UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

Weight Management

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall health and can help you prevent and control many diseases and conditions. A balanced eating plan and regular physical activity are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and physical inactivity may lead to becoming overweight and related health problems. By eating right and being active, you can reach or maintain a healthy weight.

According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts
- Is low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars
- Stays within your daily calorie needs

What Factors Contribute To a Healthy Weight?
Many factors can contribute to a person's weight. These factors include environment, family history, genetics, metabolism (the way your body changes food and oxygen into energy), and behavior.

Set Yourself Up for Success!
Take charge of your food environment, when you eat, how much you eat, and what foods are available.

- **Start the day with breakfast**. People who eat breakfast tend to maintain a healthier weight than those who don't. Starting your day with a healthy breakfast will jumpstart your metabolism, plus, it will help keep you from binge eating later in the day.
- **Serve yourself smaller portions. One easy way to control portion size is by** using small plates, bowls, and cups. This will make your portions appear larger. Don't eat out of large bowls or directly from the food container or package, which makes it difficult to assess how much you've eaten.
- **Plan your meals and snacks ahead of time**. You will be more inclined to eat in moderation if you have thought out healthy meals and snacks in advance. You can buy or create your own small portion snacks in plastic bags or containers. Eating on a schedule will also help you avoid eating when you aren't truly hungry.
- **Cook your own meals.** Cooking meals at home allows you to control both portion size and what goes in to the food. Restaurant and packaged foods generally contain a lot more sodium, fat, and calories than food cooked at home—plus the portions sizes tend to be larger.
- **Don't shop for groceries when you're hungry**. Create a shopping list and stick to it. Be especially careful to avoid foods at the ends of the aisles and along the perimeter, where grocers tend to sell high-calorie snack and convenience foods.
- **Out of sight, out of mind**. Limit the amount of tempting foods you have at home. If you share a kitchen with non-dieters, store snack foods and other high-calorie indulgences in cabinets or drawers out of your sight.

In addition to your food and eating-related choices, you can also support your weight management efforts by making healthy lifestyle choices.

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Lack of sleep has been shown to have a direct link to hunger, overeating, and weight gain. Exhaustion also impairs your judgment, which can lead to poor food choices. You should aim for around 8 hours of quality sleep a night.
- **Turn off the TV.** You actually burn less calories watching television than you do sleeping! If you simply can't miss your favorite shows, get a little workout in while watching. Do easy exercises like squats, sit-ups, jogging in place, or using resistance bands or hand weights.
- **Get plenty of exercise.** Exercise not only burns calories, but can actually improve your resting metabolism. No time for a long workout? Research shows that three 10-minute spurts of exercise per day are just as good as one 30-minute workout. Take the stairs instead of the elevator or park in the back of the parking lot. Every bit helps.
- **Drink more water.** You can easily reduce your daily calorie intake by replacing soda, alcohol, or coffee with water. Thirst can also be confused with hunger, so by drinking water, you may avoid consuming extra calories, plus it will help you break down food more easily.