

Weight Control and Diabetes

Why Control Your Weight?

If you are overweight, your body does not use insulin well. This is called insulin resistance. Even a weight loss of 10–20 pounds can improve blood sugar control. Weight loss will also lower blood pressure. After weight loss, you may need less diabetes and blood pressure medications, and that saves money.

Weight loss relieves pressure on arthritic joints. Most people also have more energy and feel better.

You do not have to reduce down to your ideal body weight to see these results. Even if you cannot lose weight, not gaining weight will help. Any change in eating or activity that lowers your blood sugar usually improves your health and fitness level.

Keys to Weight Control

Keep a food record. Write down what and how much you are going to eat before you eat it. You will become more aware of your food intake. Don't forget that those beverages have calories too.

Keep tempting foods out of the house. When you crave a certain food, purchase it in a one-portion size. Eat it, and enjoy it, but then forget it. If you buy a larger amount, you will just eat it until it is gone. A shopping list is a good way to control impulse buying.

Exercise most days of the week. Do not exercise without your doctor's approval. Keep track of your progress with an activity record. Do less than you think you can do at first. Slowly increase time and effort until you can exercise a total of 30 minutes or more. Check your blood sugar before and after exercise until you and your doctor know how exercise affects your blood sugar. Drink plenty of water. Carry

a snack to treat low blood sugar reactions. Always wear a visible diabetes identification.

Reward yourself often. Keep motivated with a list of small nonfood rewards for when you reach short-term goals. Good choices are a new paperback book, an hour free without the kids, a new plant for the house, or a video rental.

Choose high-fiber foods. Fiber makes you feel fuller and does not raise blood sugar. Fiber is part of the carbohydrate in whole grain breads and cereals and vegetables and fruits.

Measure all food and drink for at least two weeks. Once you know serving sizes, you can eyeball your portions. Use the same size plates, cups, bowls, and glasses to help control portions. Remeasure once or twice a month to prevent portions from increasing. Measure more often whenever you gain weight or your blood sugars rise. Also measure any new food or drink carefully.

Make one to two nutrition and exercise goals at a time. Gradual change is more likely to lead to permanent change. Break big goals down into small goals. For example, try to walk 1 mile in 15 minutes instead of walking 3 miles in 45 minutes.

Join a group. Many people stick to new habits better when they have support. The Extension Service and other groups offer weight control and fitness programs. Look for those that promote a balanced diet and regular activity.

Don't just look for weight loss. Inches may be lost without a big change in weight. Clothes will feel looser. Blood pressure, blood sugar, triglyceride, and cholesterol levels may also improve.

Questions to Ask

1. Do I need to see a dietitian to help me with a meal plan to lose weight?
2. What kind of exercise can I do to lose weight?
3. What nonfood rewards can I use that will keep me motivated?