

# How to lose weight

**For many people, losing weight can be one of the greatest challenges they face. Some fail because they try to change everything in their life at once. But the best way to succeed is to start by making two or three realistic changes that you can stick to – then, over time, you’ll begin to see results.**

To lose weight, you need to take less energy into your body from food and drink than the amount of energy your body uses up by being more active. This may sound simple but actually doing it – day in, day out, over weeks or months – needs planning and determination.

But don’t worry, you can do it if you take simple steps, and believe that you can do it.



## Different strokes for different folks

There is more than one way to lose weight – different things work for different people. You may be able to get some advice at a health centre or leisure centre, or you may decide to try a slimming group. Some people prefer to do it on their own or with a friend.

*If you need advice about what’s available in your area, ask at your local GP surgery.*

## Getting started

This booklet is not about miracle diets; it is about looking at your life and building up gradually to the changes that will make a difference. It will help you find two or three things you can do differently every day – and stick to them. Once you're comfortable with those changes, you'll have the confidence to make other changes.

**There are four ingredients for a weight-loss programme that works:**

- **eating right;**
- **changing behaviour (habits);**
- **being active;**
- **getting support.**

## Eating well to lose weight

You don't have to change everything you eat to lose weight. These pages will give you ideas about how to begin making realistic changes to the way you eat and tips for introducing a healthy diet.

To lose weight you need to take less energy (calories) into your body from food and drink than the amount of energy your body uses up by being active.

Healthy eating is the foundation of a diet for losing weight for most people, and this is the sort of eating you can enjoy for life. But if you keep an eye on the overall amount of some foods that you eat, you won't have to cut out all the luxuries or treats. The good news is: if you can begin with two or three things to cut out or reduce, you'll be able to go on enjoying plentiful amounts of others.

The ingredients of eating to lose weight are:

- **healthy eating;**
- **leaving out the obvious extras; and**
- **controlling the overall amount of some foods.**

## Healthy eating means:

- At least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, try to include them in every meal;
- starchy foods like potato, rice or wholemeal bread (with no added oil or butter or high fat creamy sauces);
- choosing lower fat meat, poultry and dairy foods;
- having 2 portions of fish, of which one is oily;
- reducing your salt intake to no more than 6g a day;
- cutting back on foods high in fat and sugar;
- cutting out fizzy, sugary drinks; and
- drinking less alcohol.



## Calorie control

Healthy eating is more important than counting calories. The *Balance of Good Health* plate shows the types and proportions

of foods which make up a healthy diet. For most people this means more fruit and vegetables and more starchy foods. But being aware of how many calories you need and how to control the calories you eat will help you find realistic changes that you can stick to.

An average man needs about 2,500 calories a day and an average woman about 2,000 calories to stay the same weight.

Eating 500 to 600 fewer calories each day than your body needs is a realistic way to lose weight. That means around 1,500 calories a day for adult women and 2,000 calories a day for adult men.

The *Balance of Good Health* is reproduced with kind permission of the Food Standards Agency.

## Fat – a lot or a little?

Here is a simple way to check whether the amount of fat and saturated fat in a product is 'a lot' or 'a little'. The amount of fat is closely linked to calories, so the lower the better.

### THIS IS A LOT OF FAT:

20g fat or more per 100g  
5g saturates or more  
per 100g

### THIS IS A LITTLE FAT:

3g fat or less per 100g  
1g saturates or less  
per 100g

Try to choose more foods that contain only a little fat (3g fat or less per 100g) and cut down on foods that contain a lot of fat (20g fat or more per 100g).

That way you eat enough to be properly nourished and you won't feel too hungry. It gives you a steady and safe weight loss of about 1–2lb ( $\frac{1}{2}$ –1kg) a week.

To be sure you're eating the right amount of foods to lower your calorie intake, you'll need to keep a check on portion sizes. It is easy to be tempted by bigger portions especially when they're sold at bargain prices and everyone's idea of a portion is different. You can find out more about portion sizes on the Department of Health's website [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk).

Check food labels for calories and fat, they show the amounts per 100g and per portion – choose carefully. For more help with understanding food labels, visit the Food Standards Agency's website [www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels).

## How to change the way you eat

Here are some examples of daily food and drink intake that show how small changes can help you reduce your intake by around 500 calories. These are ideas to provide examples of changes you can make, but we don't recommend you spend your time calorie counting.

Reducing calorie intake from 2,000 to 1,500.

INSTEAD OF...		HAVE...		CALORIES SAVED
<b>BREAKFAST</b> Orange juice (6oz/150ml)	55kcal	Orange juice (6oz/150ml)	55kcal	0kcal
Large bowl (60g) of crunchy muesli cereal with semi-skimmed milk	260kcal	Medium bowl (1.2oz/30g) of porridge, or a wholegrain breakfast cereal which is not sugar-coated, with semi-skimmed milk	160kcal	30kcal
		1 banana	70kcal	
<b>MORNING SNACK</b> 1 digestive biscuit	70kcal	1 apple	40kcal	30kcal
<b>LUNCH</b> Small baked potato (4oz/100g) with butter and grated cheddar cheese	450kcal	Medium baked potato (6oz/150g) with baked beans (no butter)	330kcal	120kcal
Square of flapjack (2½oz/60g)	300kcal	Small fruit scone (2oz/50g) without butter	160kcal	140kcal
<b>AFTERNOON SNACK</b> Chocolate-covered biscuit bar (1oz/25g)	125kcal	Grapes, about 12 (3oz/80g)	50kcal	75kcal
<b>EVENING MEAL</b> Ready meal, eg chicken curry with a cream-based korma sauce OR leek and bacon pasta bake (no extra salad or vegetables)	550kcal	Eg chicken curry with a tomato-based sauce OR vegetables and bean pasta bake	350kcal	90kcal
		Mixed salad of lettuce, grated carrot, onion, cucumber, tomato	50kcal	
		Low-calorie/diet fruit yoghurt (5oz/125g pot)	60kcal	
2 glasses of wine (125ml x 2)	160kcal	1 glass of wine (125ml)	80kcal	80kcal
Milk in hot drinks throughout day (200ml/½ pint semi-skimmed)	90kcal	Milk in hot drinks throughout day (200ml/½ pint semi-skimmed)	90kcal	0kcal
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,060kcal</b>		<b>1,495kcal</b>	<b>565kcal</b>

Reducing calorie intake from 2,500 to 2,000.

INSTEAD OF...		HAVE...		CALORIES SAVED
<b>BREAKFAST</b> 2 slices of toast with butter	260kcal	2 slices of toast with reduced fat spread	235kcal	25kcal
<b>MORNING SNACK</b> 2 biscuits	130kcal	1 apple	40kcal	90kcal
<b>LUNCH</b> Cheese sandwich and a medium sausage roll (2oz/60g)  Bag of crisps (1oz/30g)	810kcal	1½ ham and tomato sandwiches  Bag of lower fat crisps (1oz/30g)  1 banana	775kcal	35kcal
<b>AFTERNOON SNACK</b> Can of fizzy orange drink (330ml)	130kcal	Carton of orange juice (200ml)	70kcal	60kcal
<b>EVENING MEAL</b> Medium serving of lasagne (12oz/300g)	570kcal	Large serving of chilli con carne (12oz/300g)	360kcal	225kcal
Medium serving of oven chips (6½ oz/165g)	320kcal	4½ heaped tablespoons of boiled rice (7oz/180g) and peas	305kcal	
1 pint of beer	180kcal	½ pint of beer	90kcal	90kcal
Milk in hot drinks throughout day (200ml/ ⅓ pint semi-skimmed)	90kcal	Milk in hot drinks throughout day (200ml/ ⅓ pint semi-skimmed)	90kcal	0kcal
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,490kcal</b>		<b>1,965kcal</b>	<b>525kcal</b>

All calorie values shown in the tables are approximate.

## Regular meals

Eating well to lose weight is not only about what you eat, but how and when you eat too. Although it's not always easy, eating regular meals seems to be a key to success. If you grab a bite to eat on the run, you might think you're eating less but it tends to mean going for fast foods or snacks, which are often higher in fat and calories.

When you eat a proper meal or snack, sitting down at a table, you're more likely to be eating healthily – lots of vegetables and salad-based meals. Eating your main meal with lots of vegetables or salads fills you up with fewer calories.

## A word about breakfast

Breakfast really is the best way to start your day. It kick-starts your metabolism for the day ahead and helps you to get through to lunch. So don't be tempted to skip breakfast as a way of saving calories. Even if you don't feel hungry in the morning, try to make yourself have something to eat. Could you face fruit, yoghurt, cereal or toast?

### Make mine a 'full English'

Can't bear the idea of giving up cooked breakfasts or a lunchtime pint? Good news – you don't have to. Instead, ask yourself a few questions. What else are you eating in the day? Perhaps you can cut out other food instead. How often do you like your special treat? If it's every day, why not make it twice a week? Do you have all the trimmings? Cut down the number of items on your plate; have grilled tomatoes or mushrooms instead of sausage and black pudding.



## Small steps – where to start

To get started, many people find that it helps to keep a diary of what they eat and drink for a few days. That way, you can see where you might be able to begin making changes. If you want to try this, get a small notebook and jot down all the food and drink you take for three days before you start. Include one weekend day if you can.



Some people worry it will be more expensive to eat healthily – but if you shop carefully it doesn't have to be. Cutting back on some things like take-away meals and snacks will leave you with more to spend on healthy treats. Try different types of fruit and vegetables, breads and fish.

Careful planning will help you shop wisely.

## Being active

Being active burns calories – so it can help you lose weight. It is also very important if you have lost weight and want to keep it off.

### The benefits of being active

- Better health.
- Helps tone the body, so you look slimmer.
- Less stress and more confidence.
- You'll be able to keep up with friends and family.
- Need not cost anything.
- Can easily become part of your daily routine.
- A social and fun way to catch up with friends.

People who are more active tend to have more energy, are less stressed, sleep better and generally feel better.

### How much and how often?

Find ways of increasing your activity which are realistic for you. This doesn't have to mean going to the gym or taking up sport – many people find it suits them better to go for a regular walk or join a dance class.

Everyday activity – like walking – may be the simplest way for you to get moving more.

As an adult, you should aim to be active on five or more days of the week.

- **Thirty minutes of activity will have general health benefits and improve your fitness.**
- **Increase activity to at least 60 minutes to help you lose weight and stop the weight going back on.**

## No fitness freak?

Don't worry, everyone can do something to increase their activity levels, as long as they find what is right and enjoyable for them. It doesn't have to cost money and you don't need to wear special clothes!

Be realistic and make as much time in your day as you can to be more active. You can do it as several short bursts of 10 minutes

## How hard?

To really help, the activity you do should be of moderate intensity, which means:

- **your breathing and heartbeat will be a little faster than usual – to the level where you can feel your pulse – but you should still be able to hold a conversation; and**
- **you will feel warm, and on hot or humid days, you will sweat.**

This sort of activity tones you up, improves your immune system and makes you feel good.

### HERE IS AN IDEA OF THE INTENSITY OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITY:

#### ACTIVITY

#### INTENSITY

Ironing, cleaning, dusting	Light
Walking at a stroll (2mph)	Light
Hoovering, painting, decorating	Moderate
Walking (3–4mph)	Moderate
Golf, badminton, tennis (doubles)	Moderate
Mowing the lawn	Moderate
Cycling (10–12mph)	Moderate
Aerobic dancing	Vigorous
Cycling (12–14mph)	Vigorous
Swimming (crawl)	Vigorous
Tennis (singles)	Vigorous
Running (6–8mph)	Vigorous

## A way of life

Try to make physical activity a way of life – for good. Make it a regular and enjoyable part of your day.

- **Build in a walk, for example walking to the bus or train instead of using your car, or getting off the bus one stop earlier.**
- **Park your car at the far end of the car park as a regular habit.**
- **Use the stairs instead of a lift or escalators.**

Do activities with your friends and family – it's great fun. And if you do activities with your children, it sets them up for a lifetime of being on the move, too.



**Be safe**  
If you're worried  
whether it's  
safe for you  
to exercise,  
talk to your  
doctor

## Ready to get moving?

Think about when you can be more active and try doing a combination of different things. Here are some activities that people have found work for them:

- walking or cycling – to work, to school or college, to a friend's house, during lunchtime;
- gardening;
- DIY;
- shopping;
- cleaning the house;
- taking the stairs instead of the lift and walking up escalators;
- swimming or water-based exercise classes;
- cycling;
- dancing – ballroom, line dancing, disco, salsa dancing;
- going to the gym;
- exercise or aerobic classes; and
- walking or rambling in the park or in the countryside.

Your local leisure centre will provide lots of options for different activities. There will be groups for different ages and interests; they may run separate groups for men, women and children. Lots of leisure centres even offer a discount for regular users.

## Write it down

A physical activity diary can be a record of the activity you've done each day. It could help you plan ahead and set aside times in the day or week when you want to try and be more active. Make time for some activity each day. You can make a note of opening times, and special sessions, at the swimming pool or planned events, like an organised walk.

## Step it up

A pedometer is a gadget that fits to your belt and counts the number of steps you take. Many people have found a pedometer keeps them motivated to walk more each day and helps them to set goals.

In some areas, pedometers are available for loan from GPs (ask your GP or practice nurse if they are participating in the National Step-O-Meter Programme). Otherwise, you can buy a simple, inexpensive one from your local chemist or supermarket.

See how many steps you normally do in a day. For most people, this will be about 3,000 or 4,000. Aim to increase it by, say, 1,000. Gradually build it up so that you are doing more and more steps each week.

Adults can work towards a goal of 10,000 steps a day.

# Make a habit of it

Eating for weight loss and becoming more active mean making some real changes to the way you live your life. Changing what you do – the habits you have – is never easy. To change successfully, you will need time to think about and plan what it will involve.

## 1. Keep track

A diary will really help you keep track of how you eat and the activities that you do. That way you can look for the simple changes you are going to make in your life, which will be the breakthrough for you.

If you write down what you were doing on each day and any particular thoughts and feelings you had at that time, it can help you identify times when you eat more or do less activity. Be honest with yourself – that way you can look for simple changes which will really make a difference.

## 2. Set goals

Remember that every small change you make will be a step towards taking control of your weight. The starting point for you might be to make changes to your snacks – fruit instead of biscuits, for example.

Your diary will help you keep track of what you've achieved. Having it written down could also help you to stay motivated.

## 3. Be positive

Remind yourself that you are doing your very best to make changes. Success is when you've stuck to the changes at the end of each week.

Some people start to blame themselves if they have a bad day or if they don't lose weight as quickly as they'd hoped. Don't let negative thoughts steer you off course. If you have a few bad days, don't worry. Pick yourself up and keep going.

#### 4. Reward yourself

We all need appreciation for our hard work. The effort you make towards a healthier lifestyle is no exception. Plan some rewards for yourself, but avoid things involving food! Choose something that really is a treat for you like a magazine, a trip to the cinema or maybe a new CD or a manicure.

#### Eating for comfort?

A lot of people who struggle with their weight say that food comforts them. They eat for emotional reasons, rather than because they are hungry – comfort food is usually high in calories.

If you eat for comfort, take some time to think about what sets this off and plan what you can do when those situations arise. If you're feeling down or you think you've eaten too much, try to stick to your activity goals. Activity relieves stress and anxiety by releasing 'feel-good' hormones. You'll feel pleased with yourself when you manage to take control in these situations, and not use food as your comfort.

**Under pressure?  
If you eat for comfort when you're busy, have some fruit snacks handy**

## Snack attack

If you think high-calorie snacks could be a problem for you, try making changes to these before you change anything else that you eat. That simple step could be enough to help you start losing weight!

## My 'small steps' goals

Write here the first steps you are going to take in making changes to what you eat and how you can get more active. Why not start with three, and when you're comfortable with those add two more?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## The lifestyle checklist

This list covers things people found helped them change their lifestyle – for good. Tick the ones you think might help you.

1. Ask for encouragement and help from the people close to you, like your partner, friends and children.
2. Only eat at planned times and stick to similar times each day.
3. Plan meals ahead for yourself and the whole family.
4. Check if you're really hungry before you eat. It may be thirst or a craving.
5. Sit down at the table to eat and do nothing else while eating.
6. Set aside regular times for activities or classes. Make it a habit by planning to attend come rain or shine.
7. Plan to be more active with a friend or relative and make it a social occasion (eg gardening together, walking to work with a colleague).
8. Chew slowly and take your time over food.
9. Plan to say no to second helpings or cook only the amount of food you will eat.
10. Don't shop for food when you're hungry. Keep to your shopping list.
11. Put healthy snacks like fruit, chopped vegetables and yoghurt at the front of the fridge where they're readily available.
12. Write a list of activities you can do instead of being tempted to eat (eg cleaning out a cupboard, going for a walk, sorting out your papers, going swimming).

## How can I keep it off?

If you have succeeded in losing weight, well done! The next challenge is to continue the good work and keep the weight off. To do this, you will need to stick to good eating and everyday activity habits.

- 1. Keep eating healthily** every day, but don't worry about enjoying a special meal out from time to time.
- 2. Keep active** – it is one of the most important things you can do if you want to keep your weight off. Ask family and friends to join you in walking, swimming or your regular exercise sessions.
- 3. Keep track of your weight** by weighing yourself once a week. If it starts to creep up, even by just a few pounds, check what you are eating, and do more activity to help you get back on track.



### Tried and tested

Many people who successfully lose weight, and keep it off, say that the same things worked for them.

#### They:

- plan meals and include healthy, low-fat foods;
- eat lots of vegetables and fruit;
- are active regularly (at least 60 minutes 5 days a week);
- always eat breakfast; and
- watch their alcohol intake.