



Taking Action

MY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Are You Preparing to Lose Weight?

If you're heavier than you want to be, you may have decided it's time to manage your weight. You've probably tried diets before. Maybe you even lost weight, but now those pounds are back. That's not unusual. Most people attempt change several times before they succeed. This booklet can help you learn new skills to reach and keep a weight that's right for you. For added support, share this booklet with the people who will help you make your efforts count.



First Get Personal

Managing your weight really is all about you. It's about your body, your choices, your health. Other people can support you. But you're the only one who can change. Are you ready? If so, prepare to succeed. Managing weight is a major life event. You'll need a solid plan—one that means something to you. By working through this booklet, you'll find ways to make change last.

Then Take Action

Once you've prepared to change, all that remains is to act. Start by sharing your plans for diet and exercise with your doctor. Then, to manage weight, keep these two simple ideas in mind:

- **Eat healthy.** Choose foods that are close to the natural state of their ingredients. Pick the apple over the apple pie. What else could you do?

- **Exercise regularly.** Choose activities you like. Then go for it! It's okay if you breathe hard and sweat. That's part of being active. It's best if you stay active at least 30 to 60 minutes each day. But this doesn't have to be all at once. Break your active time into a few segments. What could you do?

This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care.

Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.

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A Caution About Weight-Loss Programs

Structured weight-loss programs can be very useful for some people. But don't get taken in by an expensive fad. Before joining a program, ask these questions:

- Does it sound too good to be true? If it does, it almost certainly is.
- Does it promise large amounts of weight loss quickly and easily? If it does, it's not realistic or healthy.
- Do you have to avoid one kind of food or food group, or eat special food? No one food is the key to weight gain or loss. Eating a variety of nutritious foods is much healthier for your body.
- Does it fit into your budget? If it doesn't, choose a less expensive option.
- Does it address how to keep from gaining back the weight once the program is over? If not, the pounds are likely to return.
- Have you asked your doctor or dietitian about it? Don't take chances with your health—check with your healthcare provider before joining a program.

Signal Your Supporters

When you're ready, joining a group or sharing your plans with family and friends can be a benefit. Other people can help you become more aware of your actions. They can remind you of your goals and help you avoid bad habits. The important people in your life can help you succeed. Some might even join you on the path toward change! Ask for the support you need. You might ask others to:

- Stop talking about your size or weight—and about other people's.
- Give you positive feedback on your changes, no matter how small.
- Join you in trying new physical activities and healthier foods.
- Read this booklet so they'll understand that you're committed to your goals.

Who will you ask to support you? _____

How do you want them to help? Different people might help in different ways!

Get SMART About Goals

Set yourself up for success. Choose goals that address the results you want. Set realistic goals that you can meet. And realize you may have to meet several smaller goals, or milestones, before reaching your main goal. To make your effort count, try to set **SMART** goals with all the traits discussed here.



Before You Start

Read about the characteristics that make **SMART** goals so useful. Then see how the example below achieves each.

Specific

Be specific about your goals. They should challenge you. But they should also be within your reach. What exactly do you want to have happen?

Measurable

Choose goals that have results you can measure. Give yourself a deadline, such as a week, a month, or 6 months from now.

Achievable

Is your goal something you can achieve? You don't want to discourage yourself. Keep in mind that you can always raise the bar after you've reached your first goals.

Rewarding

How will you reward yourself along the way? Give yourself nonfood rewards when you pass each milestone, as well as when you meet your big goal.

Trackable

How will you track your progress? Doing so helps you to see how far you've come. It also shows any slip as just a brief setback that you can get past.

Here's an Example

Specific Goal: *I will eat fruit instead of vending machine snacks at work for 4 weeks.*

Measurable: *Four weeks is a month. This is an amount of time I can accept.*

Achievable: *I can reach this goal because I like fruit, and I can keep it in my desk drawer.*

Rewarding: *At the end of the month, I'll buy a CD with the money I would have spent in the vending machine. I'll also feel better and gain confidence by meeting this goal.*

Trackable: *I can write down my snack choices each day.*

Make extra copies of this page before you use it for the first time. Use one copy for each goal you set.

Set Your Own Goal

Now it's your turn to get specific. Saying you want to manage your weight may be saying too much. That goal is too big, too broad, too weighty! Narrow the topic. What specific result do you want to achieve?

Prepare to Act

Once you've decided to make a change, it's best to set a start date. Choose one that's coming up soon. You might want to pick a day that's not busy, one that's very normal. Then think about telling the people in your life. That way, they'll understand (and support!) your new actions. Also, be clear that meeting your goal will take time, attention, and support.

I will take action toward my goal starting on:

I picked this day because:

I will tell these people about the change I'm making and suggest how they can support me:

Here are a few things I will do to make managing my weight a priority in my life:

S
M
A
R
T

goals

Form New Food Habits



All foods can have a place in any diet. Try to eat vegetables, fruit, lean meats, and whole grains every day. Choose foods such as french fries and pastry only once in a while. Remember, it's all about forming the new habit of *eating healthy foods more often*.

Plan Colorful Meals

An easy way to plan healthy meals is serving colorful fruits and vegetables. Use them for side dishes, snacks, or even the main course! Fruit works great for desserts, too. Try to have *at least 5 servings* of fruit and vegetables a day. When you fill up on healthy foods, you're less likely to eat junk foods.

Eat Real-Sized Portions

In today's world of "giant-sized" meals, it's easy to forget that we eat to fuel our bodies, not just because it tastes good. Eat food portions that make sense. For instance, a serving of meat is about the size of a deck of cards. A serving of cooked pasta is about the size of a cupped hand. Also, remember to stop eating when you're full. You don't always have to clean your plate!

Eat Healthy Foods Anytime

Keep a variety of healthy foods within easy reach. Eat them anytime. Choose other foods, such as sweets, only on special occasions.

Once in a While

- Sweets, such as candy bars, cookies, pastry, and ice cream
- Salty snacks, like potato chips
- Fried foods, like fries and chicken nuggets
- Sugary drinks, like soda, sports drinks, and juice drinks

Anytime

- Fruit and vegetables
- Whole-grain breads and cereals
- Low-fat milk and yogurt
- Lean protein, like fish, skinless chicken breast, and beans
- Water!





Add New Foods Gradually

You might find that it takes a while to get used to eating new foods. To make changes easier, try one new food at a time. If a food isn't a hit at first, try it again a few weeks later. Over time, unfamiliar tastes and textures can become new favorites. Pick one of the tips below to try.

- Choose a new fruit or vegetable when you're shopping.
- Add healthy foods to familiar meals, such as grilling vegetables along with burgers.
- Try a whole-grain bread or cereal.

Think of one small change you want to make:



Good Place to Start

2% milk

Eat at least one vegetable with dinner

Eat a new fruit for dessert

No more than three small sodas a week

Taking It Further

1% milk

Eat two kinds of vegetables with dinner

Eat fruit for dessert twice a week

No more than one small soda a week

Going All the Way

Skim milk

Make vegetables the main course

Eat fruit for dessert with every meal

Have soda only on special occasions



Plan for Daily Exercise



There's more to managing weight than just watching what you eat. People who decrease calories and increase activity are more likely to lose weight and keep it off. You don't have to run marathons. Moderate exercise is all you need. The key is to do it most days of the week. Daily exercise is the best plan. Just be sure to check with your doctor before you start!

Why Exercise?

Exercise burns calories. This keeps the body from storing extra calories as fat. Here are a few other reasons why exercise can help you manage your weight:

- Done regularly, exercise speeds up the body's metabolism. That means you burn more calories even when you're not exercising.
- Regular exercise helps you lose fat and build muscle.
- Daily exercise gives you energy and helps control appetite.
- Exercise decreases stress and takes you away from food.



Your Reasons for Being More Active

If you don't really care about being active, you won't be. In the end, it doesn't matter what other people think you should do. Your own motivation is the only thing that will get you up and about. Decide why it is important for you to be more active. Write your reasons below. Photocopy this page, then put it on the refrigerator. Read through it each day.

- Examples:**
- To make losing weight easier.*
 - To lose inches and gain muscle.*
 - To lower my risk of heart attack.*



Remove Temptation



Change can be exciting. The first days of healthier eating and increased activity often feel new and rewarding. But then, an open bag of chips or chocolate may beckon. If you're like most people, your actions are affected by what's around you. Think about the foods and the situations that cause you to overeat or avoid exercise. Then find ways to remove or limit your temptations.

What Do You Crave?

Is it taste or texture that you want? Lots of foods can supply what you crave—without overloading you with fat. Here are a few switches you can try. In fact, you might try one change each week. Can you add an alternative for foods you often eat?

If You Often Eat	Try This Instead
Donuts or cookies	Raisin toast with jam
Chips	Pretzels or a small handful of nuts
Ice cream	Frozen yogurt or light ice cream
Chocolate candy	Low-fat chocolate milk or cocoa
Bacon or salami	Turkey bacon or turkey sandwich with spicy mustard
Creamy potato salad or coleslaw	Raw vegetables with low-fat dip
Sour cream	Low-fat yogurt or fat-free sour cream

Exercise Excuses: Who Are You Kidding?

Excuses may get other people off your back. But managing your weight is for *you*. It's your body, your health, your life. Be honest with yourself. What causes you to avoid exercise, and how can you control the temptation?

Favorite Excuse

Solution for Action

Learn from Slip-Ups

What if you have an extra piece of birthday cake? Or skip a day or two of exercise? Your weight management program isn't over. Think about the reason for the slip. Was it a special splurge or an old habit trying to gain ground? You don't have to backslide. What can you do to put temptation to rest? Put the lapse in the past and get back on track. Remember your reasons for wanting to lose weight. Renew your commitment, and realize that the rest of your life is ahead of you.

Celebrate Change



Sticking with change is worthy of respect. Whether you've made it through your first week or actually met your first goal, take a moment to appreciate your progress. Sometimes it's enough to see how far you've come. Other times, effort needs to be rewarded. What do you consider a treat—a ball game, a movie, a new outfit? When you know you've earned a treat, you'll enjoy it all the more.

Tracking Your Progress

What you track and how you track it will depend on your SMART goals. Maybe you'll want to chart your weight each week. Or you might mark a calendar for every day you exercise. You might even use a pedometer (small step-counting device) to record the number of steps you take daily. No matter how you do it, make an effort to track your progress. It's a good way to see what you accomplish.

Rewarding Changed Behavior

Recognizing progress is important for two reasons. It helps you renew your commitment to change, and it rewards you for exchanging healthy actions for old habits. Rewards help you feel good about replacing an old way of life. They help you celebrate the present and may be an incentive for the future.

How Will You Reward Yourself?

Many people reward themselves with small outings or nonfood treats. Or, you might put money into an account each time you meet a goal. These dollars can be spent on vacations or desired items. For some, rewarding themselves means sharing with the community. For instance, money not spent on junk food might be donated to a food bank. Trying different rewards can also be good. What holds meaning for you?



Every Step Counts

You're making good progress! By setting your SMART goals, you've begun to manage your weight. Not only have you identified what you want to do, but you've also taken action. This is what change is all about. The steps you're taking today will help build a foundation for a healthier lifestyle.



Are You Ready for the Next Step?

Read the statements below. If you often feel this way, you're ready to move on to the next stage of change—**staying on track!**

- I switch to a healthier choice instead of letting old habits get the best of me.
- I avoid things or situations that trigger old, unhealthy habits.
- I reward myself when I achieve one of my goals.

Keeping Up the Pace

Now that you've taken action, you're the one in control. You may notice a boost to your morale. As you keep at it, you may find that you feel more fit and more healthy. Over time, you will be tempted by favorite foods and lazy days. This is normal. When it happens, think of all the benefits you've gained by losing weight. And keep this tip in mind: Start each day afresh. Let go of yesterday's frustrations. Learn from any slip-ups. Get on with today, and do the very best that you can!



Other Resources

- Harvard School of Public Health
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource
- American Dietetic Association
www.eatright.org
- American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org
- USDA Food Pyramid
www.MyPyramid.gov

How Change Happens

Changing unhealthy behavior is a process, a journey through five stages. You can't skip a stage, but it's rarely a straight path to a healthy behavior. Most people move in and out of each stage more than once before achieving a lasting change. Chances are, each time you pass through a stage, you'll have a deeper understanding of the pitfalls that lie ahead and the many benefits of the change you're working on. You'll learn from your setbacks. Then, with renewed effort, you can move ahead. By taking one stage at a time, you'll succeed in making a lasting change—one you can live with!

What Stage Are You At?



Not ready. You don't even want to think about changing right now. You might be willing to consider change someday, but not in the next few months.



Thinking about it. You see your current situation as a problem or a risk to your health. You're ready to consider the possibility of change, and you're open to learning about the benefits change would bring.



Getting prepared. You're getting ready to take action soon. You've committed to changing, you're making a plan, and you're asking others for support.



Taking action. You're setting your plan in motion. You're taking steps, tracking your progress, and using your support system.



Staying on track. You started changing your behavior some months ago. Now you're focused on sticking with your new, healthier habits.

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