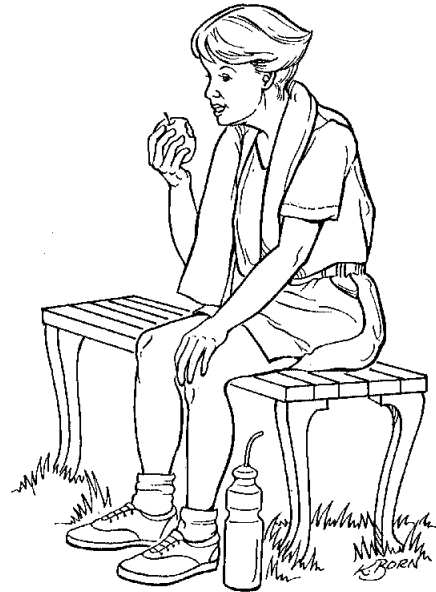


# How Can I Manage My Weight?

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**Y**our heart will be healthier if you reach and maintain a healthy weight, and don't go up and down the scale like a yo-yo. If you've been able to lose weight, good for you! You've taken the extra strain off your heart and lowered your risk for heart problems. You should be proud of your success.

Keeping extra weight off can be as challenging as losing it. Many things will tempt you to go back to your old habits. It takes commitment to stick to your new, healthy lifestyle. Yet when you do, you may notice that you have greater self-control with food, feel stronger, have better eating habits and fewer mood swings, and are in better overall shape!




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## What if I go back to old habits?

A lapse is a small mistake or return to old habits. This can happen when you have a bad day and overeat or skip exercise. A relapse is when you go back to old habits for several days or weeks.

- Remember that having a lapse or relapse is not failing. You can get back on track.
- Think about whether you feel hunger (gnawing in your stomach) or urges (mental cravings for food).
- When you feel an urge, set a timer for 15 minutes and wait, or do something else before eating. This will teach you to delay your desire for food.
- Try to use other ways to respond to life's stresses besides eating. Take a brisk walk, start a new hobby or calm yourself through meditation.

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## What happens when I reach a healthy weight?

- After you reach a healthy weight, add about 200 calories of healthful, low-fat food to your average daily intake.
- After a week, if you're still losing weight, add a few hundred more calories.
- If you change the amount of exercise you do, adjust your eating.
- Keep a record of what you eat and how much exercise you do so you'll know how to make adjustments.

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## How can I stay at a healthy weight?

- Remember that eating smart doesn't mean "dieting." It means eating some foods in smaller amounts and eating high-calorie and high-fat foods less often.
- Always keep low-calorie and low-fat foods around. Use a shopping list, and don't shop when you're hungry.
- Plan all your meals. When you're going to a party or out to eat, decide ahead of time what you can do to make it easier to eat right.
- At a buffet table, choose wisely. At a friend's house, control your portions.
- When you're hungry between meals, drink a glass of water or eat a small fruit, and stay out of the kitchen.
- When you really crave a high-calorie food, eat a small amount and forget about it, instead of resisting until you give in and gorge on it. If you don't trust yourself with just a little, don't eat any at all.
- Stay active! Don't give up on your physical activity plan.
- Find an exercise partner or exercise class to help you stay interested.

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## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your local American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721, or the American Stroke Association at 1-888-478-7653.
- If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.

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## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

What if I *start gaining weight*?

How can my family help me?

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Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

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