



NUTRI-FACTS: WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Weight management is about more than your physical appearance; it's about achieving and maintaining a healthy weight for life. It includes long-term changes in your eating and exercise habits that become your permanent lifestyle. Weight management is a commitment to making healthy choices every day that benefit you both personally and professionally.



Health Benefits

American adults are battling weight issues at an alarming rate. Nearly 70 percent of those ages 20 and older are considered to be overweight or obese.¹ The military population is waging a similar fight against excessive body weight. According to the 2013 Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment Annual Report, 64 percent of active duty Navy respondents and 56 percent of active duty Marine Corps respondents were found to be overweight or obese.² The assessment identified some of the health risks as: a low daily intake of fruits and vegetables, a high daily intake of high-fat foods, and a lack of aerobic activity.²

The good news is that even a modest weight loss of 5 – 10 percent of your total body weight can produce health benefits.³ It can improve your quality of life and help reduce your risk of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancers. Weight management can also increase your military readiness, enhance your peak performance, and build your resilience.

A gradual weight loss of 1 – 2 pounds a week allows for healthy weight loss without irritability, fatigue, or weakness.⁴ Creating a daily deficit of 500 – 1000 calories is the most efficient way to achieve long-term weight loss.⁴ This can be done by reducing daily caloric intake by 500 calories, increasing physical activity by burning 500 calories, or by combining physical activity and caloric intake to create a 500 – 1000 calories deficit.⁴

Tips for Weight Management

If you want to lose weight and keep it off, check out the Health Promotion and Wellness (HPW) resource [HPW Weight Management](#) and follow these tips on how to make healthy food choices and engage in regular exercise.

Healthy Eating

To successfully manage your weight, you must develop lifelong healthy eating habits. That means consuming nutrient-dense foods, such as 100% whole grains, lean protein, fruits, vegetables, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products. These foods give you the 'biggest bang for your buck.' They are low in calories, but high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. The vitamins and minerals provide you with quality energy to fuel your body, and the fiber makes you feel full longer, which reduces your intake and helps you maintain a healthy weight.

Healthy eating also means avoiding processed or prepared foods, such as snack chips and frozen meals because they often contain high amounts of calories, sodium (salt), added sugars, and fat. These ingredients negatively impact your health, can lead to weight gain, and prevent you from performing at your peak. To manage your weight properly, consult your health care provider and follow these healthy eating tips⁵:

- ▶ Make ½ your plate fruits and vegetables, ¼ lean protein, and ¼ whole grains
- ▶ Choose foods with less sodium
- ▶ Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt
- ▶ Avoid oversized portions
- ▶ Drink water instead of soda or sugary drinks
- ▶ Eat breakfast to help curb your hunger throughout the day
- ▶ Eat slowly to prevent overeating
- ▶ Check out [HPW Healthy Eating](#) for more nutrition tips



Active Living

Paired with healthy eating habits, exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight. Being active also increases your chances of living longer and performing better, both on and off the job. For the best results, engage in a variety of moderate to intense aerobic exercise, muscle strengthening, and functional body movement activities. If you don't have a regular exercise routine; it's never too late to start. Consult your health care provider and follow these physical activity tips to help you manage your weight successfully⁶:

- ▶ Aim for 250 – 300 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every week to lose weight and keep it off
- ▶ Aim for 150 – 250 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every week to reduce chronic disease factors and prevent weight gain
- ▶ Include a variety of activities to get the most health benefits out of your routine
- ▶ Try brisk walking, bicycling, or swimming, if you're just getting started
- ▶ Take the stairs instead of the elevator - every step counts!
- ▶ Check out [HPW Active Living](#) for more exercise tips

Quick Fixes

There are no overnight success stories when it comes to weight management. Dietary supplements and fad diets are not permanent solutions for weight loss. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight takes time and commitment.

Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements are consumable products, such as liquids or tablets that contain dietary ingredients intended to supplement the diet.⁷ You may have thought about taking dietary supplements to help you reach your weight goals faster and easier, but supplements are not meant to replace healthy habits. The most effective way to lose weight and gain muscle is through a nutritious diet and regular exercise. There are also potential health and safety risks associated with taking dietary supplements because they are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Some dietary supplements may cause irregular heartbeat, stroke, headaches, or other unfavorable reactions.⁸ So rethink your supplement use, consult your health care provider, and check out HPW's fact sheets on the [health](#) and [safety](#) of dietary supplements.

Fad Diets

Fad diets eliminate or severely reduce certain food groups, which means your body may not be getting all the nutrients it needs. These restrictive diets may result in brief weight loss, but they are not an effective way to manage your weight for life. They may also lead to health problems. For example, losing weight at a rapid rate (more than 3 pounds a week after the first couple weeks) may increase your risk for developing gallstones (clusters of solid material in the gallbladder that can be painful).⁹ The most effective way to manage your weight is to make healthy eating and active living a part of your daily routine.



By developing new eating and exercise habits, you can live a healthier lifestyle. Start today by eating a balanced breakfast, smaller portions at meals, or healthy snacks every 3 – 4 hours to limit overeating. You can monitor your progress by checking out [Nutri-Facts: Body Mass Index \(BMI\)](#) to learn how to calculate your BMI and interpret the results using standard weight status categories. If you need additional assistance making healthy behavior changes, the [ShipShape Program](#) is highly recommended. It is the official Navy weight management program designed to equip you with the skills and resources necessary to jumpstart a healthier lifestyle.

To view the references for the Nutri-Facts series, visit:

[HTTP://WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/HEALTH-PROMOTION/PAGES/NUTRI-FACTS_REFERENCES.ASPX](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/pages/nutri-facts_references.aspx).