

WIN

Weight-control Information Network



Improving your **HEALTH**

Tips for African American Men and Women



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health



Tips for African American Men and Women

You do not have to stop eating chocolate cake or start running marathons to improve your health. Making small but steady changes in your eating and physical activity habits—over time—may help you lose weight if you need to, feel better, and improve your health. The information below can help you start to change your physical activity and eating habits. When you make changes to improve your health, you may also move your friends and family to do the same.

Am I overweight?

To find out if your weight is healthy, read WIN's fact sheet *Weight and Waist Measurement: Tools for Adults*. This information can help you evaluate your body weight.



What if I think I look fine?

Even if you are overweight according to charts and measures, you may like the size and shape of your body and not want to lose weight. Your friends and family may think you look great too.

But the health benefits of getting fit and eating well are clear. Once you decide to lose weight, your loved ones may want to join you on your journey to better health.

Am I risking my health by being overweight?

Being overweight can be dangerous to your health. If you are overweight or obese, you are more likely to develop:

- **type 2 diabetes**
- **high blood pressure**
- **heart disease**
- **certain forms of cancer**

You can help lower your risk for many health problems by losing weight. Losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can help improve your health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 10 to 20 pounds may help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Slow and

steady weight loss of 1/2 to 2 pounds per week is the safest way to lose weight.

How do I start to lose weight and improve my health?

To start towards a healthy weight and improve your health, try to:

- **Be more physically active.**
- **Eat healthier.**

Be More Physically Active

Regular moderate-intensity physical activity can be fun and help you feel great. When you share physical activity with your friends and family, it can also be a social event. Make it your goal to try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, or better yet, all days of the week. You may need to be physically active for more than 30 minutes a day to help you lose and keep off extra weight.

If you are a man and over age 40 or a woman and over age 50, or have chronic health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, or obesity, talk to your health care provider before starting a vigorous physical activity program.

Beat your physical activity roadblocks!

If you...

Do not have child care.

Then try...

Sharing physical activities such as walking, biking, or playing tag with your child each day.

Do not have time or are too busy to be physically active.

Doing 10 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity three times a day, or putting more energy than normal into activities like housework, yard work, and playing with the kids.

Do not like or do not want to exercise.

Doing something you enjoy like dancing to the radio, or planning active outings with a friend, family member, or group.

Do not feel safe being physically active in your neighborhood.

Forming a group of people to walk, jog, or bike together, working out with videos in your home, or walking in a shopping mall.





TIPS FOR ACTIVE WOMEN

You can be active and still keep your hair-style. Talk to your hairstylist about a hair care routine and style that fit your active life. You might try wearing:

- A natural hairstyle.
- A style that can be wrapped or pulled back.
- A short haircut.
- Braids, twists, or locs.

What is moderate-intensity activity?

- Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes
- Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes
- Dancing fast for 30 minutes

Sometimes starting and sticking with a physical activity program can be a challenge. Figuring out how to beat your physical activity roadblocks may make it easier for you to get and stay active.

Eat Healthier

When you begin to change your eating habits to improve your health, try to:

- **Make healthier food choices.**
- **Eat just enough food for you.**

Make Healthier Food Choices

A healthy eating plan includes a variety of foods from every food group.

In January 2005, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly released the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for*

Americans. These new guidelines outline recommendations to promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease through nutritious eating and physical activity.

The new guidelines encourage Americans over 2 years of age to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods. Recommended items include fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, and whole grains such as brown rice and whole-wheat bread. The guidelines also

Do I need to drink milk?

A healthy eating plan includes a variety of foods that provides all of the nutrients the body needs. Milk is a good source of calcium. If you cannot digest lactose (the sugar found in milk), there are many ways you can get the calcium that milk offers, without drinking regular milk.



- Drink low-fat or fat-free “lactose-reduced” milk, or calcium-fortified soy-based beverages.
- Choose low-fat yogurt or reduced-fat hard cheeses like low-fat cheddar.
- Eat dark leafy vegetables like collard greens or kale.
- Eat canned fish with soft bones like salmon.

recommend a diet low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

*For more information about recommended daily intakes from various food groups, visit www.healthier.us.gov/dietaryguidelines.

Eat Just Enough for You

A healthy eating plan calls for making healthy food choices and eating just enough for you. Larger amounts of food have more calories. Eating more calories than your body needs may lead to weight gain.

Learning about the serving sizes of foods can help you eat just enough for you. Try to measure your food for a few days. This can help you learn to recognize what one serving of a food, such as 1/2 cup of rice, looks like on your plate.

To lose weight, learn to eat fewer calories. Do this by selecting foods that are lower in fat and calories from each food group. For example, choose low-fat cheese and extra lean meat. Also, choose plenty of vegetables. They are lower in calories and fat than other foods and can help you feel full.

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Lower Fat Versions of Favorite Foods

Instead of This

Try This

Fried chicken

Baked, roasted, broiled, grilled, or oven-fried chicken with the skin removed.

Ham hocks, salt pork, or fatback to flavor vegetables

Onions, garlic, low-sodium chicken broth or bouillon, smoked turkey, turkey bacon, or turkey ham. (These meats are high in salt, so use just a little bit.)

Regular ground beef

Extra lean ground beef or lean ground turkey breast.

French fries

Mashed potatoes made with fat-free milk, a baked potato topped with a vegetable or fruit salsa, or a salad.

Sour cream

Low-fat or fat-free sour cream or plain yogurt, or low-fat cream cheese.

Salt

Spices, herbs, lemon, lime, or vinegar. (Salt is not fattening, but it may contribute to high blood pressure in some people.)

Keeping Your New Habits

The path to improving your eating and physical activity habits is not easy. But do not give up. Remember, sensible eating and physical activity habits, followed over time, are key to a healthy body, mind, and spirit!



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Weight-control Information Network

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Publications produced by WIN are reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts. This publication was also reviewed by Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H., Professor of Epidemiology and Associate Dean for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and Gladys Gary Vaughn, Ph.D., National Program Leader, Cooperative Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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