December 2010

The holiday season is upon us! Thanksgiving is in the not so distant past and Christmas and New Year’s are rapidly approaching! During this time of year, people get together to fellowship, which includes lots of good food and drink. However, let us not forget that watching what goes into our body is very important for staying healthy. Have a good time with family and friends but don’t forget to think about good nutrition. In the event that you just can’t turn down that extra helping of dessert, take a look at what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has to offer regarding weight loss and weight control. The content below was taken directly from the CDC’s website. If you’d like more information, please visit [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html). This issue as well as the next two will focus on healthy weight.

Healthy Weight - it's not a diet, it's a lifestyle!

Introduction

When it comes to weight loss, there’s no lack of fad diets promising fast results. But such diets limit your nutritional intake, can be unhealthy, and tend to fail in the long run.

The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses.

Staying in control of your weight contributes to good health now and as you age.
Take Control
Monitor the following:

- Your current weight
- Your weight loss
- Your weight gain

Assessing Your Weight
If you've been thinking about your current weight, it may be because you've noticed a change in how your clothes fit. Or maybe you've been told by a health care professional that you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol and that excessive weight could be a contributing factor. The first step is to assess whether or not your current weight is healthy.

How can I tell if I'm at a healthy weight?

Adult Body Mass Index or BMI

One way to begin to determine whether your weight is a healthy one is to calculate your "body mass index" (BMI). For most people, BMI is a reliable indicator of body fatness. It is calculated based on your height and weight.

To calculate your BMI, see BMI Index Chart on the next page.

- If your BMI is less than 18.5, it falls within the "underweight" range.
- If your BMI is 18.5 to 24.9, it falls within the "normal" or Healthy Weight range.
- If your BMI is 25.0 to 29.9, it falls within the "overweight" range.
- If your BMI is 30.0 or higher, it falls within the "obese" range.

"Underweight", "normal", "overweight", and "obese" are all labels for ranges of weight. Obese and overweight describe ranges of weight that are greater than what is considered healthy for a given height and underweight describes a weight that is lower than what is considered healthy. If your BMI falls outside of the "normal" or Healthy Weight range, you may want to talk to your doctor or health care provider about how you might achieve a healthier body weight. Obesity and overweight have been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems.
At an individual level, BMI can be used as a screening tool but is not diagnostic of the body fatness or health of an individual. A trained healthcare provider should perform appropriate health assessments in order to evaluate an individual’s health status and risks.


Body mass index is a key index for relating a person's body weight to their height. The body mass index (BMI) is a person's weight in kilograms (kg) divided by their height in meters (m) squared.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) now defines normal weight, overweight, and obesity according to the BMI rather than the traditional height/weight charts. Since the BMI describes the body weight relative to height, it correlates strongly (in adults) with the total body fat content.

Overweight is defined as a BMI of 27.3 % or more for women and 27.8 % or more for men, according to the NIH. Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 and above, according to the NIH. (A BMI of 30 is about 30 pounds overweight.) Note, however, that some very muscular people may have a high BMI without undue health risks.

**BMI Index Chart**
Waist Circumference

Another way to assess your weight is to measure your waist size. Your waistline may be telling you that you have a higher risk of developing obesity-related conditions if you are:

- A man whose waist circumference is more than 40 inches
- A non-pregnant woman whose waist circumference is more than 35 inches

Excessive abdominal fat is serious because it places you at greater risk for developing obesity-related conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure, and coronary artery disease. Individuals who have excessive abdominal fat should consult with their physicians or other health care providers to develop a plan for losing weight.

How To Measure Your Waist Size

To measure your waist size (circumference), place a tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone. Be sure that the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin, and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale, and measure your waist.

Note: This information is intended for adult men and non-pregnant women only.

Preventing Weight Gain

If you're currently at a healthy weight, you're already one step ahead of the game. To stay at a healthy weight, it's worth doing a little planning now.

Or maybe you are overweight but aren't ready to lose weight yet. If this is the case, preventing further weight gain is a worthy goal.

As people age, their body composition gradually shifts — the proportion of muscle decreases and the proportion of fat increases. This shift slows their metabolism, making it easier to gain weight. In addition, some people become less physically active as they get older, thus increasing the risk of weight gain.

The good news is that weight gain can be prevented by choosing a lifestyle that includes good eating habits and daily physical activity. By avoiding weight gain, you avoid higher risks of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, and some forms of cancer.
Choosing an Eating Plan to Prevent Weight Gain

So, how do you choose a healthful eating plan that will enable you to maintain your current weight? The goal is to make a habit of choosing foods that are nutritious and healthful. To learn more, visit Healthy Eating for a Healthy Weight.

If your goal is to prevent weight gain, then you'll want to choose foods that supply you with the appropriate number of calories to maintain your weight. This number varies from person to person. It depends on many factors, including your height, weight, age, sex, and activity level. For more, see Balancing Calories.

Get Moving!

In addition to a healthy eating plan, an active lifestyle will help you maintain your weight. By choosing to add more physical activity to your day, you'll increase the amount of calories your body burns. This makes it more likely you'll maintain your weight.

Although physical activity is an integral part of weight management, it's also a vital part of health in general. Regular physical activity can reduce your risk for many chronic diseases and it can help keep your body healthy and strong. To learn more about how physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight, visit Physical Activity for Healthy Weight.

Self-monitoring

You may also find it helpful to weigh yourself on a regular basis. If you see a few pounds creeping on, take the time to examine your lifestyle. With these strategies, you make it more likely that you'll catch small weight gains more quickly.

Ask yourself—

- Has my activity level changed?
- Am I eating more than usual? You may find it helpful to keep a food diary for a few days to make you more aware of your eating choices.

If you ask yourself these questions and find that you've decreased your activity level or made some poor food choices, make a commitment to yourself to get back on track. Set some reasonable goals to help you get more physical activity and make better food choices.

Next month’s issue: Losing the Holiday Weight