

Is your **Weight** weighing down on your **health**?



Almost
60% of Canadian adults

are overweight (36%) or obese (23%). This proportion is on the rise and increasingly younger individuals are facing the problem.

Excess weight significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and other illnesses. Fortunately, changes to the level of physical activity and to nutrition can make a difference. You don't need "miracle diets" or weight-loss products—which are often bad for you—to control your weight. This leaflet will give you tools to lose weight... and keep it off!

Are you at risk?

The **body mass index (BMI)** allows us to evaluate if a person's weight represents a health risk. To calculate your BMI, refer to the **Do you have a healthy heart?** brochure of this series, visit the Health Canada Web site at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/nutrition, in the "Healthy Weights" section, or simply ask your physician. The BMI only applies to people 18 years or older. In addition, if you're over 65 years or if your muscles are very developed, your BMI can be slightly higher than 25 without increasing the risks to your health.

Weight category	BMI	Risk of health problems
Underweight	Less than 18.5	Increased
Normal Weight	18.5 – 24.9	Least
Excess Weight • Overweight • Obese	25.0 – 29.9 30.0 and over	Increased High to very high

Source: Health Canada. Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults, 2003.

The risk of disease increases when the excess weight is localized around the waist rather than elsewhere on the body. A waist circumference greater than 102 cm (40 in.) in men and 88 cm (35 in.) in women increases this risk.



Several factors can explain weight gain, but it's not always easy to recognize, or even understand them. Here are a few tips to help you identify them: too many calories, too little exercise, family history, unhealthy eating habits, stopping smoking, taking certain medications, and "couch potato" environments.

It is recognized that **our environment contributes to obesity**. Foods high in sugar and fat are available everywhere and all the time. Super-sized portions are available for just a few pennies more. And let's not forget the car, the remote control and the escalators that discourage activity.



THE WINNING FORMULA

to lose weight...

Here are four steps to success that won't leave you feeling deprived—or exhausted.

1 Set realistic goals

If you're overweight and you gain weight on a regular basis, **your first objective could be to stop gaining weight.** If you decide to lose weight, give yourself some time. After all, you didn't gain the weight in a matter of weeks! **You shouldn't lose more than 0.5 kg (1 lb.) per week.**

A gradual loss of 5 to 10% of initial weight reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, while improving the control of diabetes, cholesterol levels and blood pressure. For example, losing between 5 to 10 kg (between 10 to 20 lb.) could be sufficient for a person weighing 90 kg (200 lb.). It isn't necessary to reach a normal weight to improve your health.

Is your goal realistic?

It has been proven that the greater the expectation of weight loss, the lower the chance of success.

2 Get moving... to burn more calories

To lose weight, it's a good idea to burn more calories by becoming more active. The higher the intensity of the activity, the more calories will be burned. For example, in one hour, you burn about:

- 200 calories when walking at a normal pace
- 300 calories when walking briskly
- 600 calories when jogging

You can burn as many calories by walking briskly for an hour as by jogging 30 minutes. Jogging is demanding but walking is something everyone can do, no matter your level of fitness or the condition of your joints. Swimming and cycling are also great options.

There is no need to sign up at the gym or to buy an expensive treadmill to get moving. **All you have to do is to find activities that you like and that fit easily into your schedule and be active at least 30 minutes a day, ideally 60... or even more!**

You also benefit by developing the habit of being active every day. You can take advantage of many opportunities throughout the day to move: use the stairs; carry your grocery bags home; get off the bus or metro one stop before your destination; park your car at the far side of the lot or go for a hike with friends or family.

3 Listen to your body

In order not to overeat, we must learn to respect the signs of hunger and satiety. **Hunger** tells us when it's **time to eat**, whereas **satiety** lets us know when it's **time to stop eating**. For all kinds of reasons (boredom, stress, happiness, habit, gratification through food, etc.), we often don't listen to these signs, with the result that we overeat. When it happens from time to time, there's no need to worry. But when you ignore these signs on a regular basis, maintaining your weight or losing weight might prove to be a bit more of a challenge.

A few tips to listen to your body

- Before you eat, ask yourself if you're eating because you're hungry or for another reason. Signs of hunger are an empty stomach or low energy. If neither sign manifests itself, maybe it's best to wait a little longer if you can.
- Avoid super-sized portions. We have a tendency to eat up to 30% more when presented with large servings.
- There's no need to "finish your plate" if you're no longer hungry.
- Eat slowly and take the time to enjoy every bite. This will enable you to be better in tune with what your body is telling you.
- Wait a while before going for that second helping or having dessert. You will often realize that you're not really hungry.
- Don't hesitate to have a snack between meals if you are hungry.
- Don't skip meals in order to lose weight. You may feel so hungry later on in the day that you won't be able to control your appetite and will eat more—and not as well—as you usually do.



Slicing up the pie

A 10-minute walk in the afternoon, 10 minutes of exercise in front of the television and dancing 10 minutes in your pyjamas with the kids: there you have it—30 minutes of physical activity in a day!

and keep it off!



4 Eat less calories... without going hungry

Contrary to many “miracle diets,” it’s better to eat if you want to lose weight. Otherwise, your body goes into famine mode and slows down your metabolism to burn fewer calories. A **well-balanced meal** will allow you to eat fewer calories without depriving yourself and at the same time fill your nutritional needs.

It’s the brain that lets you know you’ve had enough. It sends a signal when your stomach is full. To lose weight without feeling deprived, it’s better to choose foods that fill your stomach but contain fewer calories, such as those that make up a **well-balanced meal**.

- ▶ Fruits and vegetables, as well as whole-grain cereal products contain **sugars** (carbohydrates) that **give you energy quickly**. These foods also contain **fibre**.
 - Fibrés can absorb a lot of water. When they expand, they fill up the stomach, **which leads us to eat less**.
 - Fibrés slow down the digestion, **giving you a prolonged sensation of fullness**.

- ▶ Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes, tofu and dairy products contain **proteins**, which take more time to digest, therefore providing **energy for a longer period**. They **prevent us from getting hungry between meals**.

A few pitfalls

Sweet beverages and alcoholic beverages can also add rapidly to the calorie count. Think about it... and drink water as often as possible.

Oil, cheese, nuts, peanuts, olives and avocado all have excellent nutritional value, but they’re high in fats and therefore in calories. Take it easy!

And those little extras?

Chips, cookies, candies, chocolate, ice cream and some other foods are high in calories and low in nutritional value. You can enjoy them from time to time, but always make sure you eat a well-balanced meal first, which means you will probably eat less of them.

Secrets of a well-balanced meal

A **well-balanced meal** will provide energy for about **four hours**. It’s best to distribute the calories we consume in at least **three meals a day, with snacks in between if necessary**. Skipping meals isn’t a good idea, especially if you’re trying to lose weight.

The following diagram shows the proportion each food group should represent in your diet.

Vegetables

Cooked or raw, alone or as a side dish, in a soup or salad

OF EVERY COLOURS AND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE!

Grain Products

Bread, pasta, rice, cereal, millet, quinoa, etc.

PREFERABLY WHOLE GRAIN

Meat and Alternatives

Fish, poultry with the skin removed, lean meat, legumes, tofu and eggs. Cheese may sometimes be used as a meat alternative (choose those with 20% M.F. or less).

KEEP AN EYE ON PORTION SIZES!



Fruit

Fresh, frozen, canned



Milk and Alternatives

Milk, yogourt (2% M.F. or less), SOY beverage



Fats

Choose good fats: oil, non-hydrogenated margarine, mayonnaise and salad dressing.

USE ONLY IN SMALL AMOUNTS

If you’re not hungry at mealtime, your fruit and dairy product or soy beverage can be saved for a snack.

Did you know that the same quantity of fat will supply twice as many calories as sugar?

For example: 1 tbsp. of sugar = 50 calories
1 tbsp. of fat = 125 calories

I'm taking control

Maintaining your weight

Once you've lost the weight, it's just as important to maintain it.

- **Keep in mind the four steps of the WINNING FORMULA.**
- **Watch your weight... but don't overdo it!** The scale isn't the only tool to manage your weight: your clothes and your waistline are also good indicators of weight gain or loss.
- **Keep a diary of your physical activity and your food intake.** With a diary, you can monitor your level of activity, track your **meals** and **snacks**, and "listen" to your body.

Weight loss, at any price?

Canadians spend millions of dollars each year to lose weight. Supposedly "miracle" weight-loss supplements and programs come at a hefty price. **Five years down the road, 95% of those individuals who have followed one of these "miracle diets" have gained the weight back-and even added on a few more pounds.**

There are no methods, foods or miracle products that guarantee long-lasting weight loss. Often, you only stand to lose more time and money, if not your health or your self-esteem.

These products and programs are especially dangerous if they're based on rapid weight loss with no physical activity and restricted to less than 1,200 calories a day.

When in doubt, go with your instincts. Your health is in the balance! Talk to a health professional to avoid unfortunate surprises.

When eating becomes an obsession

Marie is overweight and almost always on a diet. A few times a week, in the evening, when she's alone at home, she loses control and can eat a whole bag of cookies in 10 minutes. She's then racked with guilt. This has been going on for six months. No matter the effort she puts in or her frustration, she hasn't lost any weight.

Marie suffers from an eating disorder, and she isn't the only one. These disorders can be just as bad for her health as being overweight, besides preventing her from successfully losing weight.

If you eat large quantities of food in a short period of time and feel you can't stop, if you're ashamed of your body, if you hide to eat or are constantly preoccupied with your weight and food, you may suffer from an eating disorder. Nutritionists and psychologists are specialized in the treatment of these disorders. Seek their expertise: they can listen and help!

Need a little help?

Do you need information, support or motivation? Don't hesitate to call on professionals who will support you!

To find a nutritionist, psychologist or kinesiologist, contact their provincial professional associations.

You can also visit the following Web sites:

The Heart and Stroke Foundation

www.heartandstroke.ca

Go to the section entitled "Healthy weight, Healthy you".

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

Don't be disappointed if you don't lose as much weight as you would like. An active lifestyle coupled with healthy eating is already very good for your health.

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