

Understanding Impacts to a Healthy Weight



Experiencing a wound, illness, or injury may present some new challenges in your life, some of which may be shorter in duration while others are more long-term. As you focus on recovery, you may need to make lifestyle changes to promote healing and optimal health. While your primary concern during recovery may not be your weight, it is important to note that it can be affected by your illness or injury and it can impact the recovery process. Body weight can be influenced by many factors including:

- Medication and treatment
- Sleep
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in level or type of physical activity

These factors can contribute to gaining or losing weight during recovery, which may lead to being overweight or underweight. Reaching or maintaining a healthy weight is important to recovery, quality of life, performance, and lifelong health.

Contributing Factors to Weight

Medication and treatment ¹

Treatments and medications given to you by a health care provider for your wound, illness, or injury can have side effects that may affect your weight. These side effects from medication include:

- *Change in appetite*- Some medications increase your appetite so you may be inclined to eat more. Others may decrease your appetite so you do not feel hungry.
- *Change in metabolism*- Some medications cause calories to be burned slower or faster.
- *Change in how your body stores sugar*- This can lead to fat being stored around your waist.
- *Shortness of breath and fatigue*- This may limit or change the types of exercise you can perform.





- *Retaining water*- Some medications may make you retain water, which can increase your overall weight.
- *Altered taste or smell*- Some medications may affect your ability to smell or taste food, which can make eating unappealing and can often lead to weight loss.
- *Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea*- Can lead to malnourishment and weight loss, due to the body's inability to retain food and associated nutrients.
- *Difficulty swallowing or dry mouth*- Having physical issues with swallowing or a dry mouth can make eating painful and challenging, which can lead to weight loss when not enough calories are consumed.
- *Sleepiness or fatigue*- Some medications may make you tired, which can result in a lower amount of activity.

When you get a new medication from your health care provider, it is important to ask about common side effects that you could experience. If you start a medication and experience side effects such as weight loss or weight gain within the first few months, talk to your pharmacist or health care provider to see if the medication is the cause of the weight change or if you need to make adjustments to your activity or diet. It is important to talk to your doctor prior to stopping any medication, as you could be putting yourself at risk for serious side effects by stopping the medications abruptly.

Sleep ²

Not sleeping the recommended amount or not having quality sleep can contribute to weight gain. Lack of quality sleep may be caused by pain, stress, or anxiety from your wound, illness, or injury. Not sleeping enough can cause you to consume more calories and make unhealthy food choices. It can also cause you to feel hungrier and less satisfied by what you do eat. In addition, lack of sleep often results in less physical activity due to tiredness and low energy, which can result in weight gain. Getting enough restful sleep can promote recovery and may actually help with weight loss or healthy weight management.

Changes in eating habits

Dietary limitations, lack of sleep, and side effects from medications may cause a change in eating habits. The result may be the consumption of more or less calories than your body needs to function, which can result in weight gain or weight loss. A healthy weight can help with the healing process. Consulting with a registered dietician or your health care provider can help you get the proper nutrients and address weight loss or weight gain as a result of your wound, illness, or injury.





Changes in level or type of physical activity

A wound, illness, or injury may change the level or type of physical activity you are used to doing. Depending on the type of illness or injury, physical activity may only be limited initially, as your body adjusts to its new state. Other situations may require long-term adaptation. Changes in physical activity level or type of activity can result in weight gain, so it is important to stay active after consulting with your health care provider or physical therapist about appropriate activities. There are lots of ways to be active and you may discover a new favorite sport or activity!

Additional information can be found on part two and three of this series: [Benefits and Strategies of a Healthy Weight Strategies](#) and [Challenges for Maintaining a Healthy Weight](#).

Taking the Next Steps

Recovering from a wound, illness, or injury may result in some challenges you were not expecting, including weight loss or gain. As you progress through recovery, work with your health care provider or physical therapist to address side effects from medications, poor or little sleep, and changes in diet and physical activity. Optimal weight is important to recovery and overall health, both in the short-term and the long-term.

For more information or additional resources, visit the following sites:

- 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>
- Sleep for WII: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-sleep.aspx>

References

1 Kyle T and Kuehl B. Prescription Medications and Weight Gain. Obesity Action Coalition. <http://www.obesityaction.org/educational-resources/resource-articles-2/general-articles/prescription-medications-weight-gain>. Accessed August 2014.

2 Patel SR, Hu FB. Short Sleep Duration and Weight Gain: A Systematic Review. *Obesity*. 2008;16(3):643-653. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2007.118/full>. Accessed July 29, 2014.

