

Healthy weight and physical activity

Many of us know that having a healthy body weight is important for our health.

However, we also know that managing our body weight is not easy. The good news is that regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy weight.

This handout will explain:

- how much physical activity you should do; and
- how physical activity can help you to manage your weight.

How much physical activity should I do?

Aerobic activities are best when it comes to managing your weight.

Aerobic activities are the kinds that work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, and swimming.

Aerobic activities are best when it comes to managing your weight!



The table below describes your physical activity “**prescription.**”

| Aerobic Physical Activity | |
|---|---|
| How often? | <p>Aim for <i>150-250 minutes of aerobic activity per week.</i></p> <p>This could be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shorter sessions: 10 minutes, 3 times/day• longer sessions: 30 or more minutes/day, 5 or more days/week |
| How hard? | <p>Try to work at a <i>moderate-to-vigorous</i> intensity.</p> <p>This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• your heart beats faster• your body will feel warmer• you may begin to sweat lightly• your breathing is deeper and faster |
| <p><i>What aerobic activities would you like to do?</i></p> | |

When you begin a new activity, do it at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active
- **how often** you are active
- **how hard** you work

Physical activity and managing your weight

The food you eat and your eating habits are very important to weight management. However, physical activity can also help!

Physical activity helps you to:

- use more energy (burn more calories);
- lower stress and improve how well you sleep;
- improve how your heart works; and
- increase your overall strength.

There are three steps to managing your weight:

- 1) Stopping weight gain
- 2) Losing weight
- 3) Maintaining weight loss

Stopping weight gain

Before you can lose weight, your first step should be to focus on stopping *further weight gain*.

It is important to find out *why* you have gained weight. Talk to your health care provider about this.

Changing your diet and being more physically active can help you to stop gaining weight.

Myth: If I am more physically active, I can eat what I want.

Fact: It takes a lot of physical activity to “burn off” what we eat. For example, it takes about:

- 1 hour of walking to “burn off” a can of pop.
- 7 hours of walking to “burn off” a typical fast food meal (a burger, fries and a pop).

Losing weight

It's best to lose weight slowly. A healthy weight loss is no more than two pounds per week.

Talk to your health care professional about setting a healthy weight loss goal.

Did you know that physical activity by itself does not always lead to weight loss?

Make sure healthy food and healthy eating habits are part of your weight loss plan. Talk to a dietitian to learn about any changes you could make.

Physical activity helps you to:

- keep your energy levels high;
- use more calories; and
- build your strength.

Staying at your new weight after weight loss

To avoid regaining the weight you lost, stay active!

- Find activities you enjoy and can easily do.
- Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.
- Be active at times and places that work for you and that fit easily into your life.
- Continue to make physical activity and healthy food choices a part of your life.

Fact: People who remain physically active on a regular basis after they lose weight are more likely to stay at their new body weight.

Remember:

- Regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy body weight.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.

