

Small Changes, Big Gains!

If you need to lose weight or would like to make some healthy changes to your lifestyle, the table below gives some ideas about putting this into practice. Small and simple changes can make a difference to a healthier you!

Poor diet and a sedentary (or inactive) lifestyle contribute to the problem of obesity.

But did you know that over 100 factors have been suggested to influence our energy balance – that includes factors that influence the energy we put in our bodies (calories in our food and drink) and the energy we use (such as how active we are). Understanding these factors allows us to identify behaviour changes that may help us to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Don't forget that even a small reduction in calorie intake and a small increase in activity levels could help to prevent weight gain if done regularly over time.

<h2>Social</h2> 	<p>Add a group recreational activity to your week Join a new group activity. Go with neighbours or work colleagues, or go alone – you will meet people there.</p>	<p>Community activity Get involved with an activity at your leisure/community centre or outdoor space, or try volunteering. Some areas offer 'green or clean' volunteering – so you get active and help your community.</p>
<h2>Psychological</h2> <p>(factors affecting mood, emotion and mental health)</p>  <p>Achievable goals and realistic targets Set achievable and measurable weekly goals like a number of minutes for walking.</p> <p>Reward yourself but not with food Give yourself 'credits' towards rewards, such as new clothes or health and beauty treatments.</p>	<p>Lose weight with support A reputable weight loss group can provide social support and encouragement.</p>	<p>Mindfulness* Research has suggested that mindfulness may be useful in reducing behaviours such as emotional eating and in promoting weight maintenance and weight loss. You can find out more about mindfulness training from the Mental Health Foundation or MIND.</p>
<h2>Physical Activity</h2>  <p>Increase your local walking time Combine activity with everyday errands e.g. walking to the shops - walking at a brisk pace (around 4 miles/6.5 km per hour) can use 100 kcals more per hour than walking slowly.</p>	<p>Housework fun Put music on in the kitchen when you're cooking/cleaning and dance while you work! Around 15 mins energetic dancing can burn nearly 100kcal. Or go outside and do some gardening – an hour of mowing the lawn with a power mower can burn 330kcal.</p>	<p>Decrease sitting time Get up and about - keep a record of how many hours you spend sitting at home and try to reduce these each week. Take a walk in your lunch hour or after dinner, find some alternatives to screen time (that's TV and computer time) or be active with the kids, indoor or outdoor.</p>
	<p>Use active transport Get on your bike! Check for cycle loan or cycle-to-work schemes and your local council's websites for information on safe cycling routes. Half an hour of cycling can use up at least 180kcal.</p>	<p>Places to be physically active Good deals for gym and fitness class memberships are sometimes available, so check classes and facilities at your local leisure centre (aerobics burns nearly 400 kcal an hour).</p>
	<p>Try a free exercise app There are all sorts out there for complete beginners or regular exercisers. Why not look at the NHS Choices apps <i>Couch to 5k</i> or <i>Strength and flexibility</i>?</p>	

*For a description of mindfulness, see <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk> or <http://mind.org.uk/>

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Eating & Drinking



Low energy density foods like fruits and vegetables are those that provide less energy per gram of food, so you can eat more of them without consuming too many calories.

Party strategies

To reduce risk of being tempted by high-fat/high-sugars foods at the party buffet, why not select the healthier items on offer first? You could have a veg/bean soup before you go out – soups have a low energy density and can be filling.

Measure out your portions

If you choose foods like crisps or biscuits to eat occasionally, measure out small portions instead of eating straight from large packs. Why not measure out your oils when cooking or the amount of cheese you are using to moderate your intake?

Eating slowly

Pause between mouthfuls to chew and be aware of the taste of the food. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain it's full.

Alcohol calories

It can be easy to underestimate the calories in alcohol - why not mix beer or wine with a low calorie soft drink or switch to smaller glasses (large to small wine glasses, pints to half pints or bottles)?

Stay hydrated

We should all aim to drink 1.6 – 2 litres of fluid per day. Remember that drinks containing sugars will also provide calories so choose low calorie drinks. Water is a good choice. Some people even find that drinking water can reduce their hunger.

Stick to a shopping list

Avoid being tempted to buy foods you don't need by using a shopping list and sticking to it.

Stocking up on healthy foods

Try to keep healthier snacks with you so you're not tempted by high-fat, high-sugars snacks.

A little bit of what you fancy

It may be helpful to allow yourself limited amounts of certain foods each week instead of banning foods completely.

Quick foods

Why not double the amount when you cook from scratch and keep the extra portion in the freezer for when you're short of time. This can provide a healthier solution when you are hungry and looking for a quick meal solution to high-fat and high-salt convenience foods or the local take-away.

Our environment



Walking-friendly surroundings

See if you can find a longer, more pleasant walking route to places you visit regularly or find new places in your area to explore.

Help your environment

And help yourself by reducing car use and walking more.

Activate your working environment

Don't use the lift, take the stairs, have an 'active lunch time' at least once a week, and walk part of the way to work.

Physiology (factors affecting how your body works)



Feeling full

Some studies show that foods high in protein (like fish, lean meat, beans) and high in fibre (like wholegrain cereals, wholewheat pasta, pulses) can help us to feel full.

Amount of body muscle

Whether male or female, increasing lean body mass (muscle) by strength exercises and decreasing fat mass increases the number of calories your body burns. Try and do strength exercises on two or more days a week. The NHS Choices website has some gentle strength exercises that can be done at home.

Building up fitness

Walking more and faster each week for a few weeks will build up your fitness.

Stop measuring your health just by your weight

Muscle strength and fitness are important for health too.

Lack of sleep

Research has shown getting enough sleep is important in weight management. Why not try going to bed half an hour earlier during the week?

Media



Health-based digital information

Take advice from responsible health websites (look out for the Information Standard logo).

Web-based weight loss resources

If slimming groups aren't for you, try a reputable online weight loss resource that provides support and helps you track your progress.

Active gaming

Choose active video games rather than sedentary ones.

Positive self-image

Remember that nobody looks like the pictures of models in magazines – not even the models themselves!

Social media

Use social media and smartphone apps wisely, for example to count your daily steps or track your physical activity levels.

For more information on the sources used in this text, please contact postbox@nutrition.org.uk