch yesterday? Did you eat after dinner last night? Did that fudge sundae blow a hole in your calorie count? Keeping the weight chart daily keeps you focused and helps you catch the “oops” before the damage is so great that you feel defeated.

Add Mind and Spirit

What you tell yourself throughout your weight loss and subsequent management sets the tone for success. Because of gender metabolism, women are successful in losing weight and keeping it off if you lose no more or less than 1-3 pounds per week. Men can keep it off when you lose between 3 and 5 pounds per week. Knowing this, tell yourself to go slow. Don't expect too much too soon. In fact, too much too soon is a sure sign of rebounding to excessive weight gain! Using your mind to control your body impulses allows your weight management to continue productively.

Where Did All That Eating Come From??

Your mind has a set point that regulates food intake and stimulates appetite if you are not eating enough to reach it. Effective weight loss involves changing eating habits, avoiding "comfort food," and maintaining the cognitive willpower to stay the course. Because of the set point in your brain, the first third of your projected weight loss tends to be hard to lose. You are "convincing" the set point to let go. The middle third tends to fly off, as you achieve mind over matter. The last third of your weight loss is also very hard to achieve, as you are "reassuring" the set point to lower its expectations and maintain a smaller size.

Feed Your Soul

How you feel about yourself throughout your weight loss and subsequent management is a produce of your spirit. Pray through your weight loss. Paul wrote about your body being a temple to the Lord. Make it hallow by making it fit and trim. Additionally, as you monitor your feelings throughout your weight management efforts, you will reinforce your success. Feeling

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lighter, more comfortable, better able to fit into your clothes, into your social life, all lead to healthier self acceptance, higher self esteem, and more self confidence.

Having an outlet for your feelings will make you less likely to “eat your feelings,” which is what comfort food is all about. Journaling daily helps you express what you are feeling. Have your feelings in a healthy, productive way. Exercising regularly releases endorphins in your brain, which help you feel better, more fulfilled, and less stressed. Anger, in any form, is the source of negative energy and very counterproductive to healthy weight management. When you become angry, feel it, and look for healthy, productive ways to release it. Talking it out, exercising, or writing it out are all healthy releases for anger. Stuffing anger in particular and feelings in general leads to stuffing food. Maintaining a positive spirit leads to success in weight management.

You Did It !!!

It may take you weeks, months, or years to reach your goal weight, but you did it! Good for you! Your persistence paid off. Oh, you had your ups and downs, but you caught yourself, sized up the errors of your ways, and got back on track.

Effective weight management involves changing your habit structure. Good (and bad) habits take about 4-6 weeks to change. That first month and a half was the hardest for you to maintain your new strategies for losing weight. However, now that you have these strategies in place, they have become your new normal. You will maintain your weight loss with little effort because you have established new behaviors that support your new look. Not only have you reached your goal weight by dieting, but you also have achieved lifestyle changes in your food, exercise, and self-nourishment that have put you on a path of healthy, life-long weight management. Good for you. Be proud of yourself.

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