

Energy Balance

There are many factors that affect our weight. The amount of energy (calories) we eat compared to the amount of energy we use (energy balance), is a main factor in weight gain or weight loss.

Other factors that affect our weight include genetics, social/cultural factors, environment, access to healthy food, sleep, and stress. Some of these are out of our control; however, maintaining, and losing weight can be possible. If your goal is to lose weight, there are three effective strategies...

- #1. Reduce the calories you consume**
- #2. Increase your physical activity**
- #3. Use behavioral strategies**



We covered physical activity in last week's blog post so we will focus on strategies 1 and 3 – calorie reduction and behavior strategies. *If your nutrition goal is healthy weight gain, see the helpful resources section.*

Calorie Reduction:

Research shows that the most effective way to lose weight is to **create a calorie deficit**. This means that the number of calories our bodies use is more than the calories we eat. Typically, reducing 500 calories from the calories you currently eat each day, through nutrition and exercise, can contribute to about a pound of weight lost each week.

Note: Losing more than 1-2 lbs per week and eating below 1200 calories a day are not recommended.

There are many ways to reduce calories. Here are a few key tips:

- 1.) **Replace higher calorie foods** (such as fried foods, sweets, chips, and pastries) with lower calorie foods such as (fruits, vegetables, lean/baked proteins, low-fat dairy, and whole grains).
- 2.) **Re-think your drink.** Sugary beverages and juices can add up in calories without really filling you up or providing many nutrients. Switch to sugar-free beverages or some good ol' water!
- 3.) **Structure your meals.** Planning your meals ahead of time can help stay on track. Hunger combined with lack of planning may lead to unintentionally eating foods that are higher in calories.

Behavior Strategies:

1.) **Goal Setting:** Setting short-term goals for yourself can help keep you motivated. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). For example: "During the next month, I will walk 3 miles a day, 4 days a week", and, "Starting today, I will take my lunch to work at least 4 day a week to avoid eating fast food." *For more information on creating S.M.A.R.T. goals see the helpful resources section.*

2.) **Self-monitoring:** In order to know which foods are contributing to excessive calorie intake, you need to know the calories in the foods you are eating. Self-monitoring strategies like keeping a food and exercise journal and tracking your calories can help you understand where you can make improvements.

**For a more individualized weight management plan, consult your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian.*

** These recommendations do not account for medical conditions, please see your physician before making changes.*

Helpful Resources:

- 1.) **Weight Management.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institute of Health. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management>
- 2.) **Healthy Weight: Preventing Weight Gain.** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/prevention/index.html>
- 3.) **What a healthy Weight Loss Plan Really Looks Like.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. <https://www.eatright.org/health/weight-loss/tips-for-weight-loss/what-a-healthy-weight-loss-plan-really-looks-like>
- 4.) **Healthy Weight Gain.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. <https://www.eatright.org/health/weight-loss/your-health-and-your-weight/healthy-weight-gain>
- 5.) **Goal Setting.** Purdue University Extension: Nutrition Education Program. <https://www.eatgathergo.org/eat/planning/goal-setting/>