



# Strive for a Healthy Weight



Did you know that your weight will remain stable if you eat close to the same number of calories that your body uses? To maintain your weight, engage in regular physical activity, eat wisely and weigh yourself regularly. If you are normal weight, congratulations! Read more information to help you manage your weight.

## How do I know if I am at a healthy weight?

- If you are gaining weight, you are taking in more calories than your body is using. These extra calories are stored as fat, and you will gain weight. If you are losing weight, you are eating fewer calories than your body is using. Your body is using stored fat cells for energy, so your weight is decreasing.
- A simple way for you to know if you are at a healthy weight is to know your body mass index (BMI), a measure of weight by height.
  - You are underweight if your BMI is less than 18.5.
  - You are a healthy weight if your BMI is 18.5 to 24.9.
  - You are overweight if your BMI is 25 to 29.9.
  - You are obese if your BMI is 30 or greater.

## What are the benefits of maintaining a healthy weight?

- You will have greater energy and stamina.
- You can prevent or control many diseases and conditions. If you are overweight or obese, you increase your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, heart disease, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and sleep apnea.

## What can I do to maintain my healthy weight?

- You can **eat wisely** and choose a variety of low calorie, nutritious foods and beverages in the basic food groups. Make sure to select foods that limit your intake of fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol. Instead, eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains (see the *Eat Wisely* handout).

A Better Way to  
**LIVE**

*Talk with your  
health care team  
about your goals.*



- You can **be physically active**. For health benefits, you can do at least 2½ hours per week of moderate-intensity activity, or 1¼ hours per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or an equal combination of both. You'll see a difference in your weight and your health (see the *Be Physically Active* handout).
- You'll find that making lifestyle changes that include eating wisely, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight are keys to maintaining good health.

### What if I need to lose weight?

- Losing even a little will help your health. If you lose as little as 5–10% of your current body weight, you can lower your risks for many diseases.
- A safe weight loss is 1–2 pounds per week. It may take 6 months or more to reach your ultimate goal, but if you make gradual lifestyle changes, you can maintain a healthier weight for life.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov)
- MOVE! Internet Website for Patients: [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov)
- MOVE!23 Patient Questionnaire: [www.move.va.gov/move23.asp](http://www.move.va.gov/move23.asp)
- MOVE! Success Stories: [www.move.va.gov/SuccessStories.asp](http://www.move.va.gov/SuccessStories.asp)
- Over 120 different Weight Management Handouts: [www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp?all](http://www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp?all)
- Healthfinder—Watch Your Weight\*: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=25>
- Link to BMI table: [http://www.move.va.gov/download/NewHandouts/Miscellaneous/M06\\_BMIChart.pdf](http://www.move.va.gov/download/NewHandouts/Miscellaneous/M06_BMIChart.pdf)

\* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for content on the site.

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.