



# Nutrition for Older Adults: Diet and Health Guidelines For Weight Loss

**EXTENSION**

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## Healthy Weight Loss

Healthy weight loss focuses on a healthy lifestyle. Advice for those who want to lose weight is to aim for a slow, steady weight loss by:

- Focusing on health, not appearance.
- Setting reasonable weight loss goals.
- Eating healthy foods, not “dieting.”
- Getting regular physical activity.

## Reasonable goals

Reasonable weight goals are:

- Rate - A loss of 1/2 pound to 2 pounds a week.
- Time frame - A loss of 10 percent body weight over six months.

For a 250 pound person, a 10 percent loss over six months would be about 25 pounds. This would be about a one-pound loss per week.

A 10 percent weight loss, even if someone is still overweight, can provide many health benefits:

- Help blood glucose control.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Lower LDL cholesterol.

People who lose weight slow and steady tend to lose more body fat and less muscle. They are also more likely to keep the weight off.

## Healthy Eating, not “Dieting”

The amount of food needed from each USDA MyPlate food group every day is based on gender, age, and level of physical activity.

Healthy eating for weight loss focuses on eating a variety of foods from the USDA MyPlate food groups with a moderate decrease in calories.

A moderate decrease is about 500 calories a day without going below 1,200 calories for females or 1,600 calories for males. It is hard to eat a healthy diet below these calorie levels.

Some healthy eating tips for weight loss are:

- Eat smaller portions.
- Choose foods high in fiber and complex carbohydrate such as whole grains, vegetables and fruits.
- Choose foods lower in fat.
- Choose foods and beverages lower in added sugars.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat slowly. It takes about 20 minutes to begin to feel full.

## Physical activity

People who combine healthy eating with physical activity tend to be more successful

at losing and keeping weight off. People who include physical activity are also more likely to lose body fat and build muscle.

Muscle weighs twice as much as fat. As a result, people who include physical activity may see a more gradual weight loss, but the loss will be more fat and less muscle.

Physical activity increases calories used both in the:

- Short term - due to activity.
- Long term - by increasing muscle which uses more calories than fat, even at rest.

Physical activity can also help lower the amount of food eaten due to boredom, anxiety or depression.

Besides helping with weight loss, physical activity can help lower the risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes.
- Heart disease.
- High blood pressure.
- Certain types of cancer.
- Osteoporosis.

Be physically active each day. Recommendations are at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week, or 75 minutes to 150 min-

utes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity physical activity.

Physical activity does not have to be done all at one time. Try two to three 10-minute bouts instead of 30 minutes at one time. If you have not been physically active in some time build up slowly.

Different types of physical activities are important. Aim to include activities for:

- Endurance.
- Strength.
- Flexibility.
- Balance.

The most important thing is to choose physical activities you enjoy and want to do regularly.

## Before You Start

Check with your doctor before becoming more physically active. This is important if you have:

- Arthritis or joint problems.
- Heart disease.
- High blood pressure.
- Diabetes.
- Osteoporosis.

## Sources

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