



How to Lose Weight—and Keep It Off

by [Jennie McCary, MS, RD, LD](#)

How do people successfully [lose weight](#) and maintain that loss? To answer that question, the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) tracks successful weight losers--individuals who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for more than 1 year. Common behaviors that these individuals share include monitoring weight and food intake, maintaining a low-calorie and low-fat diet, eating breakfast almost every day, engaging in 1 hour of [physical activity](#) daily and limiting television viewing to 10 hours or less per week (NWCR).

Here are some tried-and-true weight management methods that may help your clients.

1. Monitor Weight and Food Intake

People who weigh themselves regularly are more successful at [weight loss](#) and weight management, as the monitoring process allows them to make adjustments if weight begins to creep back (Butryn et al. 2007). Since many people grossly underestimate the number of [calories](#) they consume, a record of food intake can be a useful management tool. Becoming more mindful of what, when, why and how we eat is important for changing and maintaining behaviors.

Weight Control Tip. For consistency, choose a day and time to weigh yourself weekly, and tune in to how your clothes fit each day. For people who are just starting out, it's wise to record daily dietary intake in order to learn about eating habits, triggers and where adjustments can be made. As weight is lost and new behaviors become habits, this may not be as necessary. Use a reliable online food record or a simple spiral notebook.

2. Adopt an Effective Eating Frequency & Pattern

When and how often one eats may determine weight. Studies show that eating four or five small meals/snacks throughout the day is associated with lower energy intake and reduced or no [obesity](#) risk, and eating less or more than this may actually increase the risk of obesity (Forslund et al. 2005; Ma et al. 2003), perhaps more so in men than women (Westerterp-Plantenga et al. 2003; Drummond et al. 1998). In addition, skipping breakfast is associated with a higher body mass index and increased obesity risk (Ma et al. 2003; Cho et al. 2003).

Weight Control Tip. Spread calories throughout the day. If you don't eat breakfast, start eating a single item, like a carton of low-fat yogurt or a banana, within 1 hour of waking and then aim for a daily high-fiber breakfast made up of two to three different food groups.

3. Control Portions

Paying attention to [portion size](#) is a proven strategy that can help people reduce energy intake and lose weight. Eating slowly and savoring the food will help control appetite and calorie intake. Shoveling food rapidly into the mouth blocks the body's natural appetite control process.

Weight Control Tip. Retrain skewed perceptions of what a serving is by measuring food for a few days with help from your hand: 1 cup = size of medium fist; serving of meat = medium-sized palm; cheese serving = two fingers; and a serving of oil = thumb tip. Teach yourself to slow down by choosing one meal a day (or week) that you purposely enjoy slowly, while sitting at a table.

4. Fill Up on Less

Increasing intake of nutrient-rich foods like [fruits and vegetables](#) is a positive strategy for controlling portions. Thanks to water and fiber, low-caloric-density foods offer larger portions with fewer calories, so you fill up without filling out. Examples include fruits, vegetables, beans and soups. High-fiber foods also slow digestion and absorption and stabilize blood sugar, which helps control hunger and further aids weight loss.

Weight Control Tip. Fill up on nutrient-rich, high-fiber foods to satisfy hunger and reduce caloric intake. Adults should aim for 25–35 grams of fiber per day and increase gradually. To control calories, choose fresh, frozen or canned fruits without added [sugar](#) over fruit juice and dried fruits.



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