

### **Weight: A weighty Issue**

**Weight** is reflected in the mirror, in the numbers creeping up on the scale and in the tight waistband on your clothes. You don't feel great and don't like the way you look. It's time to do something but just the thought of another diet brings to mind feelings of failure, cravings for forbidden foods, and a refrigerator full of wilted diced vegetables. This dream can be a reality by developing a new style of living that focuses on lifelong healthy habits. Choosing a lifestyle solution for weight management involves creating a positive relationship with food through healthy eating, making physical exercise a regular habit, and dealing with negative thoughts that trigger overeating. When you incorporate these recommendations into your life, your weight will gradually change to a healthy weight you can maintain.

### **Why Lose?**

Weight loss is almost always recommended for persons who are overweight. Achieving a healthy weight helps to improve self-esteem and body image. Weight loss can renew overall health and lengthen life. The risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes mellitus is greater in persons who are overweight. Excessive body weight also increases the risk for gallbladder disease, certain forms of arthritis, gout, and even some types of cancer. Sleep apnea, a serious condition where breathing slows down during sleep, is often brought on or worsened by excessive weight. Health benefits can be achieved by losing weight. Achieving a moderate loss of only 5 to 10 percent of body weight is enough to lower the risks for certain of these diseases. Losing just a small number of kilos can make a big difference in lowering blood pressure, blood cholesterol levels, and blood glucose.

### **What Do I Have To Lose?**

The number on the bathroom scale isn't the only way or necessarily the best way to determine the degree of overweight or risk for weight related health problems. An accurate judge of body weight is BMI, which stands for Body Mass Index. BMI calculates a weight to height ratio and assigns a number to the result. The higher the BMI number above the normal range, the greater the degree of overweight. Generally speaking, a BMI of 27 or above is considered overweight and 30 or above is considered severely overweight.

People with a higher BMI tend to have a higher percentage of body fat except for highly muscular people like body builders. It is excess body fat, rather than muscle, that causes a greater risk for health problems. The higher the BMI number above the normal range, the greater the degree of overweight and the greater the risk for weight related health problems.

#### **Assessment of Obesity using BMI**

<b><u>BMI; kg/m<sup>2</sup></u></b>	<b><u>Category</u></b>
• <18.5	- Underweight
• 18.5 - 24.9	- Normal
• 25 - 29.9	- Overweight
• 30 - 39.9	- Obese
• > 40	- Severely Obese

#### **Achieving A Healthy Weight**

Success in weight management is not just losing weight but keeping it off permanently. For long term success focus on changes that lead to a slow, gradual weight loss of 0.5 kg per week or 4 kg per month. Losing weight slowly promotes a more permanent loss of body fat, not just water weight that can be quickly regained. This involves a lifelong commitment to changes in attitudes, lifestyle, food choices and physical activity. The basic premise of weight loss involves the equation of energy balance. Body weight remains stable when the number of calories (energy) that the body burns is the same number of calories consumed as food. When more calories (energy in) are consumed than the body needs (energy out), the extra calories are stored as fat. To lose weight the number of daily calories burned by the body must exceed the number of calories consumed. This is accomplished through reducing the number of calories consumed by limiting foods high in fat and calories; and by burning more calories through regular physical activity. This forces the body to draw on stored energy (fat) to balance the equation. Most of us eat without thinking of calories but small changes can make a big difference.

Trimming excess calories from your daily diet can be as simple as not eating the daily manadazi at 10 o'clock, skipping the chips at lunch or saying no to dessert. Throughout the day there are many small healthful changes that add up to a lower calorie intake. For example, switching from whole milk to skim milk cuts 90 calories from your glass of milk. Any kind of physical activity can increase energy output and make you feel more energetic, too. Moderate exercise not only burns calories, but also if it is done regularly it

can actually help you burn calories at a higher rate than someone who doesn't exercise regularly. You definitely don't need a pocket calculator to balance the energy equation. Just look for ways to trim calories from your meals and snacks and opportunities to increase physical activity.

## **How To Succeed**

Do not look for magic or quick results. A new lifestyle takes a while to develop but the results are long lasting. When mind, mouth and muscles work together, weight loss happens. Admitting to yourself the need for lifestyle modifications is the easy part. What is difficult is actually changing long time habits dealing with attitudes, food and physical activity. Make the commitment to learn about healthy living, take control of your life and make some changes. Start today with these recommendations for successful weight management.

### **Mind**

1. **Develop a "can-do" attitude.** Forget about dieting! Erase from your mind the dieting rules that make you feel guilty, deprived and fearful of being fat. This is "all or nothing" thinking. Set your mind to focus on the positive choices that will lead to your goals.
2. **Establish goals that are realistic, moderate, and sustainable.** Having a clear vision of where you are going will help get you there. It is easiest to change one habit at a time such as walking for 20 minutes or eating at least five fruits and vegetables a day. Look for day-by-day successes and generously applaud yourself with non-food rewards.
3. **Keep a diary in a small pocket notebook to record your eating and physical activity.** Write down what, where, why, when and how much to boost the awareness level of what you are actually doing. Reviewing the diary helps to identify healthful choices and determine where change is needed.
4. **Remember its progress, not perfection that counts.** Lapses in healthy eating, physical activity and positive thinking aren't failures but opportunities to learn. When your hand is in the bag of crisps or biscuits ask yourself, why? Focus on your achievements however small. Small changes over time add up to big results.
5. **Accept yourself.** Don't wait to live the life you want until you lose weight. You can have the life you want in the body you currently have. Practice loving and being kind to yourself everyday on your journey to successful weight management.
6. **Create a supportive environment.** Involve family members and tell them how they can help you. You may need to gently remind friends to refrain from bringing you high calorie treats or ask others to not comment on your weight. Professional help from your physician, a registered dietitian, or a therapist may be just the assistance you need to achieve your goals. Weight loss groups may be helpful but don't be deceived by those which promise miracles, sell expensive products or promote strict dieting.

## **Mouth**

1. **Consider food your ally not a foe.** Food choices can honor your taste buds as well as your health. Food is not the enemy but a source of energy, nutrition and pleasure. You don't have to eat perfectly to be healthy. You will not become malnourished or gain weight from one snack, one meal or one day of eating. It is what you eat most of the time that will make a difference.
2. **Develop a healthful eating plan.** Focus on a balanced meal plan which focuses on foods such as whole grain breads, pasta, vegetables, fruits, cereal, rice, low fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, poultry, legumes and eggs. Think ahead to plan the day's meals, anticipating situations such as parties, luncheons or business dinners that may pose a challenge.
3. **Teach yourself portion control.** Become familiar with the recommended number and size of food servings needed to improve your weight. Measure foods carefully until you become familiar with serving sizes.
4. **Respect your hunger.** Physical hunger is the signal to eat. Eat only until you are comfortably full. Learn to distinguish between physical hunger and the urge to eat, which begins with the sight, smell or thought of food. Mindless eating often occurs while doing something else like watching television, reading, socializing or cooking. Be alert for emotions or stress that triggers overeating. When tempted to eat when not really hungry, do something else: walk the dog, call a friend or read a book.
5. **Plan ahead.** Think healthful when choosing foods. Food labels will help you become aware of the nutritional benefits of foods. The Nutrition Facts panel shows the calories, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars and other nutrients. Supermarket savvy shoppers know what they are buying, shop with a list, and escape the temptation of impulse purchases by not shopping when hungry.
6. **Think healthy when cooking.** Modify traditional recipes by using lower-calorie and lower fat ingredients. Broiling, baking, roasting, or steaming favorite foods instead of frying helps to control calories and lower the fat content.
7. **Enjoy a wide variety of foods.** Moderate rather than totally eliminate fat, sugars and high calorie foods. There are no "good" foods or "bad" foods; guilt feelings about eating are a barrier to developing healthful eating habits. Strive for balance, be sensible, and enjoy eating without overdoing it.

## Muscles

1. **Round out healthy eating with physical activity.** Activities involving physical movement help to enhance health, give pleasure, boost energy, elevate mood, improve sleep quality and can be a fun part of everyday life. The physical benefits include burning calories, building muscle, increased metabolism (even after exercise), and lowering of heart rate, cholesterol and blood pressure. Your heart, bones and entire cardiovascular system benefit. More importantly physical activity leads to a greater sense of well-being and helps in decreasing depression.
2. **Move your body more all day.** Use the stairs, walk from the back of the parking lot, move around whenever you can during the day and use less labor saving devices to benefit your body and weight loss efforts.
3. **Find pleasure in physical activity.** Choose activities that are fun. There are so many activities to choose from: walking, swimming, bicycling, treadmill walking, hiking, golf, tennis, volleyball, skiing and gardening. Mix it up to keep things interesting. The main point is to do something physical that you enjoy! But give yourself a day off now and then.
4. **Schedule time for physical activity in your daily.** Don't allow your schedule to get so busy that you keep deleting this important part of weight management. It may help to exercise with a friend, join a club, or you may do best on your own. Remember the rule of three. If you find that you cancel three physical activity opportunities in a row, the chances are that you will quit. You need to feel that this investment of time will improve your health as well as happiness. You are worth this extra effort!
5. **Consult with a medical professional when starting a new program.** Your physician will advise the best activities for you. Exercise isn't a punishment for looking bad or a necessary evil for looking good. It's a gift you give yourself because you need and deserve it. Play to play not just to win.

## The Personal Challenge

Weight loss is a great accomplishment but it does require a commitment from you. Look back over the Mind, Mouth and Muscles recommendations for successful weight management and set a few goals for yourself. Start small; tell a few close friends or family members and Just Do It! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Why Weight? When you reach your realistic weight loss goals (and with persistence, you will) you will find great satisfaction in your accomplishment of creating an improved, healthier version of the real you. Your new healthier lifestyle will make you feel better mentally and physically while your healthier body will almost surely last longer.

Celebrate success by helping someone else reach his or her goals; sharing your experience always reinforces what you know.

Food Guide Pyramid

