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Overweight

Ten Changes You Can Make to Lose Weight

* Appetizer reading [Ten Simple Healthy Eating Habits](#).

1. **Set realistic goals** - You didn't put on extra weight overnight so it is equally unrealistic to take it off quickly. Record a goal that you can reach in one month that is 4 to 8 pounds less than you weigh now. Set a goal you know you can achieve.
2. **Spread your calories around** - Divide your calorie goal by the number of meals (at least three) so that you eat about the same amount of calories at each meal. If meals are more than 500 calories, save some calories for snacks between meals. Make sure you eat at least 1200 calories each day or you will lose muscle.
3. **Diet foods not required** - Eat regular foods rather than the "sugar free", "lite" or "fat free" versions (except soda beverages and milk) because the calories in these "diet" foods still count towards your total calories each day. Diet foods are usually not as satisfying or filling so you may eat more of them. Drink fat free or skim milk so you can add some fat at meals. If you only drink 1% milk, then cut added fat in half at meals. If you drink 2% (low fat) milk, then don't add any fat to food at meals. Eat the basic food groups at meals - lean meat, legumes, dairy, fruits and vegetables. Then add one or two servings of grains or starches each meal to reach your calorie goal. Include 8 ounces of milk and one serving of grains, fruits and vegetables at each meal to provide carbohydrate fuel for your brain and muscles. You need at least 100 grams of carbohydrate each day.
4. **Drastic changes not recommended** - The plan you follow to lose weight should be built on the how you eat now modified by these ten changes. A weight loss plan should be a plan you can follow for a lifetime by making small changes in the portion sizes you eat once you reach your goal weight so that you can maintain a healthy weight. Try the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) to calculate your basal calorie (don't include activity)

needs at your current weight and your goal weight. There may be as little as a 5 calorie increase for each pound of body weight you gain over your goal weight.

5. **Portion control** - Control meal portions to a piece of lean meat as big as the back of your hand from your knuckles to where your wrist bends and as thick as your little finger or about the size of a deck of cards. Other foods like grains, vegetables and fruits can be portioned to 2 heaping serving tablespoons or approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each per meal. Measure how many ounces are in your beverage glass or mug so that you pour 4 or 8 ounces portions.
6. **Cook it yourself** - Bake, broil or steam food rather than frying. Consider cooking from scratch more often so you know what is in the food you eat.
7. **Some fat is OK** - Limit added fat to 1 teaspoon (margarine or mayonnaise or oil) or 1 tablespoon of salad dressing per meal if this doesn't exceed your calorie goal. You can choose to put margarine on your potato or salad dressing on your salad, but not both. To limit salad dressing and make it go farther, serve your salad dressing on the side of your salad and then dip your fork in the dressing before spearing your salad for each mouthful.
8. **Sugar is not evil** - You just can't afford the calories. Sugar only contains carbohydrate so use an artificial sweetener in beverages or drink sugar free soda in reasonable amounts.
9. **Alcohol in moderation** - Alcoholic beverages are just as empty of nutrients as sugar, but your liver processes them like fat. If you drink, limit yourself to one drink per day (12 ounce beer or 4 ounces wine or 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces distilled liquor) and then only add fat to one meal that day.
10. **Have your cake too?** - Probably not. Desserts are mostly fat and sugar which will put you over your calorie goal for the day.



I have faithfully followed the [calorie](#) counts calculated by your [Healthy Body Calculator](#) for the past 1 1/2 months and I have gained 5 pounds. I had asked your calculator to calculate how many calories I needed to loose 2 pounds a

week. I have been extremely careful about what I have been eating and at the most I have been off by +/- 100 calories/day. I must have either calculated wrong or I have some sort of metabolism problem. Here are my statistics.

- Age: 30
- Female
- Height 6'
- Weight 210
- Activity Levels:
 - 8 hours of sleep
 - 14 hours of relative inactivity
 - 1 hour of light exercise
 - 1 hour of medium exercise
- Daily calories (as calculated on you calculator) 1910

The [exercise](#) was the hardest part to estimate because the program does not allow 1/2 hours and it assumes you do the same thing every day. I ended up adding up all I do and finding the daily average. I walk 2 miles 5 days per week (1/2 hour @ 4mph) and I do 20 min. of Stairmaster, 20 minutes of weight lifting and 15 minutes of stretching 3 days per week. On weekends I am usually fairly active, but it's hard to predict.

Should I be eating a different number of [calories](#) each day depending on how active I am that day? It's a lot easier to just pick a number and stick with it, but I could probably vary my daily intake if it would make a big difference. The only way I have ever lost weight in the past is to extremely limit my calories (<1200/day) or to work out A LOT.

When I do this I can usually lose about 2 pounds a week. Even doing this I haven't been able to maintain the weight loss or even get to what your program considers an ideal weight for me (160). I have never been able to keep the weight off for more than a year or two because it is so difficult to work out that much and eat that little.

I would really appreciate it if you would respond to this. I am very frustrated and I'm not sure what to try next since this clearly isn't working. Do I have a serious health / metabolism problem?



If you are eating 1910 calories per day and getting the exercise you describe above, then you should lose 2 pounds per week. Do your clothes fit the same, tighter or looser? If your clothes fit looser, then you probably have put on muscle

as 1 pound of muscle takes up less physical space than 1 pound of body fat because muscle is more dense and has a higher [water](#) content.

If you have gained 5 pounds in 6 weeks, then you are gaining about 1 pound per week. If you are off by 100 calories each day, it won't account for your weight gain (+100 calories for 5 days = 1/7 pound weight gain) as the numbers don't add up. Another possibility may be that weight training, Stairmaster and aerobics have increased your muscle size.

Unless you had your body fat measured prior to your [calorie](#) counts and again at 3 month intervals, you won't know if you have added muscle or fat or a combination of both. Your body weight as measured on a scale will only tell a change in physical weight not composition. So you may be increasing muscle mass and decreasing your fat stores through exercise without any change in your scale weight. That is why scale weight is such a gross measure, as it doesn't tell you what percent body fat you are. Perhaps you should have your body fat tested. If your body fat is less than 20%, then you are lean and probably shouldn't lose any weight even at 210 pounds.

You should follow a consistent calorie and [exercise](#) goal each day even though what you end up doing may vary which is OK. People need to be flexible with their eating and exercise programs to enjoy life to the fullest. Given your height, you do burn more calories than a shorter person and I am surprised that you have to follow a 1200 calorie diet to lost weight and keep it off.

Write back with how you are tracking the [calories](#) you eat as you may be underestimating how much you eat. Do you write down everything you eat, amount and measure i.e. 1 1/2 cups 1% milk? Then do you use computer software to do the analysis or do you do analyze calories on paper?

There is no ideal weight and 160 is the middle of your healthy range. Perhaps 176 pounds would be a more appropriate weight goal for you.

Unless you have some long term illness that you are aware of and have not disclosed to me, with the information that you have provided, no, you do not have some serious health problem.



I had a daughter three years ago. I gained about 60 pounds while [pregnant](#). I dropped forty of those pounds, but I just

can't seem to lose the last twenty. Before her, I weighed 125. I now weigh around 143. I have kept this weight pretty constant over that three year period give or take a few pounds. I'm not gaining which is good, but how in the heck do I lose?

I have a sedentary job, so I joined a gym about a month ago. Either I need to go to the gym more or I need to find a better way of eating. I don't eat much, so I guess it must be what I'm eating.

Also, I am on a limited budget because I am a college student. Can you help me?



Before effectively answering your question it would be beneficial to know your height in addition to your weight. If your height is between 5'3" and 5'8", 125 pounds is an acceptable weight.

Have you tried the [Healthy Body Calculator](#)? What was your BMI report? A value exceeding 25 indicates potential health risk. A value of 30 or more indicates obesity related health risks. A desirable weight for height for adults is a BMI of 20-25. How's yours?

After you have determined that, hopefully you will be able to see whether or not you are in fact overweight. It is good that you have maintained a constant weight of 143 pounds. Overweight increases your health risk.

Since it is your goal to lose weight you need to remember that combining [exercise](#) and a balanced diet are essential for success. A healthy guide to eating would include using the guidelines of the [Food Guide Pyramid](#). According to the pyramid, you should be eating 2-3 servings of meat, fish, poultry, dry beans (basically proteins) a day. Keep in mind one serving of meat is 3 ounces (about the size of a deck of playing cards). It would be wise to choose meats that have lower fat content such as poultry without the skin, fish or very lean cuts of red meat. You should consume 2-3 servings of dairy and choose low fat products from this group such as skim [milk](#) or plain yogurt which are good sources of [calcium](#) (you need at least 800mg/day). Eat 3-5 servings of vegetables per day without added fat or sauce; 2-3 servings of fruit and finally 6 servings of bread, rice, cereals, pasta (all of which are carbohydrates). Select foods without added [fat](#) or [sugar](#). Generally, when attempting to lose weight, one would choose the minimum amount of servings, meaning six

carbohydrates instead of eleven. Overall, the [Food Guide Pyramid](#) incorporates the foundations of a healthy, balanced diet.

Continue to [exercise](#) at the gym. Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic (fat burning requires oxygen) conditioning. Some suggestions could be participating in an aerobics class, running on the treadmill, riding a bike, doing the stair climber or perhaps another activity you like. You should be working out at least 3 to 5 times during the week. It might also be helpful to lift weights as that increases metabolism while it increases your muscle size. The more times you work out the better you will feel and the more inclined you will be to lose unwanted weight. Remember to have fun and participate in the activities you enjoy. Best of luck.



I have been on a diet for 4 months and 3 weeks. I have lost 93 lbs. in that amount of time. My starting weight was 485 lbs. I am eating a [low fat](#) diet and have stopped eating all meat. I do eat seafood, beans, grains, fruit and vegetables. My question is I have been eating approximately 8 grams of fat per day and approximately 2000 [calories](#). Is this healthy?

Do I have to worry about eating so little fat and so much calories? It seems to be working but I am a little worried that I am not be eating enough fat.



Your weight loss has been about 4.9 pounds per week, which is faster than recommended. The concern is that fast weight loss most often is due to loss of some muscle weight along with the fat. Would recommend that you slow your weight loss because you will be more likely to keep the weight off.

A low fat diet that includes a variety of foods is a good idea. The fact that you don't eat meat (beef, pork, chicken or turkey), but that you do eat beans and grains in addition to seafood is all right. I guess you would call yourself a seafood [vegetarian](#)?

You were right to be concerned about your fat intake. The risk you take in eating such a low fat intake is developing [fatty acid](#) deficiency. At your current level, you probably aren't using any polyunsaturated margarine or oil. Make sure you get at least 1 tsp. of oil per day for the fatty acids.

Eight grams of fat in 2000 calories is about 3.6% fat. I would

not recommend less than 10% or 22 grams of fat in 2000 calories. You should increase your fat intake to 22 - 67 grams of fat if you continue to eat 2000 calories. Have you tried the [Healthy Body Calculator](#)? You can include your weight and nutrition goals including adjusting the levels of fat intake. Your Nutrition Facts report will include the number of grams of fat to eat.

The other issue is 2000 calories is fine until your weight loss stops. Then you will need to re-evaluate your calorie needs to continue losing weight. Periodically go back and use the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) to determine your calorie needs for continued weight loss. Remember though not to go below 1200 calories per day.



I am working with a patient who seems to have reached a plateau with her weight loss. Based on her reported food intake and [exercise](#) expenditure, I'm at a loss for her plateau. She has done very well with me and I believe her records to be accurate based on past weeks and months of working with her. She is inquiring about her set point and/or a plateau effect. Do you have any resources that you can recommend that I might research this topic and her concern. Thank You



Use the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) and select "maintain weight" rather than lose weight. First run your patient's physical data through the Calculator at her goal weight without any activity. Next run your patient's physical data through the Calculator at her current weight without any activity.

You will see that the calorie difference to maintain weight at the goal weight may be only 25 - 50 calories less for every 5 pounds lost without factoring in the impact of exercise. For instance at 150 pounds she may need 1620 calories, at 125 pounds she would need 1500 calories. So weight plateaus are a reality if calorie intake and expenditure are kept at the same level during weight loss. Would suggest you evaluate her [calorie](#) level and [exercise](#) plan to get off plateau. A slight decrease in calories and increase in daily physical activity will probably get her off that plateau, but remember not to go below 1200 calories per day.





I am trying to get in shape, [exercise](#), diet and lifestyle. In 1987, I had achieved a goal weight of 135 lbs. on the Weight Watchers program. Over the course of the last 10 years I have put the 30 lbs. back on and then some, (currently 181 lbs.).

I have had five friends go through a hospital based, fasting, liquid diet. (Originally developed by Ross Laboratories- however I think they have recently sold this division) who seem to have maintained their weight loss (too soon to tell - three are still in process). The beverage is 600 [calories](#), the body goes into a state of ketosis and the average weight loss is 3 lb. per week. Blood is drawn every other week and for the first seven weeks urine is tested for ketones. So, I am thinking about trying this program to get the weight off fast and reintroducing my exercise habits into my life.

My husband has just been diagnosed with high [triglycerides](#) (474) and [cholesterol](#) (314) and is 20 lbs. overweight. Our body composition is 36% fat for me, 26% for him. The YMCA selecting 23% healthy for me and 16% for him.

I was just reading under your FAQ's for [fertility](#) that it is not recommended to try this drastic a diet prior to planning a [pregnancy](#). (We want one more, AFTER I get this weight off.) Both pregnancies I was 160 lbs. starting 210 lbs. ending. Is this a really bad idea? What health risks might I encounter?



The first step you should take in planning weight loss is to determine a realistic weight goal. Check out the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) to find a healthy weight range for you. Since you did not provide your height, I do not know if the goal you have set is a realistic goal.

I encourage you to continue [exercising](#). People who combine exercise and healthy food choices are more likely to lose body fat and less likely to regain their weight back. Physical activity also helps to control appetite and increases metabolic rate or how many [calories](#) you burn per minute just lying still. Besides exercise, there are many ways to incorporate more activity into daily routines: park in the back of parking lots, take the stairs instead of the elevator, walk to a neighbors instead of calling them or replace a television show with a walk around the block. Remember that regular exercise is more effective in managing weight than short bursts of hard exercise.

Liquid diets, like the one you described, fall under the category of very low calorie weight loss diets (VLCD). VLCD do promote rapid weight loss and may be beneficial for some very obese people, but these diets do have health risks and should only be used under supervision of a physician and nutrition counseling by a [Registered Dietitian](#). Possible health risks of VLCD include: formation of [gallstones](#) and kidney stones, liver inflammation, nausea, abdominal discomfort, decrease in white blood cells, immune response diminishes, [dehydration](#), development of ketosis (read [fad diets](#) topic), loss of lean body tissue, mineral imbalance, loss of [protein](#), vitamins and minerals, body and breath odor, [headaches](#), fatigue, dry skin and sleeplessness. Dieters completing VLCD often regain the lost weight.

If your husband loses weight, exercises and eliminates all sugar, sweet desserts and alcohol, his triglycerides and cholesterol should come down to normal ranges. Triglycerides seem to respond faster than cholesterol, but depending on what diet you follow, both could be in normal ranges within a few months.

The body fat goals recommended by your YMCA seem reasonable for you, but a bit low for your husband. Depending on your age, a range of 19% to 25% is considered healthy. Low body fat does not decrease fertility in men, but when women's body fat drops below 18%, often their menstrual cycles become irregular or disappear.

When contemplating a [pregnancy](#), it is important to have adequate stores of nutrients up to 2 years prior to becoming pregnant. A drastic change in diet can deplete the body's nutrients, which can potentially harm the developing fetus. This can include the development of birth defects, such as spina bifida (read [folacin](#) topic).

In achieving a healthy weight, it is lifelong changes that need to be made. A positive approach to weight loss maintenance includes healthy eating, physical activity, behavior and attitude changes. Don't think of it as a diet, but an eating plan for life.



I went to you page because I am trying to lose weight. Your site helped me know how much to lose. Now is the hard part TO LOSE IT. I hope I can. Thanks.



Thanks for your feedback. Eat less (but not less than 1200 calories) and exercise more then the weight should come off. If you need more help, go see a [Registered Dietitian](#) where you live to get a meal plan that fits your lifestyle.



What is obesity?



Obesity is weighing 20% more than the maximum you should for your age and gender. Obesity is a risk for getting diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Obese kids are more likely to be obese adults.

For instance, if you are 10-year old girl 54 1/2" tall, you should weigh between 56 to 96 pounds. If you weigh more than 96 pounds, you would be heavy for age. If you weighed more than 115 pounds, you would be obese.

If you were a 10-year old boy 54 inches tall, you should weigh between 56 to 89 pounds. If you weigh more than 89 pounds, you would be heavy for age. If you weighted more than 107 pounds, you would be obese.

Boys and girls grow at different rates and so weight to height comparisons are different.



Can stress cause a person to gain weight? I have maintained a 50-lb. weight loss for 20 years, but it's a continual battle. I have hypoglycemia--am a vegetarian (x 26 years) and exercise regularly. I am a 43 years old, recently changed job to one that is very stressful. I eat about 750-1000 cal/day-and I cannot believe that I cannot lose that critical 10-lb. Even after 3weeks on Adipex and Pondomin, I did not lose one pound. I will take any help that I can get--and am very grateful for your attention.



Stress either causes people to gain or lose weight and people react differently. You did not say how much you weight, but anyone on 750 to 1000 calories per day should lose some weight over time. You did not say what your current weight

is, but Adipex and Pondomin are brand names for fenfluramine and phentermine. They are not usually prescribed for just a 10-lb. weight loss.



Thank you so much for writing me back! That is very nice of you.

I really could use a healthy lifestyles counselor, but first of all, I am poor, albeit not starving, college student and I can't afford one (when I looked for one, they cost \$300-500). Two, I would not know how to go about finding one I could trust and that would actually do me any good. Two years ago I went to a registered nutritionist who saw me once (for \$300) and then gave me a protein powder diet and made weekly appointments for me to come and see her assistant (the girl who worked at the frozen yogurt counter in her storefront.) I lost weight (as I always do), but as soon as the diet was over I had not learned how to eat right so I went back to my old habits and gained all the weight back plus some.

Regarding my sugar question, thank you for clearing that up. So if I am sticking to 1200calories, my sugar intake should not be any more than 30 grams of sugars. Well, I guess it's not really "Healthy" Choice, because 1 yogurt has 30 grams of sugar in it!!!! Good Lord!

Regarding veggie burgers I cook them in the microwave, so I don't use any oils to cook them. The box says it has 100 calories, 2.5 grams of fat (0.5 saturated, 1.5polyunsaturated,and 0.5 monounsaturated) They have already been precooked, is that good? Then I toast a whole-wheat bun and I have about 1 Tbsp. catsup and 1 Tbsp. mustard. Is it all right to eat this every day for dinner? Or is it unhealthy or fattening? That's the problem, I think I'm eating healthy, but I guess I may not be. I'm sorry to be taking up so much of your time, but would really appreciate any help you could give me. Thank you so much for writing me back!



Don't know what a registered nutritionist is as there is no national registering of "nutritionists". Some states though do license who can provide nutritional services or call themselves "nutritionist" or "dietitian". Find out if your state does. Sounds like the person you saw, was out to sell supplements and may not have had the education and

experience to provide nutritional counseling. And follow-up by a person selling frozen yogurt???

As to a healthy lifestyle counselor, start with a [Registered Dietitian](#). Since you are a college student, go to your student health services and ask to see one. They should have one working or consulting at the clinic. Otherwise, if you have health insurance, you may be covered to see one at your doctor's office. Ask your doctor if he / she has Registered Dietitian and ask for a referral if your health insurance requires it. If you don't have insurance, college or university health insurance is inexpensive. Check it out!

Next, you need guidance in an effective exercise program. Check with your physical education department to see if anyone in the department works with student's personal exercise program. Or if your school has a gym for students to work out, ask if an exercise physiologist or trainer there can assist you.

Weight loss diets that require special foods or drinks can produce quick weight loss, but this weight is quickly regained once the special foods or drinks are stopped. Unfortunately, a person doesn't learn new healthy habits eating special foods or drinks. You need to adopt a healthy eating meal plan that you can eat for the rest of your life, a plan that combines enough calories and lower fat with exercise to maintain your healthy weight. You really need assistance in working out a meal plan for weight loss and then maintenance once you have achieved your healthy weight.

Surprised at the sugar content in low fat foods? Don't forget that the "sugars" on the label of frozen yogurt probably also include the lactose in the milk. So not all is from table sugar, which is sucrose.

Those veggie burgers have half the fat compared to lean ground beef if you compare equal amounts of each. They are probably pre-cooked so that they hold together in the box and during your re-heating. Though your veggie burger is a lower calorie / fat food choice, I would not suggest you eat it every dinner. Would not suggest you eat the same foods for any meal, day after day. Variety in foods offers a variety of vitamins and minerals which is healthier long term.

Research has found that the persons who lose weight and keep it off for over 2 years, diet, exercise and nutritionally analyze everything they eat. If you want to keep track of your food intake, I would suggest you try nutrition analysis software that has weight control, diet analysis, exercise and

cooking features.



I need help. I have been trying to eat healthier, but it doesn't seem to be doing a whole lot. Could you tell me about how many grams of sugar I should stay below each day? Some of the foods I eat say non-fat, but have 30 grams of sugar in them and I wonder if that is what is sabotaging my efforts. (Healthy Choice non fat chocolate yogurt).

And how much bread is too much?

And what about vegetable burgers, are they good for you or not? (I love them--it makes it easier to not eat meat.)

I weigh 190 pounds and I am getting very frightened. I'm working out as much as I can and I am watching everything I eat. Could you write back to me? I am just too unknowledgeable to figure it out myself and could really use some help. I just need some updated advice on nutrition.

I used your [Healthy Body Calculator](#) and it was much more helpful than anything else I've been able to find. Please write back and let me know. Thank you very much.



"Sugars" listed on food labels include all simple sugars from fruit, milk as well as table sugar. So don't count all sugars as "bad" Fruit sugar and milk sugar are found in some very nutritious foods. Table sugar on the other hand does not contain any necessary nutrients like vitamins or minerals and is generally considered an "empty calorie" because of that.

Generally, the sugar content of your diet should be less than 10% of total calories. Since you used the [Healthy Body Calculator](#), you know how many calories to eat for your weight goal. It now will calculate the grams of sugar you should eat per day. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of sugar data available and you will still have to rely on food labels that provide sugar data.

You are right on about low and non-fat foods. When you remove fat, something has to be added back to imitate the smooth mouth feel of fat. Typically starches and sugars are used which increases the sugar content in a serving of fat reduced foods. Recent research has shown that people who eat fat reduced foods make up the difference in their calorie needs later in the day. In other words, if you saved 100

calories by eating fat reduced food, you might eat a bigger serving or some other food and even another fat reduced food, later in the day. Your body will do what it can to maintain weight as it thinks a famine is coming when we attempt weight loss. This can be attributed to our "caveman" genes.

The amount of bread you should eat per day depends on how many calories and how many other starchy foods you eat. For instance if you ate 1500 calories per day, you could eat 6 - 7 starch / bread exchanges / servings. If you ate 1200 calories per day, you could eat 3 - 4 starch / bread exchanges / servings. An exchange is a serving size used in the diabetic exchange list for meal planning.

Vegetable burgers are a nice substitute for meat burgers however, they can be higher in fat once cooked. Read the food label for the fat content of one burger, then measure the oil you use to fry the vegetable burger. The oil may be necessary to prevent the vegetable burger from sticking. There may not be a whole lot of difference in fat grams in a vegetable burger compared to eating lean (15% fat) ground beef. The difference would be in the type of fat. Ground beef has saturated fat and the vegetable burger may only have unsaturated fat, but read the food label of the vegetable burger for saturated fat content. The type of fat would also be determined by what fat you use to fry the veggie burger.

Sounds like you could use a healthy lifestyle coordinator? Why not talk to a [Registered Dietitian](#) who could guide you in making meal plans that would include your food likes and dislikes for weight loss. Your exercise program should include 30 minutes of aerobic exercise 5 times per week. Exercise increases your metabolic rate up to 15 hours after exercise, helps maintain muscle mass and provides a feeling of euphoria due to increased endorphins (feel good chemicals) in your brain.

The most successful weight loss programs include diet, exercise and nutritional analysis of food consumed.



I am currently on the Jenny Craig program. It's getting a little expensive and my weight loss is too slow. How can I speed up. I am using Nordic Track, but yet am losing only a pound a week and spend about \$80.00 on Jenny Craig food.



Your program should be designed to lose only 1 or 2 pounds per week. If you want to lose 2 pounds per week, lower your calorie intake as you lose weight. Remember though to not go below 1200 calories. Another way is to increase your exercise program. You didn't say how much time nor how frequently you use your Nordic Track, but it should be at least 30 minutes 5 times per week. Calorie reduction and weight loss slows down your metabolism and exercise speeds it up. Muscle burns a lot more calories than body fat, so try adding weight training or weight lifting to increase muscle mass.

Check out the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) frequently to re-figure your calories as you lose weight. Depending on your activity level, your calorie recommendation will drop slightly to continue weight loss.

You need to ask yourself the question, What are you going to eat when you get to your weight goal? Are you going back to "regular" food? If so, what new eating habits did you learn during your weight loss that will reinforce healthy food habits?



First of all I would like to say thank you for such an informative site. I have read almost every question and answer currently listed.

Now for my questions. I am female, 5'5" and weigh 190 lb. I used to work out a lot and I know that some of my weight is muscle as I look about 30 lb. less than what I weigh. I am in the process of designing a new, healthier eating plan for myself which is impeded by the fact that I don't like vegetables and I'm not crazy about water. Right now, I eat mostly fast food, ham or bologna sandwiches and junk food (I don't cook much). Do you know software that will plan meals for you? I have in the past used similar software called Body Craft by a Dr. Hatfield, which prepares a weekly menu, grocery list and exercise routine, but it has a limited food listing consisting mostly of foods I don't eat. Can you recommend a good nutrition guide that lists calorie, carbohydrate, protein, fat and fiber values in foods?

And lastly, you never mentioned your opinion of the Slim Fast diet plan. I am considering it for the first three months of my new "diet" alternating the meals that I substitute so that I can learn to prepare three healthful meals that I like and

will stick to long term.



You're welcome.

As you recognize, your food choices are your biggest barrier to implementing a healthier eating plan. You probably aren't going to suddenly like vegetables though vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fiber. Do you like any raw vegetables or vegetable juices?

I don't know of any nutrition software that plans meals for you. But you could choose from the foods in the database of nutrition software and plan your own meals and it may even create a shopping list too or recipes if you choose to start cooking more frequently.

I do not endorse food products and therefore will not comment about Slim Fast.

Ask yourself this question about any "diet". Can you eat this "diet" for the rest of your life and get to a healthier weight? If the answer is no and the "diet" is for short term or quick weight loss, you probably won't keep it off. Research suggests that you set a goal to lose 10% of your current body weight (for you 19 pounds). This will actually reduce your health risk at your current weight.

You said you used to work out a lot. What about resuming your exercise program? Thirty minutes of exercise five times a week would increase your metabolic rate, (even up to 15 hours afterwards), reduce body fat that doesn't burn as many calories as muscle and increase your feeling of well being.



I'm in desperate need of weight loss exercise program. Could you help?



First use the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) to see how many calories and fat grams you need to lose one or two pounds per week. Then use the Food Guide Pyramid or the Exchange List to plan meals. If you want some help implementing this, I would suggest you contact a [Registered Dietitian](#) who could work with your food lifestyle.

Plan on exercising 30 minutes 5 times per week doing activity that raises your heart rate. If you want some help planning an effective exercise program, you may want to contact an exercise physiologist. Research has shown that the people who lose weight and keep it off for at least 2 years, follow a program to reduce their food intake, exercise 30 minutes 5 times per week and record their food intake daily.

Also, depending on your current weight, you may want to visit your doctor for a physical first. Plan on slow weight loss and look at a lifestyle change as your goal.



I am a 22-year-old. Do you have any ideas how I can loose some weight and loose the big hips and thighs?



First find out what you should weigh and eat with the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) . With physical exercise, you can strengthen the underlying muscles. While spot reducing is not possible, you can lose inches overall with a regular exercise program 3 to 5 times per week. FYI, exercises will sometimes cause body weight to go slightly up as you increase muscle mass and decrease fat.



I am a 22 year old female that weights 175 lb. and am 5'5" tall. I am currently active one hour a day, 4 days a week jazzercise class. I desperately want to lose weight. According to your [Healthy Body Calculator](#) I am very obese. What I am looking for is a food plan. I am unsure of what to eat in order to lose weight. But I would also like something that I can live with for the rest of my life. Please, if you can help mail me back.



Go back to the [Healthy Body Calculator](#) , but select to lose 1 or 2 pounds per week. Your Nutrition Facts will adjust to include weight loss, but won't go lower than 1200 calories. You can also adjust the percent fat, protein or carbohydrate.

I would suggest you contact a [Registered Dietitian](#) who can plan a personalized meal plan that includes your likes and

dislikes as well as your lifestyle. There are no bad foods, just healthier ones to eat regularly. Keep up the exercise as it increases your metabolic rate for up to 15 hours after exercise and helps maintain your muscles, which burn more calories than body fat does.



I've recently loss 35 pounds on a 60 gm protein and 30 gm carbohydrate (daily) diet. I am quite satisfied with the results, but now I would like to start eating a more balance diet. How much weight should I expect to gain on the high carbohydrate, low fat diet that's recommended by the RDA? Currently I am 5'7" and weigh 130 lb. and walk at a brisk pace 2 - 3 times a week for 30 - 40 minutes.



Why not check out your calorie and diet options yourself with the [Healthy Body Calculator](#). You should be able to keep your weight within 5 pounds + or - from 130 by sticking close to the calories your body needs at that weight. Check out how many calories you would need at 125 and 130 pounds at your activity level. It may only be 50 calories difference. Also, you can adjust the percent carbohydrate, fat and protein to suit yourself.



I have been trying to lose weight ever since the 4th grade - I am now 22. Last time I had it checked my body fat was 27%, but I know I have gained weight since then. The main problem to all of this is that I don't eat veggies. I can't stand them - carrots, lettuce and corn are tolerable when people pick on me about my habits, but I just can't seem to eat them. The same goes for fruits, although I love apple juice. I do take a vitamin supplement, but really want to start eating healthy. Help!



If you don't like vegetables, then try eating foods with vegetables in them like spaghetti sauce, soup, stew, casseroles or stir-fry meals. If you dislike all raw and cooked vegetables and foods with vegetables in them, then you probably won't eat vegetables. They do contain a lot of vitamins, minerals and fiber, but only if you eat them! You choose. Don't let others determine what you eat.

Fruits are similar to the above discussion about vegetables.

So to make up for the nutrients you aren't getting in fruits and vegetables, take a multivitamin that has 100% RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance) of all nutrients. Vitamin pills though don't contain fiber. For fiber, you need whole grain breads, cereal, rice or pasta.

Eating vegetables and fruits will not cause weight loss. Normal body fat for women is 21 to 23%, for men 18 to 20%. You may be over fat, but not overweight. Exercise is the most effective method to loose body fat and increases muscle mass. The human body is either lean muscle tissue (muscle, organs and bones) or fat. Now this is simplistic, but it works. Lean muscle tissue burns more calories than body fat. So why not try exercise to change the composition of your body.

Eating healthy is a good goal. What else are you doing?



I am trying to help out a friend of mine. He has heard of a natural appetite suppressant drug from India called,(spelling?), "Sintramax". I was wondering if you have ever heard of it and what you may know about it. If not, do you know where I might go to find out on the Net?



I have not heard of the appetite suppressant you mention and since you do not have the correct spelling, it may be difficult to search for more info. on the Net.

There is a new appetite suppressant "leptin" that seems to hold hope in making the body think you are full. Until the FDA passes it and prescribed by your friend's doctor, I would suggest exercise and weight loss by reducing calorie intake. Exercise has been shown to increase metabolic rate for up to 15 hours afterwards, produces natural endorphins that elevate

mood and suppress appetite.



My mother, 53 years old, is over 100 lb. overweight. She has dieted on every 'plan' on the market, almost all her life. She has in the past lost all the weight and reached her goal weight, only to gain all of it and more within a year or so. My big concern is her health. She also has lost her will to try again. Please give me any advice you can.



Well I can understand why. Who likes repeated failures? While it is true that overweight increases a person's health risk, recent research does not find that it is more hazardous to repeatedly lose then gain weight (often-called weight cycling).

Why not talk about healthy eating, one low in fat, (for now don't mention calories), combined with regular exercise. Why not exercise regularly with your mom. It would be a good opportunity for quality parent time as well. Exercise increases the "feel good me" chemicals in the brain and increases a person's energy level. Water exercises put less strain on weight bearing joints and are a good place to start exercising.

Remember, that you cannot make your mom lose weight and nagging will only increase her resistance to weight loss. Positive comments will encourage her. Reward even the smallest attempt at a healthy lifestyle.



My question is about the amount that a person needs a day in protein. My brother is trying a liquid diet. I told him that he needs not only vitamins and minerals, but also a certain amount of carbohydrates, protein and fat. I was especially concerned about protein and how overall his calorie intake is so low. For a while he did not eat anything just drank the supplement. Now he is eating a small amount with the supplements. I asked him how much protein was in his diet and he said that it had 75% of the recommended daily need for protein, carbohydrates and fat. But it did not tell what that was. He said that each supplement was 110 calories and that it is recommended 3 times a day. He also may eat up to 300 to 400 more calories a day. This seems very dangerous to me. How can I get more information?

I am very worried, today he told me he has lost 32 lb. in 2 weeks. I know that being more over weight, a person can lose more. He weighs around 500 lb.

He is also drinking a lot of water, taking water pills and also taking Phen/fen to help with control of appetite. I do know that he will see his Doctor again.

Although, he did not tell him the first time that he had started this diet. Is there an average amount of protein in grams and calories, that a person should eat a day. He is tall, 6' 3" and, in his 30's. Do you have any suggestions on what I could tell him. To help him see that this may be dangerous. Thanks for you Help.



Your brother's protein RDA is 63 grams per day. If he is telling you that drinking a supplement 3 times a day will provide him with 75% of his protein needs, then he may be getting 47 grams of protein. Current food labels only list the grams of protein, not what percent a serving of the labeled food provides. Some studies suggest that the minimum dietary protein to prevent lean tissue (internal organs and muscles) from being broken down for energy is 20 grams per day. If your brother is getting 75% of his protein requirements then he is probably getting adequate protein. Is he also getting 75% of his RDA for all vitamins and minerals?

My concern would be with a doctor who prescribes a diet pill for a morbid obese individual without asking what the patient is eating. The current therapy using appetite

suppressants should include diet counseling and frequent office visits to monitor tolerance and complications that result from the drug therapy and rapid weight loss. The drug is available by prescription only and your brother will have to return to his doctor to renew it. I would suggest diet, exercise and water pills be discussed with the doctor.

Persons who are more than 100 pounds overweight or double their healthy body weight are morbid obese. Your brother's healthy body weight is 186 to 206 pounds.

Current nutritional therapy for morbid obesity can include a very low calorie diet (600 calories per day), vitamin supplements, exercise and prescribed appetite suppressant drugs. Very low calorie diets produce quick results, but do not necessarily increase long-term successful weight loss. A physician and a [Registered Dietitian](#) should supervise this type of diet.

Current calorie recommendations for obese and over weight persons are a minimum of 1200 per day, low fat foods and exercise. I think it is an improvement that he is eating some regular food and could probably use some guidance in making food choices.

In addition, he should not take water pills without his doctor's advice as he could become depleted in sodium or potassium. Weight loss will vary, however 32 pounds in 2 weeks is excessive and I would suggest that some of that weight loss is water due to the dehydrating effect of the water pills. Any weight loss greater than 1 pound per day is temporary and usually due to fluid shifts in the body.



I not sure what is the best strategy for me on losing weight. I'm 255 lb. and 5'8". Right now I don't know if I should follow up on two diet authors that interest me. These are Dean Ornish and Cliff Sheats. Ornish deals with more a low-fat vegetarian diet with minimal or absent use of meat. Sheat's diet is about using more of the right food to lose weight. Like, veggies and very lean meat.

I'm really concerned about my health. My father had his 1st heart attack when he was 30 years old and he was just slightly overweight (5'5" and 170 lb.). Please any advice is welcomed.



It so happens, I heard Dr. Ornish at the American Dietetic Association meeting recently and saw some rather impressive improvements in cholesterol plugged arteries and oxygenation of tissue. The improved arteriograms (x-ray dye studies of arteries) PET scans, blood fats profiles were compared before and after 3 months on Ornish's diet.

The diet has 10% fat, 15% protein, 75% carbohydrate, 10 mg of cholesterol, no animal products other than egg whites and 1 to 2 servings of non-fat dairy products per day, no added fats (oil, avocado or nuts), no caffeine or decaffeinated beverages, but calories aren't restricted. Alcohol is allowed (1 1/2-oz alcohol, 12 beer or 4 oz of wine) with one per day and 0 to 2 servings of non-fat sweets. Grains, legumes, beans, peas, fruits and vegetables are recommended foods.

The program includes stress management, an exercise program (3 hours per week), smoking cessation and social / emotional support. Also included in his program are vitamin supplements. He has set up centers across the US to expand his program.

The patients included in his study were people who needed a heart transplant or cardiac bypass operation or were at risk for coronary heart disease. Considering your family history, I'd say it would be a good diet from the results I saw.

I am unfamiliar with Sheats as it is difficult to keep up with the \$35 billion diet industry in the US.

A successful diet means a change in lifestyle for most persons and should include reducing fat to 25% of total calories, reducing calorie intake and increasing calorie output through a regular exercise program. I learned from patients that the most successful weight loss diet is slow (1 - 2 pounds per week) and don't attempt to make too many changes at once. To stop smoking, stop drinking alcohol, diet and exercise at the same time may be more than the average person can achieve, especially without support. You choose your goal, just do something. Why not talk to a [Registered Dietitian](#) for an individualized weight loss diet?



For several years, I have read that it is desirable to eat a diet high in complex carbohydrates from say breads, pasta, potatoes and such, but recently read an article that appears to indicate that for obese folks like myself (female, 5'3, 247 lb.)

this might not be such a good idea. If I understand the article correctly, it appears that these foods may be just as bad for you as high fat meats and salad dressings.

Currently I am on a 1200-calorie/day diet based on diabetic exchanges and have lost 20 pounds in 7 weeks. Other than being obese and having arthritis in my ankle (that prevents me from doing much walking), I am in good health. I ride a stationary bike for 40 minutes (8 miles) 5-6 times per week. Although I have to fight my tendency to binge on breads and pastas, it is somewhat distressing to me that these foods that help me to feel "satisfied" so to speak may not be as good for me as it was once thought - and may even undermine my weight loss efforts.

What are your thoughts on this?

By the way, I find your page to be very informative. Thank you!



Well nutritional recommendations constantly evolve with current research. You're right in that we previously recommended diets high (60 - 70%) in carbohydrates with the most coming from complex rather than simple carbohydrates. But now that recommendation has been reduced to 50 - 55% for exchange based weight loss diets.

In regards to undermining your weight loss efforts, I do not believe that your eating a high carbohydrate diet has lessened your weight loss because you have lost almost 3 pounds per week. Congratulations. Besides, you are also limiting calories to 1200, which is great! Calories do count when attempting to change your weight.

Secondly, I would not compare eating complex carbohydrates to high fat meat and salad dressings. Fat contains more than twice the calories of carbohydrate and fat are likely to increase your blood cholesterol as well. You should limit fats to 25 - 30% of the total calories in your diet. This would be about 33 -40 grams of fat per day. The new food label lists grams of fat and you could keep track of fats as well. Or you could buy nutrition analysis software to keep track of your calories and fat by doing the analysis yourself.

Your exercise routine is good, especially if you work up a sweat. Swimming is also a good exercise for persons with arthritis as it reduces the impact on weight bearing joints like hips, knees and ankles. There are lots of water exercises

besides swimming. Take the plunge and contact your local YMCA or health club.

Other foods that are filling are fruits and vegetables because of their bulk. You can eat a lot of fruits and vegetables without consuming a lot of calories if you don't add fats, sauces or syrups.

Remember, if you don't buy or cook it you will have a hard time eating it. Go through your kitchen and give away any food that you have eliminated from your diet so that you are in a positive environment where all you can do is succeed.

Thanks for reading.



I heard on the news and have been watching my news groups, about the latest and "greatest" research indicating that women 5'5 should weigh 119 pounds. The research claims that the weight standards published currently are far too "lenient". This is extremely upsetting to me. I am 5'5 and when I weighed 125-130 pounds I felt really great. I did feel fat even then, but I'm trying to get back to that weight. My body fat was in the low 20's. It's discouraging to hear this and I'm wondering what YOU think of these new discoveries.



I know that when nutrition or health research results appear in the media that it can be confusing to the public, especially when some information seems to conflict current practice. I think the new weights may be a little low, but are based on mortality (death) and morbidity (illness) studies. Unfortunately, it didn't help our ancestors are the skinny cave people died off.

There are several methods of determining "healthy body weight". One weight standard currently published is the Metropolitan Height Weight tables. There are separate tables for adult males and females, each divided into small, medium and large body frame. Body frame should be measured at the elbow with a caliper by measuring the distance between the bones on either side then comparing that measurement against a table of norms. The table weights are the result of compiled, self reported heights and weights for persons in the lowest mortality category and usually represent young adults who apply for life insurance. In other words, there is no medical exam to measure weights or

heights. The tables merely report the changes in self reported physical information each time that the tables are published. On the current table, a woman of your height small frame is 117 - 130 pounds, medium frame 127-141 and large frame 137-155. You are within normal ranges no matter what size body frame you have.

Another is based on a formula for height, which is sex dependent. For a female start at 100 pounds and 5 feet. For every inch over 5 feet add 5 pounds. Next compute 10% above and below this number to get a weight range. You should weight 125 pounds + or - 13 pounds or 112 to 137 pounds. So you are fine at 125 - 130 pounds.

Another method is to calculate a weight goal based on body fat content which norms are sex dependent. If you were in the low 20's percent body fat at 125 - 120 pounds, your percent body fat is very good. Normal body fat for a woman is 20 - 24%. Some women have found that when their body fat gets below 18% they quit menstruating. Hormones are made from fat.

The last method is calculation of body mass index. Check out the [Healthy Body Calculator](#). Normal body mass for women is less than 25. You are OK on this calculation too.

Body weight fluctuates with the water levels in your body, which are normally around 60%, time of day, whether your bladder and bowel are empty. Relax, your body weight at 125 - 130 is fine.



I started an exercise program approximately 2 months ago. At that time, I started walking about 1.5 miles a day 5 days a week and using a health rider 10 minutes a day, 3 - 5 days a week. I also began limiting my fat intake, eating more fruits and vegetables and less junk. Now, why is it that I have only lost 1 (one) pound in that time.

I really need to lose about 20 pounds and decided to do it sensibly. But due to the results I've been having, one of those dumb crash diets is looking better and better.



You may have changed the composition of your body. Exercise does help convert body fat to muscle and muscle weighs more than fat. Do you know what percent body fat you were before starting this program?

You did not say how many calories or percent fat you are eating. Generally, for every 500 fewer calories you eat, you should lose 1 pound per week. Fat should be restricted to less than 30% of calories. Unless you record and monitor your calorie and fat intake, exercise output and weight at the same time, you may not know why you are not losing.



I am a 57-year-old Australian man of 5'10" weighing 105 kilograms (231 pounds). I have a long history of back injury with problems at L5-L4 and now a new condition with L5-S1 disk almost non-existent. I also have a narrowing at C6 from a broken neck. Don't worry my sense of humour(humor) is still very much intact! I have been advised to get my weight down to about 85 Kilograms (187 pounds). This seems a daunting task. How should I start?

I have just started a low fat, high fiber program. Any comments are most welcome and if you wish to case study me be my guest. I know that other peoples' experiences are most useful.



Congratulations for starting. A low fat diet (25 - 30% of calories from fat), along with including high fiber foods (11.5 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories) is good. Spread out your food intake over 3 meals per day. Don't wait until you are hungry as you may then overeat. How many calories are you eating per day?

Your healthy body weight is 72 - 79 kilograms (159 to 173 pounds). Choose a weight that is attainable though.

The most successful weight loss diets are designed for 0.45 - 0.9 kilogram (1 to 2 pound) weight loss per week. An exercise program (possibly water aerobics or swimming) that does not further stress your effected disks would be beneficial. Any weight loss should decrease the weight bearing stress on your back, hips, knees and ankles as well. Self-monitoring your food intake (daily food records) and

exercise seems to be important to long term success.



Thanks so much for you Ask the Dietitian page. The sections on weight loss have been particularly interesting to me. I do have a question, though!

Although you touch on this a bit in your Overweight page, I'd like to know more about the statement "The maximum weight loss currently recommended is 2 pounds per week. Research has found that this helps preserve lean muscle tissue (muscles and internal organs) so that the weight loss is mostly body fat (adipose tissue)."

Background, I am male, 5' 11" and presently weigh 222 pounds. I have lost 32 pounds in the last 62 days. This averages to 3.6 pounds per week--quite a bit more than the 2 pounds per week you mention. I am eating between 1500-1600 calories per day. I don't feel hungry at all and am really happy with my success so far. What I am worried about is doing any sort of permanent damage because of this higher-than-recommended weight loss rate. I also expect that my weight loss rate should soon slow down as I become lighter (since a lighter body requires fewer calories to keep warm and move around, etc.). (Though a plot of weekly weight loss over the last 6 weeks does not show any noticeable decrease in rate.)

I keep a 100% accurate (assuming the food values on the sides of packages are correct), daily food diary, so I can make all sorts of calculations. I have no problems sticking to my meal plans, so I can easily pick a daily calorie number and hit it.

Can exercise counteract the loss of lean muscle tissue? I presently walk 3-5 times per week for an hour (at a rate of about 4.1 miles per hour). I am also strongly considering beginning a 3 time-per-week weight training program (for the days I don't walk).

The diet program I am using is free on the Internet and is called The Hacker's Diet. I would love to know if you are familiar with this diet and what comments you might have about it. (I realize there are thousands of diets, so it is improbable that you know of this particular one!) This diet seems to fit my lifestyle and personality well. (Incidentally, one component of the diet happens to be a series of Microsoft Excel spreadsheet macros for doing graphs of daily weights, recording exercise, etc. Since you work for a

software company, this might interest you.)

By the way, which medical professional is best equipped to answer questions about diet, exercise and weight loss? Should I try my regular general practitioner? Have her recommend another person? Or just keep reading on my own?



Using [Healthy Body Calculator](#), I calculated your basal energy needs to be 1813 calories. Any personal activities and exercise will add to this caloric need. At 1500 - 1600 calories per day, you are at least -313 calories per day. One pound of body fat is equal to 3500 calories. So if you laid in bed (basal energy needs) and didn't exercise, it would take you 11 days to lose one pound.

Exercise is keeping your metabolic rate elevated for up to a day afterwards. Using nutrition analysis software, I calculated a 222 pound person walking at 4 mph would burn 235 calories in one hour. This alone would bring your calorie needs to 2048 per day, but still would not include the rest of your daily activities.

Congratulations on your weight loss! The weight you are losing is more than currently recommended, but the concerns with fast weight loss have more to do with loss of lean muscle tissue and deficient nutrient intake. Exercising will minimize that effect. As to any permanent damage, you would have to nutritionally analyze your food intake to determine that answer. Are you getting sufficient protein (63 grams for males 25+ years of age) and meeting your RDA for vitamins and minerals?

You will have to adjust your calories up from 1500 - 1600 once you get to your healthy body weight so that you stop the weight loss to enter a weight maintenance level. Your metabolic rate may decrease as you get closer to your healthy body weight of 165 - 179. At 179 pounds, your basal energy needs will be around 1625 calories per day without figuring in activity or exercise calories. Walking 4 mph at 179 pounds will burn 211 calories per hour.

Exercise is the best way to prevent the loss of lean muscle tissue. Exercise, especially aerobic, can change the composition of your body to a lower percent of body fat - higher percent lean muscle tissue even without losing weight. The amount of time and effort you expend when you exercise is more important than the distance covered. Weight training

increases muscle mass. The exercise program you suggest sounds good - alternating walking with weight training. I would suggest you work with an exercise physiologist or qualified weight trainer for direction so that you achieve maximum results. You may even gain weight as muscle weights more than fat. Muscle contains more water and holds glycogen (stored glucose from the blood).

I will check out the hacker's diet, but had not heard of it before. Generally, dietitians are the best source for planning weight loss diets. Your general practitioner physician could direct you to a dietitian. A Bariatric physician specializes in treating obesity, but it doesn't sound like that's what you need. I would recommend you read anything on nutrition, but discriminate about who is offering the advice. Again, seek references written by dietitians who are educated, trained and registered experts in nutrition.

By the way, a food label is only required to list the 80% -120% of the nutritional content in a serving of food according to the current FDA regulations.

Have you tried using nutritional analysis software to keep track of your food intake, daily weight and exercise program?



I am writing you because I have a little problem. My mother is over weight, even though she does activities and eats well (most of the time). I have no idea what to tell her that would help her out. This has been going on for a long time and I would really like to help her lose weight, since I am planning on becoming a nutritionist when I graduate high school. If you have any ideas, any at all, please write back to me.



Your mother has to decide for herself that she wants to lose weight. Any reminders or unasked for suggestions by you will be resented by your mom. Be supportive of any healthy low fat food choices your mom makes.

Offer to cook, then make a low fat meal. There are lots of low fat cookbooks available in the library or your local bookstore. You could read the [Eating Habits](#) topic for information. You could offer to go for a walk, bike ride or other exercise activity on a regular basis with your mom.

For your information, a Nutritionist has bachelor and

master's degrees in nutrition. Unfortunately, the title isn't regulated and anyone regardless of any nutrition education can call himself or herself a nutritionist. Call the American Dietetic Association in Chicago (312-899-0040) for information about becoming a dietitian whose title is regulated. Some state license persons who dispense nutrition information as well.



Have you heard of the American Medical Association endorsed 3-day diet? Do you know how I could find out about it?



No, I haven't heard about the AMA 3-day diet. You could contact the AMA to ask their Public Relations person what the diet entails. If anyone has the details, please write.

Lastly, I wonder what could be accomplished in a 3 day diet?



I have heard many different opinions as to what to go by when trying to lose weight. I am about 45 pounds overweight and have finally started trying to lose some of it. Some people have told me to go by the amount of calories in a product as to whether it is healthy or not and others have told me to go by fat grams. What exactly should I go by and what are some good numbers to go by?



Fat grams seem to work for a lot of folks, but you should also keep track of calories. (Read the remaining questions in this topic for assistance in determining your healthy body weight and calorie requirements for weight loss.) Next take the total calories you eat per day and multiply by 30% to determine the number of calories from fat. (If you ate 1200 calories per day times 30% equals 360 fat calories.) Lastly, divide by 9 calories per gram to get the fat gram total for a day. (Divide 360 calories by 9 to get 40 fat grams.)

The only problem with this is it does not take into consideration vitamin and mineral content which calorie or fat gram content cannot determine.



I am 40 years old, am 5'4" tall and weigh 267 lb. I have been extremely overweight since youth and have made many weight loss efforts. One particularly "effective" diet was a high protein/low carbohydrate diet. Ten years ago, I lost 120 lb. in about 14 months but it took less than 8 months to re-gain the entire amount.

I recently consulted a nutritionist (MD) at a medical college who offered me three diet choices: (1) Carnation Instant Breakfast Diet (5 servings/day) (2) High Protein/Low Carbohydrate Diet (NO STARCHES /Fruits at all) (3) Balanced-Deficit (1200 calorie diabetic exchange). The only diet that makes sense to me is (3) and I became VERY skeptical of a MD who would advocate diets such as (1) and (2). Because I chose (3), what advantage to I have to continuing to see this nutritionist over, say, a program such as Weight Watchers?

From a medical college nutritionist, I had hoped for a more progressive approach to obesity treatment that included a program of drug therapy (Phen/Fen, for example). She told me that she couldn't prescribe long-term therapy with these drugs because FDA has not approved them. This seems to be contrary to the press that I have read recently. If these drugs can be prescribed, what kind of doctor do I need to see?



A Bariatric doctor specializes in weight control. If what your nutritionist doctor told you is true about drug therapy for weight control, it may not matter what the doctor's specialty is. Anyone can call himself or herself a nutritionist as the title is not regulated except in some states that license nutritionists. I would check out a person's credentials.

Your instinct was good in choosing the 1200-calorie diet based on the diabetic exchanges. Weight Watchers uses a similar system of exchanges with differing calorie levels. An important question to ask is what is the nutrition counselor's education and experience to provide nutrition counseling. A good nutrition professional [Registered Dietitian](#) has the education and national certification to provide nutritional counseling. Some states now also license who can provide nutrition information.

FYI One Instant Breakfast packet has 123.55 calories and 8 ounces of skim milk has 80 calories. Five servings of Instant Breakfast with 40 ounces of skim milk has 1045 calories.

Four packets would give you 100% of the RDA for all nutrients except Vitamin E. So the 5 servings would be nutritionally complete other than for fiber.



I have a friend who is becoming quadriplegic through post-polio syndrome. She'd like some advice on diet---i.e. what should she eat so as not to gain weight as she loses mobility. Any ideas?



A healthy diet that limits fat to 30% of calories, three meals per day and a variety of foods using the Food Guide Pyramid would be the best. There is no bad food, but eating too much food can cause weight gain, especially if physical activity levels drop. Foods high in fat and sugar usually don't contribute as many vitamins and minerals and are very calorie dense. That is, lots of calories per ounce of food. Limit high fat and high sugar foods to 1 or 2 servings per week if at all. Better to eat nutrient dense foods. That is, lots of vitamins and minerals with lower calories per ounce of food.

To get a goal weight, first calculate her healthy body weight. For women start at a height 5 feet and 100 pounds. Add 5 pounds for every inch of height over 5 feet. Height can be measured lying down and persons are usually taller when measured this way. For instance a 5'4" woman's healthy body weight is 120 pounds plus or minus 10%. The healthy body weight range for this woman is 108 to 132 pounds.

Next calculate calorie requirements based on 15 calories per pound. A woman weighing 120 pounds needs about 1800 calories per day. This would include basal calories and calories burned during very light activities. Using Santé software, I calculated her basal calorie requirements at 1337 calories per day, which doesn't include activities. Basal calories are those needed just to keep the body systems running without any activity. Your friend, if at healthy body weight, should not go below this level.

As physical activity decreases, so does lean muscle tissue (muscles and organs) which in turn decreases metabolic rate (basal calories). Your friend should weigh herself once a week to get a handle on how her plan to manage calorie intake and energy output.



I'm 230 lb. / 5'8" and I'm interested in joining the "Optifast" program. My only problem is that I hear that it's very costly. (\$300 initial fee; \$120 per week) I live in NYC and I was wondering if all the participating doctors charge the same rate. How would I go about finding more information on "Optifast"? Is it just as popular as it once was a long time ago? In comparison to other 'liquid diets', do you feel that "Optifast is the best one today?"



Optifast is a hospital based outpatient program that uses a very low calorie (600 calories per day) diet to achieve weight loss. The program incorporates training in modifying eating habits and food stimuli in addition to the liquid diet plan. And the important component is, that you are working with nutrition professionals who have education and training in weight loss. Oprah Winfrey catapulted this diet plan to popularity by talking about her own weight loss using the Optifast program.

If you would like more information about Optifast, first call your local hospitals to find out which doctors participate in the program and what the cost is. Like any service offered, you may have to call around to find out if the costs are the same. Next you can call Sandoz Nutrition, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota at 612-925-2100.

Needless to say, the research does not have real favorable things to say about liquid diets long-term success rate when used to severely limit calorie intake. There are also other over-the-counter liquid diets available which if used to replace one or two meals per day also achieve weight loss. The bottom line is you eat less food, you lose weight. What research results do point to are successful long-term weight loss results from moderate diet reduction and exercise.



Does the excess weight an over weight person has need to be supported. I am currently overweight going to Weight Watchers and do not understand what would happen if I ate the exact amount of calories to maintain my Goal weight. I understand I am eating a little less than that, but what if at my goal weight I would need to eat 2,000 Calories. And I ate that now being over weight, would I stay the same because I am eating the exact amount I use.



Yes, body weight is composed of tissue that needs calories to perform metabolic work. Some tissue (muscles and organs) require more calories than fat.

You can figure your calorie requirements at your current weight by measuring how many calories you eat a day averaged over a week while maintaining your weight (+ or - 2 pounds is insignificant). Generally that can be calculated at 12 calories per pound of body weight. So if you weigh 150 pounds times 12 calories, you need 1800 calories per day.

To lose weight, you have to decrease that calorie amount by 500 (lose 1 pound per week) or 1000 (lose 2 pounds per week). If overweight, you eat 2000 calories per day, to lose 1 pound per week, eat 1500 calories per day. To lose 2 pounds per week, eat 1000 calories per day. However, research does not support eating less than 1200 calories per day because quick weight loss is usually regained.

Once you have reached your goal weight, to stop losing weight, you will need to slightly increase your calories. Again, figure 12 calories per pound of body weight to determine weight maintenance. So if your maintenance weight is 130 pounds, you need 1560 calories per day. (Not a whole lot less than you did at 150 pounds.)

At a lower weight, you will probably not need more calories than you did at your over weight unless you have changed the composition of your body. If you have exercised, decreased body fat (gone from 28% down to 21%) and increased muscle, then you may need to increase your calories a bit higher than 1560 per day. Muscles burn more calories than fat.



What is your opinion about support groups? I belong to an organization called TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) which is modeled after AA. It is non-profit and promotes no special diet - just group support. I found that this is the only way to control my eating and it is like Weight Watchers except that it is much less expensive.



TOPS is a good support group for persons wanting to lose weight though the group does not offer diet plans. I have talked to many area groups. Weight Watchers is another weight loss support group. They have a diet plan based on diabetic exchanges that can be individually tailored.

Support groups for persons with similar concerns are very helpful during periods of change, including losing and maintaining weight loss. It's nice to share with others who have similar experiences and questions as well as receive their support and encouragement. It is especially helpful to have a nutrition professional, [Registered Dietitian](#), to provide accurate nutrition information. Lots of TOPS groups suggest participants first see their doctor for a physical exam and see a dietitian for a meal plan. A dietitian can help advise and guide to the most effective and individualized plan for weight loss.

While TOPS may not support any particular diet, you will need to follow a diet and exercise program for optimum long-term success. Some guidelines are a minimum 1200 calories per day, 30% of calories from fat and eat 3 meals per day with 1 to 3 snacks. An effective exercise program is one that is based on exercises you like to do 3 to 5 times per week for 30 to 60 minutes per day. Also, exercise support is important; find an exercise buddy, maybe from your TOPS group.



I recently started a weight loss program and have changed my eating habits within three weeks time. I drink 2 sometimes 1 1/2 liters of water a day and more chicken and veggies. I lost 6 pounds the first two weeks when I checked in with my nutritionist. Is this too much weight? I am not depriving myself from eating, I just make better choices.



The maximum weight loss currently recommended is 2

pounds per week. Research has found that this helps preserve lean muscle tissue (muscles and internal organs) so that the weight loss is mostly body fat (adipose tissue). Also, if you lose too much weight too quickly, research has also found that you will be more likely to regain the weight you lost. The most successful weight loss programs after a two-year period includes exercise daily and dieting slowly.

The amount of water you drink is fine (2500 cc = 10 - 8 ounce glasses). I usually recommend that persons drink eight glasses of water a day, even if weight loss is not a concern. Water helps your kidneys wash waste products out of the body and helps provide enough fluid for dietary fiber in your intestinal tract. One way to tell if you are drinking enough water is to look at the color of your urine. During the day, it should be colorless and odorless unless you are taking a Vitamin C supplement. Vitamin C will tint your urine yellow if you take much more than two times the RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance). This would be more than 120 milligrams per day.



Every New Year's Eve, I start a new diet. What suggestions do you have for helping me stick to this year's diet?



Congratulations on your New Year's resolution to lose weight. Try the following suggestions. Work on incorporating as many of them as you can deal with at one time. Don't try to do all of them at once.

Choose a weight reduction diet that includes all groups in the Food Guide Pyramid: milk; meat; bread; fruit; vegetables; fats, oils and sweets. Remember that you need carbohydrate from breads, fruits, milk and vegetables to burn body fat.

Set your weight loss goal for one to two pounds a week. Work for a realistic short-term goal of one month at a time. Remember, it may have been a while since you weighed your "dream weight". You did not put this weight on overnight. It took time. To focus on the total amount you want to lose may seem overwhelming. It would be unrealistic to expect to lose quickly and you would be setting yourself up to fail. Weight loss that is slow is more likely to be kept off because over time you can concentrate on changing your "fat eating habits" for "thinner eating habits".

Weigh yourself only once a week at the most. Your

expectation is that you have lost weight each time you stand on a scale. It is negative feedback when your weight isn't lower each time you stand on a scale. Learn to judge your weight based on how your clothes fit.

Design your home food environment to be positive and supportive of your weight loss plan. Remove all high calorie, high fat, high sugar foods from your kitchen cabinets, refrigerator and freezer. These include chips, snack foods, cakes, pies, cookies, bars, ice cream, pop and candy. You are fooling yourself if you say you won't touch frozen cookies or that they are for someone else's lunch bag. Don't test your will power, as you will be setting yourself to fail at losing weight. If you don't buy it or make it, food has a hard time finding its way into your mouth.



I seem to be able to eat anything and not gain weight. I lost 12 to 14 pounds slowly over about four months. What interests me now is that I don't have to watch what I eat now. I had been walking a lot while I was losing weight, but since the cold weather I have not been walking.



Congratulations on your weight loss. I can't explain why you have been able to eat anything without a detailed record of what you have been eating. To gain or lose weight, you must increase or decrease your food intake by 3,500 calories.

One theory about body weight is called the set point theory. The set point is the body's preferred weight that it tends to return to after any change in weight. The theory follows that if a person loses weight slowly, the body is able to readjust to the lower weight and reset your weight thermostat, much in the same way you lower your heat thermostat.

Rather than trying to see what you can get away with eating, I would suggest that you follow a weight maintenance diet of a few hundred calories more than you ate to lose weight. Hopefully you are including a variety of foods from the Food Guide Pyramid: milk, 2 to 3 servings; meat, 2 to 3 servings; breads, 6 to 11 servings; fruits 2 to 4 servings, vegetables 3 to 5 servings and use fats, oils and sweets sparingly. You should also eat at least 1,200 calorie with a variety of foods to be able to meet your Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) of nutrients.



How do you melt off fat? Are there foods that do it? Is it a combination of vegetables?



You can't "melt off" fat. There is not any food or combination of foods that specifically help burn body fat. A variety of vegetables will improve your consumption of vitamins and minerals, but will do nothing to "melt off" fat.

Weight loss is a very misunderstood process. Actually, in order to move fat from storage to fuel as energy, you need carbohydrates (minimum 130 grams). To completely break down stored fat, your body needs carbohydrates. Without carbohydrates, your body incompletely breaks down fat and produces ketones. Large amounts of ketones are produced by stored fat when burned without carbohydrates. Ketones are irritating to your kidneys and your body will attempt to get rid of them in your urine. This urinary loss of ketones represents only about 100 calories per day, which is not going to cause a significant weight loss.

Your brain and nerve cells need glucose (blood sugar) for fuel. This is why body organ tissue and muscle starts to break down to some extent during a very low carbohydrate or fasting diet. This process is very evident in anorectics. Muscle and organ proteins break down and yield glucose for your brain and nerves to function. This is a waste of body protein since the amino acids are excreted and unavailable to build and repair your body.

Your body was originally designed to be able to store fat. This enabled cave people to survive from feast through famine to the next feast. Only those cave people able to store fat survived and reproduced. Unfortunately, they pass their "fat genes" on to us. The cave people with "skinny genes" died off during famines.

Your body will do anything it can to preserve its fat and muscle stores. So during a low calorie or low carbohydrate diet, your body will reduce its energy output. As muscles become smaller, because they have been broken down for fuel, they perform less work. In fact, less stored fat is lost during a semi-starvation diet (600 to 900 calories) or a fast (less than 600 calories) when compared to a moderately low calorie diet (1200 calories). Weight loss during a very low calorie or low carbohydrate diet is usually water weight during the first three days.

Weight loss occurs because in the first few days of a high protein, low carbohydrate diet or any diet less than 900 calories per day, you use your blood sugar (glucose) and stored sugar (glycogen) as fuel. Sugar is stored in muscles

and your liver. This stored sugar holds three times its weight in water. When you lose the stored sugar, you lose the water it is holding in your muscles and liver. In addition, in diets of less than 900 calories, any food eaten including fat and protein will be burned for fuel. Your body can convert 70 percent of the protein and 30 percent of the fat you eat to glucose. This is a waste of food protein. You would be better off eating more carbohydrates. In such a low calorie diet, no dietary protein will be available for growth and repair of muscles and organs.

When a person who has been on such a diet begins to eat normal amounts of calories and carbohydrates to maintain this lower weight, your body will start to re-hydrate itself and replenish glycogen, wasted muscle and organ protein. Weight gain usually results.

So, how do you effectively lose weight? If you eat a minimum of 1200 calories, with adequate carbohydrate and protein foods, you should achieve a slow weight loss. One to two pounds per week is a realistic goal. An individualized weight loss diet would start with determining the calorie and nutrient content of your present diet. For every 500 calories per day you decrease in your present diet, you will see a one pound weight difference per week. A 1000-calorie reduction in calorie consumption would result in a two pound per week weight difference.



I started on Weight Watchers diet. The first week I only lost 1 3/4 pounds and my friend, who is also on the diet lost three pounds. She's two inches shorter than I am, but weighs more. The second week, I didn't lose anything and she lost two pounds. I'm really disgusted because I've stuck to their diet.



Weight Watchers is a good balanced weight loss diet to follow. Weight Watchers diet could be followed for a long time with good success.

You seem to have a competitive nature in that you compared your weight loss with your friend. I would suggest that your expectation of weight loss was unrealistic. When trying to lose weight, you should set a realistic weight loss goal of one to two pounds per week. Rather than focusing on losing all of your weight at once, set one-month goals. Your weight loss goal should be small, short-term amounts that you can

achieve. Otherwise, you will be preoccupied with what you haven't lost rather than patting yourself on the back for losing. You should have congratulated yourself for not gaining the second week.

You must consume 3500 calories less than you eat or expend to cause a weight difference of one pound. For example, if you cut 500 calories per day off your pre-diet food intake for a seven days, you would lose one pound in a week. A 1000-calorie decrease, would cause a two-pound weight loss. This loss would occur if your weight has been stable. The calories you eat combined with the calories you expend through exercise determine whether your weight goes up or down. That is true, assuming you have no metabolic disorders that slow the rate you burn food and store fat.

If you had been gaining one pound per week and you decrease your calorie intake by 500 calories per day, you would stop gaining one pound per week. If you decreased your calorie intake by 1000 calories per day, you would not gain your usual one pound per week and you would also lose one pound. In the following weeks, you would continue to lose about two pounds per week. Use nutrition analysis software to periodically track your calorie intake. Compare your weight to your average calorie intake over three days. If you need to lose weight, subtract 500 to 1000 calories per day from your average calorie intake.

When I prescribe weight loss diets, I do not recommend diets less than 1200 calories in order to assure enough vitamins and minerals. (Even this is hard to do for the menstruating female who needs 15 milligrams of iron per day.) Persons on diets of less than 1200 calories should consider taking a multivitamin supplement to prevent nutritional deficiency diseases. Gradual weight loss through changed eating habits has greater long-term success than short-term fad diets.

Lastly, you should consider including exercise in your weight loss program. Talk to your doctor about your physical fitness before you start any exercise program. Exercise helps increase calories burned, decrease your appetite and gets you out of the food environment.

Choose an exercise you enjoy. If you dislike jogging or calisthenics, you won't do them regularly. Try walking or biking. Start with a 15-minute walk per day for the first week. Increase your walk or ride to 30 minutes per day the second, 45 minutes per day the third week and 60 minutes per day the fourth week, which should be adequate for long term benefits of exercise. You will find that weight loss will

be more consistent if you get about 60 minutes of exercise three to five times per week.

Companionship while exercising makes the time more enjoyable. Ask your friend to go with you. Companionship also helps with sticking to an exercise routine. If you know that your friend is waiting on a corner for you, you will be more likely to continue your exercise habit. Also, you could channel your competitive feelings into your exercise time with her.



Is peanut butter fattening? It seems that whenever I eat it I gain weight.



No, peanut butter by itself is not fattening. It does have some peanut oil in it and some protein. One tablespoon of peanut butter is comparable to the calorie content in one ounce of hard cheese (about 100 calories).

As to why you gain weight when you eat peanut butter, I don't know. One food by itself does not cause weight gain. (Unless you eat a lot of it.) Besides, how can you pinpoint the peanut butter as the cause? All the food you eat in a day must be considered as contributing to your weight.

Any food eaten to excess including meat, milk, eggs or grapefruit can be fattening. Your body burns calories constantly to keep all your body systems running. The amount of physical activity over and above that increases the amount of calories you need. When you eat less than this total, you lose weight and when you eat more, you gain. The calorie effect of the food adds up and the effect (weight loss or weight gain) does usually not show up immediately unless you grossly overeat.

So if you like peanut butter, I would suggest one tablespoon on bread or toast for breakfast or lunch as a substitute for an egg or a slice of meat. Change your food choices at meals from day to day to achieve a balanced diet.



I'm a 42 year old male and am fighting a weight battle. The only diet that has worked for me is meat and vegetables. I cut out all bread, potatoes and macaroni. How long should it take

me to lose 30 pounds?



Your weight loss depends on how many calories you have been eating per day, how many calories you intend to cut down to and how much exercise you get. (Assuming you have no disease or metabolic disorders that would effect your weight loss.)

Your letter sounds like this is not your first attempt at dieting. Perhaps your short-term dieting efforts have not been successful because you have not changed your "fat eating habits" for "slim eating habits". While a meat and vegetable diet (high protein and low carbohydrate) may produce quick weight loss results, you cannot eat like that forever.

A high protein, low carbohydrate diet is a dehydration diet. Most diets caution you to drink eight cups of water per day and limit the time on the diet to a few weeks. What are you going to eat when you go off your weight loss diet? Are you going back to your "fat eating habits"? Instead, a diet containing the Food Guide Pyramid of meat, milk, breads, fruits, vegetables and fats is more successful in the long run. If you ate smaller portions of bread and potatoes as well as smaller portions of meat and vegetables spread out over three meals per day, you would consistently lose weight. When you get to your weight goal, you can still follow this diet and by increasing the portions slightly, you should be able to maintain your "slimmer" self.

Aim for a one to two pound weight loss per week. At this rate, it will take you 15 to 30 weeks to lose that 30 pounds.



I can lose weight on a low carbohydrate diet. I count grams of carbohydrates and usually aim for around 50. I only need to lose 15 pounds. Can you tell me how many grams of carbohydrate are in a glass of orange juice? Some lists say one-half cup contains 12 grams of carbohydrate and some say 14 grams. Which is right?



The carbohydrate content of orange juice varies among the varieties (summer & winter) and the carbohydrate content also varies among the various carbohydrate lists available. I usually figure one-half cup of orange juice as having 15

grams of carbohydrate. See Food/Analyst for the carbohydrate content in different forms of orange juice.

I do not recommend you follow a low carbohydrate diet for weight loss for several reasons. First, what are you going to eat when you go off your diet? What are you going to eat to maintain your "slimmer self"? Are you going back to your "fat eating habits" that kept your weight higher?

Second, a low carbohydrate diet (below 130 grams) is a dehydration diet. Most low carbohydrate diets caution followers to drink lots of water (eight cups per day). The low carbohydrate diet is dehydrating because initially you will be burning glycogen, the body's sugar stored in the liver and muscles, which is accompanied by a loss of three times as much water.

The diet also causes loss of protein from muscle and organ tissue because of the very low carbohydrate and calorie intake. As your body breaks down its own fat to provide calories to keep you going, ketones are the waste product that is produced. Ketones are quite large and do tax your kidney's filtering system. More water is drawn from your body as the kidneys excrete ketones. This additional loss of water from the body increases the possibility of dehydration. Because each person differs in terms of kidney function, your urine should have no color or odor. This will help you see if you are really drinking enough water for your kidney's sake.

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