

# Setting Goals for Weight Loss

Partnership for Healthy Weight Management

There are lots of reasons for people who are overweight or obese to lose weight. To be healthier. To look better. To have more energy.

No matter what the reason, successful weight loss and healthy weight management depend on sensible goals and expectations. If you set sensible goals for yourself, chances are you'll be more likely to meet them and have a better chance of keeping the weight off. In fact, losing even five to ten percent of your weight is the kind of goal that can help improve your health.

Most overweight people should lose weight gradually. For safe and healthy weight loss, try not to exceed a rate of two pounds per week. Sometimes, people with serious health problems associated with obesity may have legitimate reasons for losing weight rapidly. If so, a physician's supervision is required.

## What you weigh is the result of several factors:

- \* how much and what kinds of food you eat
- \* whether your lifestyle includes regular physical activity
- \* whether you use food to respond to stress and other situations in your life
- \* your physiologic and genetic make-up
- \* your age and health status

Successful weight loss and weight management should address all of these factors. And that's the reason to ignore products and programs that promise quick and easy results or that promise permanent results without permanent changes in your lifestyle. Any ad that says you can lose weight without lowering the calories you take in and/or increasing your physical activity is selling fantasy and false hope. In fact, some people would call it fraud. Furthermore, the use of some products may not be safe.

## A Realistic Approach

Many people who are overweight or obese have decided not to diet *per se*, but to concentrate on engaging in regular physical activity and maintaining healthy eating habits in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, emphasizing lowered fat consumption and an increase in vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Others who try to diet report needing help to achieve their weight management goals.

Fad diets that ignore the principles of the Dietary Guidelines may result in short term weight loss, but may do so at the risk of your health. How you go about managing your weight has a lot to do with your long term success. Unless your health is seriously at risk due to complications from being overweight or obese, gradual weight loss should be your rule and your goal.

Here's how to do it:

- \* Check with your doctor. Make sure that your health status allows lowering your caloric intake and increasing your physical activity.
- \* Follow a calorie-reduced, but balanced diet that provides for as little as one or two pounds of weight loss a week. Be sure to include at least five servings a day of fruits and vegetables, along with whole grains, lean meat and low fat dairy products. It may not produce headlines, but it can reduce waistlines. It's not "miracle" science - just common sense. Most important, it's prudent and healthy.
- \* Make time in your day for some form of physical activity. Start by taking the stairs at work, walking up and down an escalator, parking at the far end of a lot instead of cruising around for the closest spot. Then, assuming your physician gives the okay, gradually add some form of regular physical activity that you enjoy. Walking is an excellent form of physical activity that almost everyone can do.
- \* Consider the benefits of moderate weight loss. There's scientific evidence that losing five to ten percent of your weight and keeping it off can benefit your health. For example, if you are 5 feet 6 inches tall and weigh 180 pounds and your goal weight is 150, losing five to 10 percent (nine to 18 pounds) is beneficial. When it comes to successful weight loss and weight management, steady and slow can be the way to go.

For many people who are overweight or obese, long-term-and healthy-weight management generally requires some sensible goals and a commitment to make realistic changes in their lifestyle and improve their health. A lifestyle based on healthy eating and regular physical activity can be a real lifesaver.

## Determining Your Weight/Health Profile

Overweight and obesity have been associated with increased risk of developing such conditions as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and coronary artery disease. For most people, determining the circumference of your waist and your body mass index (BMI) are reliable ways to estimate your body fat and the health risks associated with being overweight, overfat or obese. BMI is reliable for most people between 19 and 70 years of age *except* women who are pregnant or breast feeding, competitive athletes, body builders, and chronically ill patients. Generally, the higher your BMI, the higher your health risk, and the risk increases even further if your waist size is greater than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women. There are other ways, besides BMI, to determine your body fat composition, and your doctor can tell you about them, but the method recommended here will help you decide if you are at risk. Use the chart at the end of this brochure to determine your BMI. Then measure your waist size. Now, with your BMI and waist size determined, use the table below to determine your health risk relative to normal weight.

<b>Risk of Associated Disease According to BMI and Waist Size</b>			
<b>BMI</b>		<b>Waist less than or equal to 40 inches (men) or 35 inches(women)</b>	<b>Waist greater than or equal to 40 inches (men) or 35 inches (women)</b>
18.5 or less	Underweight	-	N/A
18.5 - 24.9	Normal	-	N/A
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight	Increased	High
30.0- 34.9	Obese	High	Very High
35.0 - 39.9	Obese	Very High	Very High
40 or greater	Extremely Obese	Extremely High	Extremely High