



Losing weight safely

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is part of the United States Government. FDA requires most food labels to list the amount of important nutrients the food gives you. Use food labels to choose healthy foods for losing weight.

If you are overweight, slim down for better health

Overweight people have an increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and other illnesses. Losing weight reduces the risk.

Ask your doctor about sensible goals

Your doctor or other health worker can help you set sensible goals. They will be based on a proper weight for your height, build and age. Men and very active women may need up to 2,500 calories daily. Other women and inactive men need only about 2,000 calories daily. A safe plan is to eat 300 to 500 fewer calories a day to lose one to two pounds a week.

Exercise 30 minutes

Do at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. This can include brisk walking.

The idea is to use up more calories than you eat. You need to use up the day's calories. And use some of the calories stored in your body fat.

Eat less fat and sugar

This will help you cut calories. Fried foods and fatty desserts can quickly use up a day's calories. And these foods may not provide the other nutrients you need.

Tips for cutting calories and fat

- Eat plenty of vegetables, fruits and grain products like bread and rice.
- Eat small, single servings of foods high in fat or calories.
- Eat less sugar and fewer sweets.
- Drink less alcohol or no alcohol.
- Choose foods whose labels say low, light or reduced to describe calories or fat.
- Choose 1 percent or skim milk products and reduced-fat cheeses.
- Replace ice cream with fat-free frozen yogurt.
- Replace sour cream with fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt.
- Make sure fish, poultry and meat are lean. Trim skin and fat.

- Broil, roast or steam foods.

Eat a favorite rich food sometimes

That may keep you from craving it. But eat only a **small** amount. Make sure your other foods that day are low in fat and calories.

Eat a wide variety of foods

Variety in the diet helps you get all the vitamins and other nutrients you need.

Watch out for promises of quick and easy weight loss

Fad diets aren't good because they often call for too much or too little of one type of food. You may not get important nutrients you need daily.

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true.

What about diet pills?

Diet pills you buy without a prescription won't make a big difference in how much you lose each week. Or how long you keep the weight off. If you do use them, read the label carefully. Side effects may include high blood pressure. Never take more than the listed dose.

Be careful about taking cough or cold medicines with diet pills you buy without a prescription. These medicines may contain the same drug used in diet pills. Or a similar drug with the same effects. You may get too much of the same drug. This can hurt you.

Before taking a cough or cold medicine while using diet pills, ask your pharmacist if it's OK. Prescription diet pills may help some people. Follow the doctor's directions carefully.

Do you have more questions about weight loss? Ask your doctor for the answers that are best for you. You also may want to view tips about nutrition and a healthy diet. Visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

Source: Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services (June 1998)

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.