

Weight management

Definition

Weight management means keeping your body weight at a healthy level.

Information

Regular exercise and a healthy diet are crucial when it comes to controlling your weight. A weight management plan depends on whether you are overweight or underweight.

An easy way to determine your own desirable body weight is to use the following formula:

- Women: 100 pounds for the first 5 feet of height plus 5 pounds for each additional inch.
- Men: 106 pounds of body weight for the first 5 feet of height plus 6 pounds for each additional inch.
- For a small body frame, 10% should be subtracted. For a large frame, 10% should be added.

Body fat and body mass measurements are used to determine whether a person is under- or overweight. A registered dietitian or exercise physiologist can help you calculate your body fat. The recommended amount of body fat differs for men and women.

For women:

- The recommended amount of body fat is 20 - 21%.
- The average American woman has approximately 22 - 25% body fat.
- A woman with more than 30% body fat is considered obese.

For men:

- The recommended amount of body fat is 13 - 17%.
- The average American man has approximately 17 - 19% body fat.
- A man with 25% body fat or higher is considered obese.

Body mass index (BMI) is an indirect measurement of your body composition. It takes into consideration both your weight and height. BMI helps determine your risk for certain diseases, including diabetes and hypertension.

It is important to note that the terms "overweight" and "obesity" do NOT mean the same thing.

Weight management for people who have been overweight involves continued physical activity and monitoring the amount of food eaten.

UNDERWEIGHT

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are eating disorders associated with a negative body image. Anorexia nervosa is a disorder in which people extremely limit their food intake. This results in dangerously quick weight loss, to the point of starvation. This disorder is most commonly found in adolescent females, but may also occur in males, children, and adults.

Bulimia is binge eating followed by self-induced vomiting. It's often associated with anorexia nervosa. Many people with bulimia don't lose a lot of weight, and may not get medical attention until they seek help.

Excessive intentional weight loss can cause a person to be dangerously underweight. To maintain their weight, people with eating disorders must eat enough food to prevent them from losing the weight they have gained.

CALORIES FOR WEIGHT MAINTENANCE

To maintain your weight, you can use the following formula:

- 10 calories per pound of desirable body weight if you are sedentary or very obese

- 13 calories per pound of desirable body weight if your activity level is low, or if you are over age 55
- 15 calories per pound of desirable body weight if you regularly do moderate activity
- 18 calories per pound of desirable body weight if you regularly do strenuous activity

ACTIVITY LEVELS

- Low activity: No planned, regular physical activity; occasional weekend or weekly activity (such as golf or recreational tennis) is the only type of physical activity.
- Moderate activity: Participating in physical activities such as swimming, jogging, or fast walking for 30 - 60 minutes at a time
- Strenuous activity: Participating in vigorous physical activity for 60 minutes or more at least 4 - 5 days per week

A BALANCED DIET

- Do not eat meat more than once a day. Eat fish and poultry more often than red or processed meats because they are less fattening.
- Avoid frying food. Fried food absorbs the fats from the cooking oils, increasing your dietary fat intake. Instead, bake or broil food. If you do fry, use polyunsaturated oils, such as corn oil.
- Cut down on your salt intake. Limit table salt, or flavor intensifiers that contain salt, such as monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Include adequate fiber in your diet. Fiber is found in green leafy vegetables, fruit, beans, bran flakes, nuts, root vegetables, and whole-grain foods.
- Do not eat more than 4 eggs per week. Although they are a good source of protein, and they're low in saturated fat, eggs are very high in cholesterol.
- Choose fresh fruit for dessert, rather than cookies, cake, or pudding.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Too much of anything -- calories or a particular type of food -- has its drawbacks.
- Follow the recommendations of the food guide plate.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

To successfully manage your weight, follow these basic guidelines:

- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Balance physical activity with diet to maintain your desired weight. Aerobic exercise will help increase muscle tissue and burn calories.
- Gradually adjust your eating habits to encourage a permanent lifestyle change. You may need counseling and behavior modification to change your diet.
- Avoid alcohol, or drink in moderation.

RESOURCES

A registered dietitian is an excellent resource for individualized weight management. The registered dietitian can provide information on classes and programs available in your community.

The Federal Trade Commission offers consumer brochures that evaluate commercial weight management programs.

Note: 1 calorie equals 1000 calories or 1 kilocalorie.

For more information, visit the Franciscan Health Library at www.FHSHealth.org/Health_Education.aspx