

# Overcoming Challenges for Maintaining a Healthy Weight



When addressing weight management challenges, you may find the same environments you were exposed to prior to your wound, illness, or injury now affect you differently. It may be necessary to adjust aspects of your eating, physical activity, or personal environments in order to achieve a healthy weight that will help promote healing and prevent further complications in your health. It is important to understand how your wound, illness, or injury [impacts](#) your weight and seek out information and activities to succeed in achieving a healthy weight. By effectively evaluating your environments, you can determine what works best for you and identify the areas that are adversely affecting your goals.

Making necessary adjustments in your lifestyle may be challenging, but as you take on this endeavor, regularly remind yourself of the personal [benefits](#) that motivate you.

## Your Eating Environment

There may be new factors that you now have to consider, such as how much time you have available to plan and prepare healthy, nutrient-dense meals, difficulties maneuvering through your kitchen, or conditions and medications that may have an adverse effect on your appetite. For any of these challenges, consider the following options to support the development of a healthy eating environment.

### *Planning and Preparation*

- Plan out your meals for the week in advance. Meal times may be hectic and you may feel a time crunch; so set aside time to shop and prep meals on the weekend so they are ready for the week instead of continuously choosing fast food options.
- Know what foods to look for when you go shopping. Going to the [grocery store](#) with healthy foods in mind will help you avoid buying foods that will lead to empty calories and could be detrimental to your healing process.
- Explore different [tools](#) that can be used in the kitchen to help ease meal preparation, so that you are more likely to continue preparing meals at home.





### What and How You Eat

- Consider different methods for preparing your food that will keep you interested and can address altered tastes and smells and responses to textures.
  - Add different [spices, extracts, or herbs](#) to your meals to boost flavors.
  - Experiment with [grilling, broiling, steaming, or baking](#) meals to draw out different flavors in foods.
  - Try blending foods into smoothies or soups to maintain nutritional value and help issues with swallowing.
- Research easy recipes that have ingredients you like and suit your dietary needs (e.g., easy to digest).
- Practice [mindful eating](#), which will keep you attentive and aware of what you are consuming. As some medications may increase your appetite, this technique can help you identify what your body actually needs and help you avoid overeating.
- Do your best not to engage in or discuss topics that could frustrate you right before or during your meal. It can set you up for emotional eating and muscle tension. Being emotionally on edge can trigger making poor food choices, eating too fast, or losing one's appetite.

### Your Physical Activity Environment

Two common challenges with reengaging in regular physical activity may be fatigue and pain. In addition, the fear of falling, creating more pain, and the frustration related to what your body can and cannot do may be barriers to exercise. The following motivators and recommendations may help you ease into exploring exercise options so that you can keep your focus on maintaining a healthy weight.

<b>Motivator 1:</b> Losing weight can reduce pain, especially in the joints.	<i>For example, every one pound of weight loss equals four pounds of relief on your knees.<sup>1</sup></i>
<b>Motivator 2:</b> Even short bouts of activity can reduce fatigue and ease pain.	<i>Start with as little as ten minutes a day. Some activity is better than none.<sup>2</sup></i>
<b>Motivator 3:</b> There are many physical activity options that match each person's specific abilities. <sup>2</sup>	<i>Activities range from biking, walking, and surfing to yoga, aquatic classes, and wheelchair basketball.</i>

Changing your physical activity environment may be particularly challenging, especially if you had a specific routine you enjoyed prior to your wound, illness, or injury. It is important to remind yourself that physical activity is not only critical in maintaining a healthy weight but also helps to prevent the development of chronic diseases, improves mental health, and increases independence. Find the benefits that motivate you, and start a new routine! Consult your health care provider or physical therapist and explore local programs and communities.





## Your Personal Environment

Creating a supportive personal environment can go a long way in achieving your healthy weight goals. Studies have shown that participants who enroll in weight loss programs with friends have a higher success rate of keeping the weight off when compared to those who attempt a program on their own.<sup>3</sup> Encourage those around you to educate themselves on the impact your wound, illness, or injury is having on your weight, so that they can help motivate you and support the changes you may be implementing to gain or lose weight.

## Resources

Visit the following websites and explore the listed resources to get more information on topics discussed in this fact sheet:

- Weight Management for WII: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-weight-management.aspx>
- Active Living for WII: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-active-living.aspx>
- Healthy Eating for WII: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-healthy-eating.aspx>

## References

1. Can My Weight Make My Joint Pain Worse?. Osteoarthritis Action Alliance. [http://www.oaaction.org/resource\\_library/OAAA\\_WorseJointPain/OAAA\\_WorseJointPain\\_SPRD\\_vf.pdf](http://www.oaaction.org/resource_library/OAAA_WorseJointPain/OAAA_WorseJointPain_SPRD_vf.pdf). Accessed August 4, 2014.
2. CDC Vital Signs. Adult with Disabilities - Physical activity is for everybody. <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/disabilities/index.html>. Published May 6, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014.
3. How social support can help you lose weight. American Psychological Association. <http://www.apa.org/topics/obesity/support.aspx>. Accessed August 4, 2014.

