

Wellness365

Taking charge of your weight for better health



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No pill, potion, diet or exercise program will quickly whittle your waist, whip you into shape and yield permanent results with no further effort. Not gluten-free. Not 8 ounces — or 80 ounces — of water before every meal. Not the supercharged exercise plan on 18 DVDs. The only magic for weight management is permanent lifestyle changes.

The good news is that there are proven methods to help you succeed with those changes. Success starts with understanding the basics of weight management: learning to eat healthy and easing into a safe, balanced activity plan that works for you. Geisinger's program for weight management includes this booklet and a series of sessions designed for beginning, intermediate and advanced individuals.

Get (and stay) realistic

Articles and exercise programs often exaggerate exercise impacts, with terms like “fat blasting” or claims that metabolism will be fired up for hours post-exercise (“Burn fat while you sleep!”).

Exercise has many important health benefits, but it's hard to lose weight through activity alone. Unless you're performing boot-camp-level training over a period of weeks or months, you must adjust your caloric intake as well as up the burn.

Weight training is a vital fitness component, and adding muscle does help to increase metabolism. However, most exercisers add only a few pounds of muscle, so the metabolic impact is modest.

As you lose significant weight, your body requires fewer calories, so expect your weight loss to slow accordingly, and prepare to permanently adjust your eating and activity to maintain your fitness progress.

Source: Created by the health professionals at Geisinger.

A dose of motivation

Within a few weeks of adopting better eating and activity habits, most people begin feeling significantly better. In the long term, healthy weight delivers a host of health benefits:

- Reduced blood pressure
- Reduced need for medications
- Reduced risk for diabetes, sleep apnea, heart disease and stroke, certain cancers and other diseases
- Less stress on bones and joints
- Improved ability to move and perform routine activities

The positive impacts start early. Losing just 10 percent of your body weight, or as little as 10 to 20 pounds, can yield measurable improvements.

Slow and steady: a foundation for sustainable success

When starting a weight loss effort, it's natural to want change immediately — or at least as fast as possible.

There are many good reasons to take the long view:

- Losing a moderate amount (½ pound to 2 pounds a week) is the safest and healthiest approach.
- Overdoing exercise can result in all pain and no fitness gains, especially if you injure yourself out of the chute.
- With extreme diet restriction (crash or fad diets), you are likely to lose muscle as well as fat and experience unpleasant side effects, from fatigue and headaches to bad breath and gallstones.
- It takes time to establish new habits. The longer you commit to healthy eating and activity, the more ingrained a healthy lifestyle can become.



1 Goal-setting

Assess

Start with a clear picture of where you are: record your current weight, as well as your waist size (a good indicator of abdominal fat, which is associated with a higher risk for obesity-related diseases). You may also want to calculate your body mass index (BMI), which provides a useful estimate of body fat for many people, though BMI is not an accurate measure of body fat for people who are very muscular, such as football players or body builders. There are many BMI calculators online; you can find one by searching for “BMI” on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.

Set goals

Choose a modest initial weight-loss goal, such as 10 pounds or 5 percent of your current body weight. Allow one week per pound of desired loss. Then create eating and activity goals tied to your weight-loss target.

SMART goals

Effective goals follow the SMART guidelines:

- **Specific:** be specific about how much you aim to lose and in what time period.
- **Measurable:** decide how you will track/measure whether you have met your goals.
- **Achievable:** set goals that you know you can reach realistically and safely.
- **Relevant:** goals should be important to you and rewarding once you reach them.
- **Time-based:** having a realistic (but firm) deadline helps counter procrastination.

SMART goal examples

“I will eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily for the next 10 weeks.”

“Over the next 2 months, I will work up to walking for 30 minutes 5 times a week, and weight training twice a week.”

Record your goals

Putting your goals in writing helps reinforce your commitment — and gives you a baseline to assess your progress at the end of your chosen time period. Below is a simple format you can use.

My goals

1. Weight-loss goal:

Right now, I weigh _____ pounds. My initial goal is to lose _____ pounds in _____ weeks.

2. Food/beverage changes:

1. _____

2. _____

3. I will increase my activity by:

1. _____

2. _____

4. I will weigh myself at least once a week.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Worth a try: reinforce your goals

- **Join a weight loss group or program** if you're the kind of person who thrives on a group dynamic.
- **Work with a nutritionist/dietitian, a fitness coach or a personal trainer** if you are a one-on-one type, and feel the investment will motivate you.
- **Take a series of body measurements** (chest/bust, waist, hips, thigh, upper arm) so you can see tangible results of your hard work. This can be particularly helpful if you travel a lot. Scales may vary or be hard to come by, but a measuring tape is consistent and easy to pack.

Stay on track

Daily tracking of your activity and food intake is an important tool. Tracking keeps you honest about how much you're eating and how healthy your food choices are. It can help you identify situations and times that challenge you. And it helps you to see how your activity and eating are impacting your results.

You can use a notebook, a tracking form like the one below or a digital tracking program or app.

Weight _____ Date _____

Food and drink	Calories	Hunger Scale of 1–10	Feelings and emotions	Physical activity	Minutes	Calories burned
Breakfast						
Lunch						
Dinner						
Snack						
Totals				Totals		

② Healthy eating

Choosing wisely

Good food choices are critical in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Choosing a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein, nuts and healthy fats is key to getting the most nutritional value as you cut back what you take in. Below are some daily guidelines.

Focus on fruits

- Eat 1½ to 2 cups of fruits daily.
- Choose a variety of fruit (fresh, frozen, canned or dried).
- One serving of fruit equals:
 - 1 medium piece of fruit
 - 1 cup of sliced fruit
 - ½ cup of dried fruit
 - 1 cup of 100 percent fruit juice
- Limit fruit juice to 1 cup a day. Whole fruit is a better choice, thanks to the fiber and nutrients found in the skin.

Vary your vegetables

- Eat 2 to 3 cups of vegetables daily.
- Select dark green and orange vegetables like broccoli, kale, carrots, sweet potatoes and butternut squash.
- Choose dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, split peas and lentils.
- A 1-cup serving of vegetables equals:
 - 2 cups of raw leafy greens
 - 1 cup of chopped, cooked or raw vegetables
 - 1 cup of 100 percent vegetable juice
- Limit vegetable juice to 1 cup a day. Whole vegetables are a better option, thanks to the fiber and nutrients found in the skin.

Choose calcium-rich foods

- Aim for 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt or cheese daily.
- Dairy servings:
 - 1 cup of milk or soymilk
 - 1 cup of yogurt
 - 1½ ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese
 - 2 cups cottage cheese
 - ½ cup ricotta cheese
 - 1 cup frozen yogurt (but check label to avoid high fat/sugar content)

Go with whole grains

- Eat at least three 1-ounce servings or the equivalent of whole grains daily, like wheat, rice, oats, corn and cereals made from them. Choose options that include higher amounts of fiber and less added sugar or fat.
 - Women should aim for 5 to 6 ounces or the equivalent daily.
 - Men should aim for 6 to 8 ounces or the equivalent daily.
- A 1-ounce grain serving equals:
 - 1 slice of bread
 - 1 cup of dry breakfast cereal
 - ½ cup of cooked rice, pasta or cooked cereal

Lead with lean protein

- Aim for 5 to 6½ ounces or the equivalent of protein daily. Choose lean meats or poultry often. Vary protein sources by adding fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds to your diet for added health benefits.
- Bake, broil or grill meats. A 1-ounce protein serving equals:
 - 1 ounce of cooked meat, poultry or fish
 - 1 egg
 - 1 tablespoon of peanut, almond or other nut butters
 - ¼ cup of cooked beans or peas
 - ½ ounce of nuts or seeds
 - ¼ cup tofu

Fats, salt, sugar and alcohol

- Know your limits, and enjoy these “extras” in moderation.
- Select foods low in saturated and trans fats.
- Check labels for multiple sources of added sugar (e.g., fructose, corn syrup, honey, molasses, brown sugar). These provide calories with no added nutrition.
- Choose and prepare foods with little sodium and added sugar.
- You can plan for and enjoy alcoholic beverages in moderation, but keep in mind that alcohol provides empty calories with little or no nutritional value (though red wine does have valuable compounds or phytochemicals). Beware of added calories from mixers like soft drinks, juices, syrups and sour mix.

Healthy hydration

- Water is a convenient and calorie-free beverage option.
- Keeping hydrated is important, particularly as you become more active. It’s easy to confuse thirst with hunger.
- The average adult needs 8 to 12 cups of fluid daily.
- Tea, milk, vegetable juice and other low-calorie beverages are also healthy options.
- Try adding a splash of fruit juice (a couple of tablespoons), citrus slices or sliced strawberries to iced water for a low-calorie refresher.

An easy reminder for healthy eating: “5 – 3 – 2 – 1 – almost none”

- **Five** or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily
- **Three** meals a day: breakfast, lunch and dinner
- **Two** hours or less of screen time (TV, computers, video games) daily
- **One** hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily
- **Almost none:** empty calories (e.g., sugar-sweetened drinks)

3 Getting active

Plan for success

- Check with your healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise program if you are 45+ (for men) or 55+ (for women), if you are very overweight, if you have been inactive for a long time and/or if you have specific health concerns (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, arthritis).
- Choose activities that you enjoy, can afford and can fit into your schedule.
- Schedule exercise on your calendar. Have a convenient alternate activity for bad weather or if you can't get to the gym.
- Keep a daily log of your activities using a digital or paper tracker.
- Phase in activities and give your body time to adjust. Overdoing it can cause injuries and discouragement.
- Start with aerobic or cardiovascular fitness activities. For a complete training routine, incorporate regular stretching and add weight or resistance training twice a week.

Stay FITT

- This acronym (which stands for **f**requency, **i**ntensity, **t**ime and **t**ype) helps you plan physical activities for safety and effectiveness. In general, increase just one or two FITT variables at a time as you progress.

Frequency: how often you are active

- Increase frequency gradually. Start by incorporating an activity (e.g., walking, biking) two times a week.
- Build up to being active five or more days a week.

Intensity: how hard your heart and muscles are working during activity

- When you start, work at a moderate intensity, such as a brisk walk that allows for talking.
- Slow down if you have trouble breathing or catching your breath.
- When your initial intensity becomes too easy, gradually increase your speed, incorporate hills in your walks (or increase the treadmill incline) or choose a more challenging activity.

Time: how long you are active

- Set weekly goals.
- When you begin a new activity, stay active for at least 10 minutes without stopping.
- Aim to build up to at least 30 to 60 minutes of activity during the day.
- Increase your duration before upping the intensity of your activity.

Type: what activities you do

- Regularly perform aerobics, strength training and flexibility training for optimal fitness results. It's smart to vary your chosen activities to work different muscle groups and avoid going stale.

Remember to warm up and cool down

- Proper warm-ups and cool-downs help prevent injury and reduce muscle soreness.
- Start and end at a gentle pace; the warm-up and cool-down should each take 5 to 15 minutes.
- Stretch after your workout, when your muscles are warmed up. Stretching vigorously before exercise may cause muscle injury.

Know when to stop

Overexertion (particularly in extreme temperatures) can result in injury or serious conditions such as heat stroke. If you have any of the following symptoms, stop exercising immediately:

- Severe shortness of breath
 - Cold sweats
 - Severe nausea or vomiting
 - Muscle cramps or joint pain
 - Sudden weakness overall in your arms and legs
 - Trouble swallowing, talking or seeing
 - Severe headache, dizziness or light-headedness
 - Pain or pressure in your chest, neck, shoulder, arm, back or jaw
- If pain lasts more than two minutes or comes and goes after you stop exercising, call 911 or get to an emergency room.

Make it work for you

If you have arthritis or other conditions that impact movement, talk with your primary care provider, orthopaedist or sports medicine specialist about the best activities for you. In general, whole-body, low-impact, gentle exercises such as walking, water aerobics, swimming, yoga and tai chi can be good options — particularly if the instructor offers adaptations and alternate movements.

Start with what you love — then explore new options. As your body adapts to a specific exercise routine, it becomes more efficient. Trying a new activity presents new challenges and reaches new muscle groups.

Test before buying. Many gyms offer a free week. Take the opportunity to assess the environment, hours, equipment and classes at one or more facilities. Even if you don't plan to join, a trial membership is a good way to test out a variety of exercise equipment before buying what may become just a very expensive clothes rack.

Try a free class. Many studios and programs offer a free class or even a week of free classes. Check the class's intensity and the instructor's style. Does the instructor offer low-impact alternatives or suggest ways to adapt the moves to make them easier/harder? Does the instructor monitor the class and help students correct their form? Does the class include people of different levels, including beginners?

Explore virtual class options. Access reviews for video/online programs. Do they offer multi-level instruction? A variety of routines? Alternatives to make moves easier/harder? Safe progressions?

Healthiness loves company. Many people enjoy having an exercise partner or posse. Be sure to have a backup plan if your partner or group has to miss one or more sessions.

4 Striving for permanent change

The tools and techniques introduced in this program are a foundation for sustaining and building on your fitness progress. Tips that have proven effective for long-term weight management include:



Keep tracking your activity and food consumption. It keeps you honest and helps you retain focus on your fitness commitments.



Keep measuring portions. Oversized servings are so common that it's easy to forget what recommended serving sizes actually look like. Using smaller plates and glasses can also help you avoid overeating.



Take the time to focus on and enjoy your food. Keep screens off and don't multitask. Eat slowly to savor the tastes — and to allow the 15 to 20 minutes it takes your body to register fullness.



Make it easy to choose wisely. Keep your refrigerator and pantry stocked with healthy and easy-to-prepare meals and snacks. At the same time, keep “irresistible” calorie-heavy treats out of the house — or at least out of sight.



Seek out people who share your interest in staying fit. If your friends and family don't, consider getting a workout buddy, joining a fitness club or sports group or participating in an online community.

Source: Created by the health professionals at Geisinger.

More information and tools

Geisinger Health Plan

[TheHealthPlan.com](https://www.thehealthplan.com)

Access wellness articles, delicious recipes and healthy tips and find information on events and classes.

MyHealthyPlate

[ChooseMyPlate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Provides a visual guide to healthy eating, plus other tools and resources.

HealthFinder

[HealthFinder.gov](https://www.healthfinder.gov)

Health information and resources on a wide variety of topics, including weight management.

USDA Nutrition Information and Tools

[nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov)

Source of credible information to help make healthy eating choices, as well as a repository of content on nutrition, healthy eating, physical activity and food safety for consumers.

Veterans Administration National Weight Management Program

[move.va.gov](https://www.move.va.gov)

Digital home for weight management health promotion program designed to improve the lives of veterans.

President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition

[fitness.gov](https://www.fitness.gov)

Resources, content and tools for national program to engage, educate and empower all Americans to adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity and good nutrition.

Keystone **ACO**