

Improving Your Health

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The Health Education Network



The Health Education Network is a Program of the Minority Organ Donation Education Program, Inc.

Improving Your Health

You don't have to stop eating chocolate cake or start running marathons to improve your health. Making small but steady changes in your eating and physical activity habits over time may help you lose weight if you need to, feel better, and improve your health. The information below can help you start to change your physical activity and eating habits. When you make changes to improve your health, you may also move your friends and family to do the same.

Even if you are overweight according to charts and measures, you may like the size and shape of your body and not want to lose weight. Your friends and family may think you look great too. But the health benefits of getting fit and eating well are clear. Once you decide to lose weight, your loved ones may want to join you on your journey to better health.

Being overweight can be dangerous to your health. If you are overweight or obese, you are more likely to develop:

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Certain forms of cancer.

You can help lower your risk for many health problems by losing weight. Losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can help improve your health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 10 to 20 pounds may help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Slow and steady weight loss of 1/2 to 2 pounds per week is the safest way to lose weight.

Be more physically active

Regular moderate-intensity physical activity can be fun and help you feel great. When you share physical activity with your friends and family, it can also be a social event. Make it your goal to try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, or better yet, all days of the week. You may need to be physically active for more than 30 minutes a day to help you lose and keep off extra weight.

What is moderate-intensity activity?

- Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes
- Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes
- Dancing fast for 30 minutes

Sometimes starting and sticking with a physical activity program can be a challenge. Figuring out how to beat your physical activity roadblocks may make it easier for you to get and stay active.

Eat healthier

When you begin to change your eating habits to improve your health, try to:

- Make healthier food choices
- Eat just enough for you

Make healthier food choices

A healthy eating plan includes a wide variety of foods from five food groups. Let the Food Guide Pyramid help guide your food choices. Use the Food Guide Pyramid to guide the number of daily servings you eat from each food group. A range of serving numbers is given for each Pyramid food group.

- The smaller number is for people who eat about 1,600 calories a day, such as women who are not physically active.
- Active women and most men need about 2,200 calories a day and should choose a mid-range number of servings.
- The larger number is for people who eat about 2,800 calories a day, such as active men.

Improving your eating plan may take time. Changing favorite foods may be one of the most difficult parts. To enjoy tasty, lower-fat versions of some favorite foods, try the suggestions listed in this publication.

Children, teenagers, and adults under age 25 should choose 3 daily servings from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group to meet nutritional needs.

Source: National Institute of Health