

Benefits and Strategies for a Healthy Weight



Achieving or maintaining a healthy weight is more important than ever as you are recovering from a wound, illness, or injury. Not only can it assist with your recovery process, but a healthy weight can help prevent additional illnesses or injuries. Finding a healthy weight that is right for you can take some time, and it is important to keep in mind that even small changes in weight can impact health. As you begin this endeavor, take a moment to determine which of the many benefits of a healthy weight motivates you the most. You may find motivation in the list below, or you may have a different personal reason for maintaining a healthy weight.

Benefits of a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many physical, psychological, and emotional benefits. Whether you are looking to boost your mood, speed your recovery, or prevent chronic illness, finding and achieving your ideal weight can be helpful. Below are some of the potential advantages to a healthy weight¹⁻³:

Physical benefits

- Improve your energy level
- Help your clothes fit better
- Improve wound healing
- Sleep better
- Reduce joint pain
- Help with prosthesis fit (prosthesis will fit best when you stay at or close to a consistent weight)
 - Staying within 2% of your baseline body weight generally maintains a proper fit; a replacement can be made if weight loss or gain is needed to reach a healthy weight
- Decrease the risk of developing certain cancers
- Increase the chance of survival and decrease the risk of the cancer coming back if you have cancer
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower your risk of cardiovascular disease





Psychological and emotional benefits

- Improve your confidence and general mood
- Improve overall quality of life by allowing you to do more of the activities you enjoy

Regularly remind yourself of the benefits that mean the most to you. Help motivate yourself by posting them on index cards around the house, placing a list in your phone, or joining an online program that sends out positive health messages.

Strategies for achieving a healthy weight

Once you have committed to achieving a healthy weight, where do you start? Whether you are working to gain or lose weight, the first step is to work with your health care provider to determine safe nutrition and physical activity strategies. Next, use a tool such as the [SuperTracker](#) to get an idea of how many calories or servings of food are recommended for you and track your progress. Finally, choose a few strategies below that you can act on.

Weight Loss

The theory behind weight loss seems pretty simple: weight loss is achieved by decreasing the calories you take in through food and drink, and increasing the calories you burn through physical activity. Sometimes the reality of getting to, and maybe even more importantly staying at, a healthy weight can be the challenging part, particularly during recovery. Things such as medication side effects and changes to your metabolism can also be a factor. While some factors may be out of your control, there are steps you can take towards achieving a healthy weight. Here are some proven strategies to help⁴⁻⁶:

1. **Eat a breakfast every day** that consists of a mix of protein and carbohydrates.
2. **Aim for a low-calorie, low-fat diet.** A low-fat diet consists of less than 25% of daily calories from fat. A low-calorie diet will be different for each person. Work with your health care provider or a registered dietitian to determine how many calories you should consume in a day.
3. **Take part in consistent physical activity each week.** The table below outlines the national physical activity guidelines for weight loss. While these provide helpful recommendations, it is important to talk to your health care provider or physical therapist to determine an activity plan that will work for you.

Activity	Benefit
150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week	Prevents weight gain and promotes heart health
150 – 250 minutes of moderate	Can lead to moderate weight loss





physical activity per week	
Greater than 250 minutes of moderate physical activity per week	Can lead to significant weight loss
Resistance training or weight training twice per week	Increases lean muscle mass and increases the calories you burn after your workout

Note: Moderate physical activity is any activity that causes you to breathe hard but still be able to carry on a conversation using short sentences.

Tip: Safely performing resistance exercises at a pace that increases your heart rate and causes you to breathe hard counts towards your weekly moderate physical activity!

4. **Weigh yourself once a week.** This will allow you to catch small increases in weight and adjust your strategy as necessary.
5. **Get some sleep.** People who do not get the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep per night are at greater risk for being overweight or obese than people who do get the suggested amount of sleep.
6. **Strive to keep a consistent eating pattern,** even during holidays, weekends, and when going out to eat.
7. **Develop techniques to manage your emotions** to prevent eating based on mood. This can help maintain a consistent eating pattern and prevent relapsing to unhealthy behaviors.

Weight Gain

Sometimes injuries and illnesses, as well as their treatments, can lead to being underweight. While this often receives less attention, being underweight can also hinder healing. Gaining weight can assist in the recovery process. Talk to your health care provider to understand your optimal weight and consider using the following strategies⁷:

1. **Determine how many calories you need to consume each day to gain weight.** Your health care provider, a registered dietitian, or a tool such as the SuperTracker can help you decide on a plan that is right for you.
2. **Eat four to six mini-meals each day,** if eating large quantities of food at one time is difficult.
3. **Focus on the quality of your food** and not the quantity. Nutrient-rich foods assist with the healing process by helping build muscle, strengthening bones, and helping repair tissue.
4. **Have a smoothie or shake** in between meals. Many people find they tolerate liquids better than solid food. Consider adding protein to help with recovery.





5. **Gain weight by eating more** whole grains, lean protein, fruits, vegetables, full-fat cheeses, nuts, seeds, and oils instead of loading up on unhealthy choices such as fast foods and sweets.
6. **Add weight lifting or resistance training** to your fitness plan to improve or maintain muscle mass.
7. **Hydrate often** but not with meals. This will leave room for food and keep you from feeling full.

Resources

You may encounter challenges along the way, but there are lots of resources available on your journey to a healthy weight. Check out some of the resources below for additional information.

- The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's (NMCPHC) [Active Living for WII webpage](#) offers resources to help you meet your fitness goals, and [Healthy Eating for WII webpage](#) provides specific nutrition for wound healing guidance.
- This helpful [Body Mass Index \(BMI\) calculator](#) from the National Institutes of Health will calculate your body mass index based on your height and weight.
- The Amputee Coalition offers a [BMI calculator](#) for Sailors or Marines who have experienced an amputation.
- [ChooseMyPlate](#) provides helpful tips and information regarding weight management, nutrition, and physical activity for all age groups.
- The [SuperTracker](#) will calculate how many calories you should aim to eat and drink each day based on your individual goals. It can also track your daily intake, and provide helpful tips and support to make healthy choices.
- The Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System [Virtual Meal Builder](#) provides a customized nutrition plan to help fuel your recovery.
- Check out the [NMCPHC Weight Management webpage](#) for additional information and resources.





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