



# Win at the Weight Game

*Whether you want to gain, lose, or maintain your weight, you must eat wisely to see lasting results. To successfully manage your weight, develop a plan that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and strategies to maintain your lifestyle changes. A successful regimen is one that is followed throughout life, not just for a few weeks. Weight management techniques are easy to learn, and with practice and patience you can see gradual, lasting results.*

## How Can I Manage My Weight?

### 1. Select well-balanced meals.

Regard weight management as the adoption of a life-long nutrition plan. A healthy plan for weight loss includes a variety of foods low in fat and added sugar. Foods high in complex carbohydrates and fiber (fruit, vegetables, and whole grains) provide bulk and a feeling of fullness with fewer calories. Lean protein sources with meals also promote satiety. Be sure that your plan includes foods you enjoy eating, and eat three or more smaller meals a day.

If you are trying to gain weight, select calorie- and nutrient-dense foods (such as raisins, nuts, peanut butter,

and fruit juice), and eat more frequently throughout the day. Weight gain does not require stocking up on empty calories, like candy bars, chips, and soda.

### 2. Enjoy regular physical activity.

Physical activity is indispensable for long-term weight loss or gain. Weight loss without exercise can result in the loss of lean body mass as well as fat. The result is a lowering of your metabolism (called your basal metabolic rate). Because of this decreased metabolism, returning to normal eating patterns can actually lead to weight gain (the yo-yo effect). Do both aerobic activities, (which burn fat, control your appetite, and reduce your risk of chronic diseases),

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and resistance training (which increase lean body mass and boost your metabolism). If you want to gain weight, resistance training is essential to make sure you gain mostly lean body mass, not fat.

### **3. Set realistic goals.**

Many people set unrealistic goals in their weight management plan. Remember that weight gain or loss should progress by no more than one to two pounds per week. If you are losing more weight than that, chances are the majority of weight lost is from water and not fat (and you are liable to quickly gain it back once you stop your drastic dieting methods).

### **4. Be aware of your calorie needs.**

A deficit of 500 calories per day will result in approximately one pound lost per week. This deficit can be reached by moderately decreasing calorie intake and increasing physical activity. More severe calorie restrictions lower the basal metabolic rate, making weight loss even more difficult. The minimum daily calorie intake for an obese person trying to lose weight should not be less than 1200-1500 for women and 1500-1800 for men.

If you wish to gain weight, maintain a daily intake of at least 500 calories higher than what you usually consume.

### **5. Incorporate lifestyle changes.**

In order to successfully manage your weight, include lifestyle change strategies to cement long-term eating and physical activity habits. Try keeping a diary of your current eating and physical activity patterns, including time, place, amount, whether you were alone or with friends, and how you felt afterwards. Identify barriers to changing your eating or exercise patterns, and work to overcome these. Also, notice positive weight management behaviors, and strengthen those activities.

To learn more about weight management, please visit [www.snac.ucla.edu](http://www.snac.ucla.edu).



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## HEALTHY HABITS KEY TO HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is important for your health. To be successful, a weight management program must stress the importance of making permanent changes in eating and physical activity habits.

Behavior modification is the systematic substitution of one set of behaviors for another by the selective rewarding of desired behaviors. Follow the six steps below to modify your behavior and establish your individual weight-management program.

**1. Ask yourself: “Am I ready to make the changes in my lifestyle now?”**

Do not begin your plan when facing a stressful event such as studying for finals, moving to a new apartment, or dealing with personal problems.

**2. Identify the problem.**

Keep a daily food diary to become aware of when, why, and how much you are eating. Many people are amazed at how much eating is merely habitual. The diary will help you become more aware of your eating patterns and identify your reasons for eating, other than being hungry. Make a list of all the barriers which prevent you from being physically active. Is it lack of time, lack of recreational facilities, limited interest, or low motivation?

**3. Brainstorming or creative problem-solving.**

List all the possible ways for you to modify your behavior in favor of healthful, conscientious eating habits and a more active lifestyle. See the back of this page for some ideas, but also be creative and think of ways that you might find especially effective. Sometimes the most unique solutions work the best.

**4. Decision-making.**

Choose the ideas that will work best for you, and begin with those solutions that will be easiest to carry out. Initial progress with your first steps will help encourage you to continue with your plan.

**5. Execute the plan.**

Begin your program! Think positively and envision yourself being successful.

**6. Evaluate your progress.**

This is best accomplished by keeping a record of your successes and failures. Maybe you have set your goals too high – or too low. By studying your record, you might notice a more fundamental problem with your strategy that’s necessary to change your behavior. But evaluate your plan before you blame yourself for failing to follow through with it. Upon evaluation, you may decide to alter your approach.

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## Food-related Behavioral Problems and Solutions

Permanent weight management requires changes in your lifestyle. These changes take time to incorporate into your everyday activities, but the result will be well worth the effort! Listed below are factors that often lead to food-related behavioral problems, followed by possible solutions. Try these suggestions. They may help you deal more effectively with specific problems.

### Proximity to Food

- Eat only at the designated eating place.
- Let others get their own snacks.
- Avoid “unconscious” eating. For example, do not eat while studying, watching TV, or driving the car.
- Control your environment by not keeping high-calorie snacks in your room.
- Avoid places that tempt you with high-calorie foods.
- Always have low-calorie options available.

### The Amount of Food You Consume

- Take only one portion at a time.
- Put away food packages before you start eating.
- Buy individually packaged snacks.
- Share a single serving with another person (e.g., split a sandwich, entrée, or dessert).
- Leave some of your portions uneaten. Set it aside before you eat.
- Clear the leftover food on your plate directly into the garbage or clear your tray immediately. “Better the food go to waste than to waist.”
- Stop dieting and forbidding yourself from eating your favorite foods. The more food is off limits, the more you’ll want it. Restricting only leads to binge eating.
- Eat mini meals. Having smaller, more frequent meals can prevent you from getting ravenously hungry and over-eating.
- Drink a tall glass of water with all meals and snacks.

### How Quickly You Consume a Meal

- Take at least 20 minutes to finish a main meal. It takes this long for the appetite center in your brain to register fullness from the digested food.
- Put your utensils down between every few bites until your food is swallowed.
- Pause 30 seconds between bites, and take smaller bites.
- Slow down the chewing actions of your jaws. Chew 10-15 times before swallowing.
- Practice being more of a gourmet. Relax, slow down, and enjoy your food by concentrating on the taste, texture, sight, and smell. Pay attention to eating and you will get more satisfaction from it.

### Emotional Fulfillment from Food

- Use relaxation techniques instead of food to cope with anxiety or stress.
- Talk through--rather than eat through--your emotions.
- Reward yourself for successes and accomplishments in ways other than food.
- Develop hobbies to replace “boredom eating.”
- Ask yourself, “Who’s in control, me or the food?”
- Listen to your body’s physiological signs for hunger and fullness.
- Do not dwell on lapses in your weight management plan. Pick up where you left off. You are still ahead by your efforts.