

LET'S TALK ABOUT WEIGHT

No size fits all





Do I need to lose weight? How can I lose weight? How much weight should I lose? Why is it so difficult to lose weight?

Truth is, your weight is a lot more complex than a number on a scale. And understanding why means taking a look at the relationship between your weight, your lifestyle and your overall health.

Weight is complex

Weight loss is not as simple as ‘eat less and move more’. What you weigh is the result of other factors as well, some of which are beyond your control: your age, genetics, certain health conditions and some medications that you might be taking, for example.

The impact of lifestyle changes

Instead of focusing on losing weight, consider ways that you can improve your lifestyle. Small changes like regular physical activity, balanced eating and good sleep hygiene can have a real impact on your overall health and well-being, regardless of whether you lose weight.

Health isn't just about weight

Healthy people come in all shapes and sizes, which is why it's important not to confuse weight with being healthy. Your lifestyle plays an important role in your overall health, and it's possible to improve your health by making better lifestyle choices. Many experts agree that even if these choices don't result in weight loss, they can lead to a healthier you.

A matter of physical and mental health

It's no secret that excess weight can increase the risk of certain chronic conditions, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, especially in people who don't get a lot of physical activity. But not everyone realizes just how much of an impact negative stereotypes and misinformation about weight and health can have on people with larger bodies. Some can end up suffering from feelings of shame, guilt and anxiety; others can experience discrimination at work and at school, often with significant social consequences. All of this negative energy feeds our dissatisfaction with our bodies and our struggles with our weight, leading us to seek out unhealthy, quick-fix weight control 'solutions'.

Quick-fix is too often no fix at all

Short-term weight loss solutions might sound appealing, but they rarely work to maintain your weight over the long term. If you stop to think about it, this makes sense: if diets were truly effective, would there really be so many of them to choose from? Gluten free, paleo, no sugar, raw food, food combining, blood type... In the end, the winning solution for long-term benefits is to adopt a healthy, enjoyable lifestyle rather than losing large amounts of weight too quickly through a restrictive diet.

Weight & the modern environment

In today's modern environment, we're pushed to work harder, eat faster, move less and sleep when we can find the time. When we're not commuting, we're spending endless hours sitting in front of screens at work and at home. And every day, we're bombarded with messages about food: ads sell to us, easily-accessible meals and snacks call our names, and large restaurant portions crowd our plates. At the same time, beauty ideals remain as unattainable as ever, with thinness perceived as an ideal, while excess weight, and even normal weight, are deemed unattractive and undesirable.

Is it any surprise, then, that most of us tend to gain weight over time and have unrealistic expectations for our bodies?

Switch the focus away from weight loss

While fad diets and weight loss programs can lead to impressive initial results, the fact remains that the majority of people who succeed in losing weight struggle to maintain their weight loss over time.¹ Take, for instance, reality TV show “The Biggest Loser”. Participants in the popular weight loss competition quickly lost massive amounts of weight while undergoing an intensive food and exercise regimen. However, a follow-up of a group of these participants revealed that, 6 years later, they had regained on average more than two thirds of their initial weight loss.²

This is why an ongoing commitment to healthy behaviours is important. By changing your eating habits and being active regularly, in a way that is realistic and ongoing, you're more likely to lose weight and maintain the loss over time.

Weight stability:
A healthy first step

Often, we're so focused on losing weight, we lose sight of other things that we've managed to accomplish—like stopping weight gain. It's important to remember that this is an achievement in itself, as is being able to maintain the same weight over time.

Slow and steady wins in the end

If losing weight and maintaining weight loss is your goal, consider losing small amounts over a long period. It's not how much and how quickly you lose weight that makes a difference, but rather how you can maintain the behaviour changes in the long run.

Understanding your weight

Your bones, muscles, organs and fat mass all contribute to the number you see on the scale when you weigh yourself. In addition, your weight can fluctuate by a few pounds from one day to the next—or even over the course of a single day—due to things like your hydration level and the status of your body’s digestive processes. If you weigh yourself, consider the trend over a longer period of time rather than focusing on the day-to-day variations.

Put some muscle into your body

Because muscle is much denser than fat, it weighs more for the same volume—which means that, even if you become more active, you might not end up weighing less. You will, however, improve your body composition and improve your overall health. Plus, you’ll find you’re stronger and have more energy.

Boost your metabolism with physical activity

Metabolism is the amount of energy (measured in calories) that your body burns each day. But because we all have our own metabolism, you could do the same amount of physical activity and eat the same foods as someone else, only to see it impact your weight in different ways.

There are a number of factors that, throughout your life, can affect your metabolism. And because muscles require more energy than fat, your muscle mass contributes to your metabolism. As you get older, your muscle mass tends to decrease which, in turn, causes your metabolism to slow down.

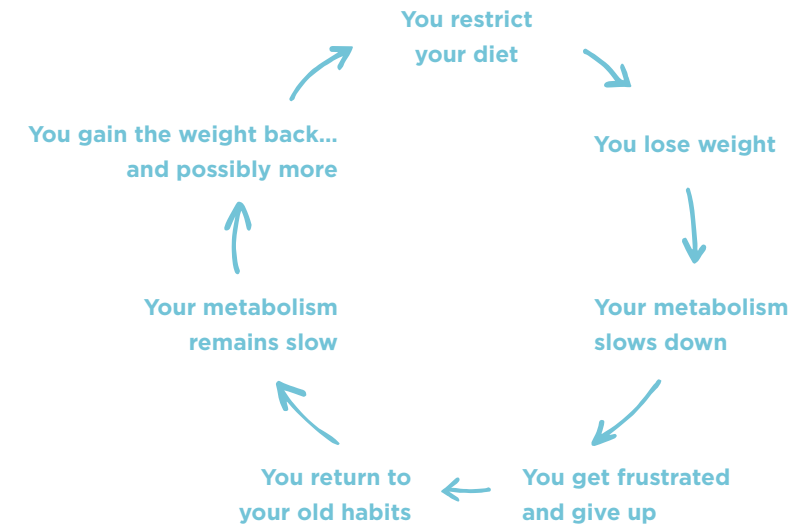
This explains why, as the years go by, you might find yourself gaining weight more easily. But the good news is, staying active throughout life can help maintain your muscle mass—and activate your metabolism.

The benefits of being active

Physical activity is good for you no matter what you weigh. A more active you is a more energetic you. Whether or not you’re losing weight, you’re gaining something even more important: an active, fulfilling and healthy life.

The yo-yo effect

While going on a restrictive diet can result in rapid or drastic weight loss, it can also slow down your metabolism in a significant way.² Not only can a slower metabolism and feelings of deprivation have a negative impact on your weight, but weight loss can also increase your appetite.³ When this happens, you're likely to give up, start eating as before, and even experience binge eating, and put back on the weight you lost (and possibly more)—which will make you want to restrict your diet all over again. And so your weight goes down, then up, then down, then up—just like a yo-yo.



Adapted from <http://monequilibre.ca/mon-alimentation/23-regimes-ne-fonctionnent-pas-long-terme>

Take a mindful approach to eating

More and more, the term ‘mindful’ comes up when talking about healthy eating. But what does it mean, exactly? Mindful eating is a technique aimed at helping you reconnect with your body’s internal hunger and fullness cues. It’s a great way to consume the amount of food your body *actually* needs—which is often less than you would eat when distracted.

It’s about more than just food

Paying attention to what you eat is important. But so is thinking about *when*, *where* and *why* you’re eating.

Try these mindful eating strategies

- Eat when you’re hungry
- Eat sitting down at a table
- Make what you eat look and taste good
- Eat slowly, appreciating different tastes and textures
- Create a calm eating environment
- Minimize distractions when you’re eating, e.g., watching TV, working, etc.
- Stop eating when you feel satisfied

Weigh in with the hunger scale

With the overabundance of food in our environment, internal hunger cues, like feeling full, are often ignored because of external influences such as food served from large packages and oversized plates. Use the hunger scale below to tune into your internal cues.

The hunger scale

As a general rule, you should eat when your hunger is at level 2 and stop when it’s at level 4. Eating when you’re too hungry will likely cause you to eat too much, too quickly. But eating just as you’re beginning to feel hungry will enable you to eat more slowly and pay more attention to when you’ve had enough.



Important note

If you have trouble identifying your body’s hunger and fullness signals, or if you have a poor relationship with food, the advice in this section might not work for you. If this is the case, you should consult a qualified health professional who can help give you advice that’s better suited to your personal situation.

Size up a smaller plate

Larger plates can make a serving of food seem smaller, which helps explain why we might sometimes eat more than we need to. To help you get a better sense of your portion sizes, try using smaller plates and bowls.

Fuel your body with satisfying foods

Consuming a variety of foods from all four food groups not only gives your body all the vitamins and minerals it needs, it also provides you with key nutrients that can help satisfy your appetite throughout the day.

No more forbidden food

Some foods are definitely more nutrient-rich than others. But all foods, even treats and sweets, can fit into an overall balanced diet. In fact, when you deprive yourself of the foods you love, you often end up craving and even eating more of them at some point anyway. But if you're being mindful of how often you eat these foods, and how much you have when you do, there's no need to eliminate them from your diet.

The power of fibre and protein

When you eat meals and snacks that are not fully satisfying, your body begins to send hunger signals not long after you've eaten. Dietary fibre and protein play a key role in satiety, or the feeling of fullness after eating, which is why it's important to make sure your meals and snacks provide enough of both.

Dietary fibre is found only in plant foods: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts,

seeds and legumes. Since fibre-rich foods generally need more chewing and digestion time, they help keep you feeling satisfied longer.

Protein, on the other hand, can be found in a variety of plant and animal foods like

meat, fish, eggs, legumes, nuts, seeds and milk products. Including protein at every meal and snack helps you feel more satisfied throughout the day, which can help curb cravings for less nutritious foods. Take a look at this list of common foods and their protein content:

Food	Protein content
Chicken, beef, pork or fish—75 g (2½ oz)	20 g
Plain Greek yogurt—¾ cup (175 g)	17 g
Cheddar cheese—1½ oz (50 g)	12 g
Chickpeas, red kidney beans or lentils—¾ cup (175 mL)	12 g
Eggs—2	12 g
Tofu—150 g	12 g
Pumpkin seeds or peanuts—¼ cup (60 mL)	10 g
Milk—1 cup (250 mL)	9 g
Flavoured yogurt—¾ cup (175 g)	8 g
Peanut butter—2 tbsp (30 mL)	7 g
Almonds, pistachios or sunflower seeds—¼ cup (60 mL)	7 g
Pecans or walnuts—¼ cup (60 mL)	3 g

Source: Canadian Nutrition File, version 2015.

Stay ahead of your hunger

For added dietary fibre	For a protein boost
Eat the skins of fruits and vegetables whenever possible	Replace water with milk when preparing oatmeal
Add beans or lentils to soups or salads	Keep some extra hard-boiled eggs in the fridge for protein that's ready when you are
Add seeds, nuts or fruit to your breakfast cereal	Have Greek yogurt with your breakfast or as a snack or dessert
Choose whole grain bread, pasta, cereal and rice	Pair your grape and apple with a piece of cheese

Eliminating a food group can be counter-productive

Unlike what some fad diets might suggest, eliminating a food group is not necessarily a good idea. Cutting out grains, for example –especially whole grains, which have been linked to a decreased risk of obesity– can reduce your intake of dietary fibre.

Similarly, giving up milk products can reduce your daily intake of protein and calcium. Several studies show that consuming milk products as part of a calorie-restricted diet could promote fat loss while preserving lean mass, including muscle and bone. Moreover, milk products provide satiating, high-quality protein.

What you drink can make a difference

Water is the best way to keep your hydration levels up during the day. But if you need something to quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger, milk is a great choice due to its protein content. ›

Think moderation, not deprivation

Sometimes, when you impose restrictions, it's easy to become obsessed with the foods you can no longer have. And this tends to make you want them even more. Instead of cutting out treats altogether, allow yourself to have them occasionally. When a craving hits, try buying single serving cakes or sweets, or put a handful of chips in a bowl instead of eating straight out of the bag. And, most importantly, take time to savour and enjoy every bite!

If you like juice, limit yourself to a 1/2 cup (125 mL) serving of 100% fruit or vegetable juice, keeping in mind that eating whole fruits and vegetables is a better way to satisfy your hunger. Juice contains less dietary fibre than whole fruits and vegetables, which makes it less satisfying.

As for sugar sweetened beverages, they not only contain very few nutrients, but are also much less satisfying compared to nutritious foods.

Snack on this

To give your body all the nutrients it needs and help keep your hunger in check all day long, it's important to eat at least three balanced meals every day and, if you're hungry, nutritious snacks in between. Snacks, especially ones that contain protein and fibre, help you avoid being too hungry for your next meal and eating more than you need to.

Here are a few quick snack ideas:

Fibre	Protein
Homemade oatmeal muffin	Milk
Apple	Nuts or seeds
Raw vegetables	Hummus
Frozen raspberries	Yogurt
Whole-grain crackers	Cheese

Put a positive spin on ready-to-eat meals

Home cooking is an important aspect of eating well; ready-to-eat meals tend to contain more salt, fat and sugar, and less fibre and protein. Unfortunately, we all have days when our busy schedules just don't allow us to cook, and we need to rely on something that's good to go—and that's OK.

When a 100% home-cooked meal just isn't possible, you can still put a positive spin on ready-to-eat meals by adding protein (e.g., grated cheese, hard-boiled eggs, canned legumes, etc.) and fresh or frozen vegetables.

Handy home cooking tips

- Plan your meals and snacks ahead of time
- If possible, set aside time on the weekend to cook a few meals for the coming week
- Use a slow cooker: put it on before you leave for work, and come home to a ready-to-eat meal!
- Wash, cut and measure recipe ingredients ahead of time, to speed up meal prep later on
- Double up on recipes and freeze the leftovers in single-serving containers
- Keep canned fish and legumes on hand for quick salads or pasta dishes
- Save time by using already shredded cheese and precut fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables

Don't give up on eating out

Eating in restaurants is a simple pleasure we all enjoy, as is the occasional take out or delivery. And so they should be. But since restaurant portions tend to be a lot bigger than homemade meals, it might be helpful to recall some mindful eating strategies. Here are a few other things you can try:

- Instead of ordering an appetizer and an entrée, order two appetizers
- Request a half portion or a smaller portion (often more than enough!)
- Share a dessert
- Bring leftovers home

The importance of physical activity and sleep

Much like a healthy diet, being active and getting enough sleep every day can have a significant impact on your health and weight. But more than this, it can give you the energy and stamina you need to get more out of your daily life.

Staying active does a body (and mind) good

Regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of several health conditions, as well as lead to improved self-esteem. Aim for at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic activity—like walking, jogging, bike riding or cross-country skiing—per week, broken down into sessions of 10 minutes or more. And to increase your overall strength, add activities that target your muscles and bones like yoga and Pilates at least twice a week.

Try to make physical activity a part of your daily routine

Not sure where to start? Here are a few easy ways to help keep you on the move:

- To ensure you stay motivated, choose activities you enjoy
- Try to take the stairs instead of the escalator or the elevator
- Try to use active transportation whenever possible, e.g., walk or bike
- Join a team or take part in group activities—you'll make new friends and get active at the same time!

What's sleep got to do with it?

Growing research is finding that insufficient sleep can contribute to weight gain. It seems that the less sleep you get, the more likely you are to choose calorie-dense foods, snack more often and eat more meals than necessary.⁴

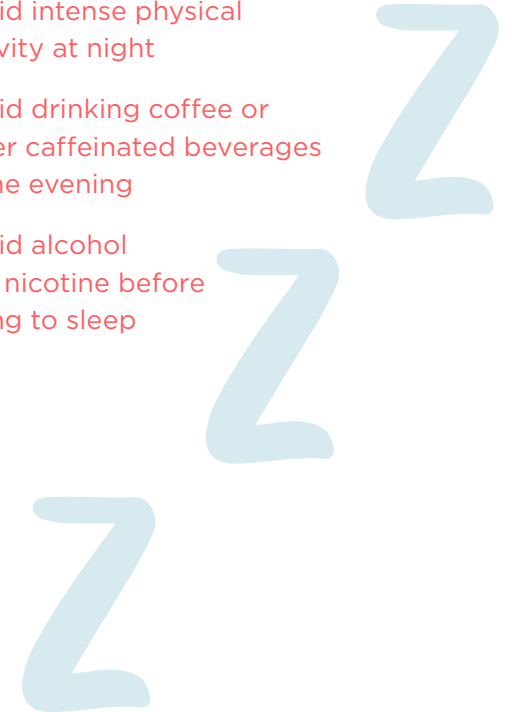
Sleep is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. But our increasingly busy lives and demanding work schedules are leading many of us to suffer from some form of sleep deprivation on a daily basis. Worst part is, we often don't even realize it.

How much is enough?

According to the Canadian Sleep Society, adults require anywhere from 6 to 9 hours of sleep at night, but it's different for everyone.⁵ To figure out if you're getting enough sleep, pay attention to whether you feel rested in the morning and are able to remain alert throughout the day.

Tips for a good night's sleep

- Set a regular sleep schedule
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, like taking a bath and reading
- Limit the distractions in your bedroom
- Avoid intense physical activity at night
- Avoid drinking coffee or other caffeinated beverages in the evening
- Avoid alcohol and nicotine before going to sleep



The first step towards a healthier life

If you're looking to get on the path to a healthier lifestyle, you might want to ask yourself, "*Is now the right time for me?*" Remember that even small lifestyle changes can improve your health—regardless of whether you lose weight.

When it comes to healthy life changes, the first step involves finding a few realistic habits that you can maintain over time. And the best way to achieve a big goal like "*I want to adopt a healthier lifestyle*" is to break it up into a number of small, specific goals.

When it comes to setting goals, think SMART

The way you eat and live now didn't happen overnight, so don't try to make a lot of major changes all at once. People who make realistic changes over a longer period are much more likely to succeed.

The SMART method involves setting goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-framed. And since SMART goals are measurable, it's easier for you to track your progress and stay motivated. It is also recommended to focus on only one or two goals at a time, especially at the beginning.

Celebrate your success when you achieve a goal, and don't be too hard on yourself if you fall short. Slip ups are a natural part of change, so don't feel bad—just get back on track. Changing your habits can be challenging at first but, with persistence, healthier habits will soon become second nature.

These examples can give you an idea of SMART goals:

From your original goal...	...to a SMART goal
I'm going to eat breakfast.	I'm going to eat breakfast at home 3 times this week.
I'm going to be more active.	I'm going to go for a 15-minute walk with a friend twice a week after dinner.
I'm going to eat more fibre.	I'm going to eat brown rice instead of white rice this week.
I'm going to eat more protein.	I'm going to include a source of protein (e.g., milk, Greek yogurt, cheese, eggs or nut butter) at every breakfast this week.
I'm going to get more sleep.	I'm going to make sure I go to bed before 10:30 pm at least 4 times this week.
I'm going to eat out less often.	I'm going to bring a packed lunch 3 days this week.

Focus on behaviour, not weight loss

Weight is not a behaviour. Rather, it's influenced by your lifestyle and many other factors that can be beyond your control. This is why it's important to set lifestyle goals instead of weight loss goals.

10,000 people did it

Since 1994, the National Weight Control Registry has tracked more than 10,000 people who have lost a significant amount of weight and maintained the loss over the long term.⁶ Here are some interesting facts related to their success:

98%

modified their food intake in some way

94%

increased their physical activity, mostly by walking

90%

are physically active, on average, about 1 hour per day

78%

eat breakfast every day

62%

watch less than 10 hours of TV per week

A little professional support goes a long way

Just as you need to ensure that now is the right time to think about achieving a healthier lifestyle, you also need to ask, “Can I live and eat this way for the rest of my life?” This is where the support from health professionals can help.

Your **family doctor** can assess and help you manage medical conditions or concerns you might have related to your weight.

A **kinesiologist** can evaluate your goals as they relate to physical activity.

A **registered dietitian** can take a look at your eating habits and personal situation and help you set achievable goals that fit your needs.

A **psychologist, mental health professional** and **occupational therapist** can help you address some of the barriers for healthy living by giving you ongoing support and access to resources.

Note that the content of this brochure is not intended to replace the advice of your family doctor, kinesiologist, registered dietitian, psychologist, mental health professional or occupational therapist. If you have any health problems related to your body weight or your relationship with food, or if you are seeking personalized information, make sure to consult a qualified health professional.

swim
jog
laugh
yoga
walk
bike
swim

Reach out to reach your goals

Making lifestyle changes can be challenging. But having support and encouragement helps. So let your close friends and family in on your goals. They can help keep you motivated and even accompany you on your journey to a healthier you.



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