

Weight Management and Improving your Body Mass Index

1. Learn what you currently eat and drink:

Write down what and how much you eat and drink. Find a way that works for you. Use a journal, log your intake on your calendar, keep track on your phone, or use an online tool like the [SuperTracker](#) at [Choosemyplate.gov](#).

2. Get started eating smaller portions:

- A simple trick to help you eat less is to use a smaller plate, bowl, or glass. One cup of food on a small plate looks like more than the same cup of food on a large plate. Tall glasses or bowls (i.e. a fluted ice cream dish) will appear larger even if they hold less than a short (but wide) bowl. Even using smaller spoons and serving spoons helps according to research.
- Figure out how big your portions are versus what a serving is according to the food label. Most people generally need 400-600 calories per meal and 100-200 calories per snack, so multiple servings may be appropriate.
- If you are still hungry after eating smaller portions, try to fill up more on vegetables or fruits. You can eat larger portions of these foods for fewer calories. For example, follow the advice to *"make half your plate fruits and vegetables"*.
- Pay attention to feelings of hunger and fullness as you are eating. Stop eating when you are satisfied, not full. If there is still food on your plate or on the table, pack it up into a "frozen meal" for later. Review your weight goals and motivations as you do this.
- If you tend to overeat, be aware of the time of day, place, and your mood while eating so you can better control the amount you eat. Some people overeat when stressed or upset. Try walking instead of eating or snack on a healthier option. For example, instead of eating a bag of chips, crunch on some celery; or, instead of eating a bowl of ice cream, enjoy a low-fat yogurt with fresh blueberries. Making healthier choices is better for your weight and can also help you feel better.

3. Get started eating fewer empty calories:

Did you know:

- The #1 source of calories in the American diet is desserts - like cakes and cookies?
- Americans get more calories from sugary drinks than any other beverage choice?

Here are three ways to cut back on empty calories:

1. Choose foods and drinks with little or no added sugars.

For example, drink water instead of sugary drinks. There are about 10 packets of sugar in a 12-ounce can of soda, while water has no added sugars.

2. **Select products that contain added sugars *less often*.**

For example, eat sugary desserts as occasional choices, not everyday foods. Most days, select fruit for dessert instead of a sugary option.

3. **When you have foods and drinks with added sugars and solid fats, choose a *small portion and savor it!***

For example, instead of eating three scoops of ice cream, order one scoop.

4. **Get started focusing on the foods you need:**

- Start with breakfast. People who skip breakfast often weigh more. Eating a high fiber, nutrient-dense breakfast, like eggs and whole grain toast or a high fiber cereal and milk, may help you lose weight and keep it off.
- Try to eat every 3-4 hours to prevent overeating later. Have healthy snacks available at home and bring healthy snacks to eat when on-the-go, such as carrot and celery sticks with peanut butter or whole grain crackers and low-fat cheese.
- When preparing meals, include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods. These foods provide nutrients with fewer calories. Check the [sample meal patterns](#) at Choosemyplate.gov.

5. **Get Started making better choices when eating out:**

- **What** are you eating and drinking?
 - Check posted calorie amounts, and choose lower calorie menu options. Many restaurants post calories on menus, in pamphlets, or on their websites. If 400-600 calories is appropriate for a meal, think twice before ordering a salad with 1300 calories. Also, don't forget about the calories from drinks, dressings, dips, appetizers, and desserts. They all count!
 - Choosing a balanced meal, dishes that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods, can help you stay on track when eating out.

6. **Increase physical activity:**

The people with the greatest long-term weight loss success are BOTH eating less and are more active. To start, adults should do the equivalent of 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week. For example, walking 30 minutes each day and drinking one less soda each day are two small steps you can take that can have a big impact on your weight over time. Find activities you like and track them as you do your food intake.

Information adapted from Choosemyplate.gov. See this website for more information and to the troubleshoot stumbling blocks of meeting these goals.