

# What can we do to manage our weight?

## 1 Managing our weight in a healthy way

- ◆ First, we can learn if we have a healthy weight now by **checking our BMI and our waist circumference at the clinic.** A BMI of 18 to 25 is healthy. A BMI over 25 means our weight is affecting our health. A waist circumference of 35 inches or less is healthiest for women, and 40 inches or less is healthiest for men.
- ◆ We can set a goal of **not gaining any more weight.** That's a great start!
- ◆ If we are overweight, we can set a goal of losing 5% to 10% of our weight in the next six months. For most people, losing between 10 and 20 pounds over 6 months is reasonable and healthy. Losing weight faster than that isn't healthy.
- ◆ We can make sure that now is a good time to start.



## 2 Being more physically active

- ◆ We can find exercise that we enjoy, and find different options for exercise.
- ◆ **We should aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days.** Losing weight may mean we need to exercise an hour or more a day, but we can start slowly and build up to that.
- ◆ We can break up the exercise throughout the day instead of doing it all at once, if that's easier. We can walk for 10 or 15 minutes while waiting for something. It all adds up!
- ◆ We should exercise at a moderate intensity. **We should be able to talk while we are exercising, but not sing.** If we can't talk while exercising, we are exercising too hard. If we can sing, we are not exercising hard enough.
- ◆ We can **increase our physical activity** during the day. This means being more active with the things we need to do, like walking to the store instead of driving.
- ◆ We can add stretching and strengthening exercises to improve our flexibility.



## 3 Choosing healthy foods and beverages in the right amounts

- ◆ **We can eat a healthy breakfast every day.** A healthy breakfast has some protein and some fiber, and is one of the most important parts of losing weight.
- ◆ **We can eat 3 cups of vegetables and 2 fruits every day.**
- ◆ We can **choose whole grains** like brown rice, whole grain bread and cereal, and whole wheat pasta instead of refined grains like white rice and white bread.
- ◆ We can **choose low-fat proteins** like fish, lentils, eggs, beans and soy instead of high-fat proteins like meat and milk products.
- ◆ We can **choose healthy snacks** like nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and low-fat yogurt.
- ◆ We can **choose water** or 100% juice instead of other beverages.
- ◆ We can **limit how much unhealthy food we eat** by eating it less frequently, and in smaller amounts.
- ◆ We can **make healthy shopping choices** by reading the labels on food. We should not buy any foods that have hydrogenated oils or high fructose corn syrup in the ingredients.
- ◆ We can **eat slowly**, and eat only until our hunger goes away, not until we are full. We can serve ourselves less food, and avoid eating for social reasons.



## 4 Managing stress and emotions in a healthy way

- ◆ It is important to realize that if we have a lot of stress in our lives, it can be difficult to control our weight.
- ◆ We can respond to emotions (like nervousness, sadness, boredom) in a healthy way by talking to others or writing in a journal.
- ◆ **We can use exercise to relieve stress and respond to emotions in a healthy way.**
- ◆ We can make sure to get plenty of sleep. Getting less than 7 hours of sleep can make us gain weight.
- ◆ **We can practice relaxing.** We can try breathing exercises, gentle stretching or going for a walk.



## 5 Keeping track of our progress

- ◆ **We can make a plan for the changes we want to make.** Setting small, short-term goals helps us be successful.
- ◆ We can weigh ourselves once a week to check our progress. Losing  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 pound a week is healthy.
- ◆ We can keep track of our food and exercise changes on a log. This helps us remember what our plans are for healthy eating and exercise.
- ◆ We can tell someone about our health goals to help us stick with it. **We can look for support and encouragement.** We can give ourselves rewards (not food!) when we reach our goals.



## 6 Helping children control their weight

- ◆ **We can set a good example by having the whole family make healthy choices.** Children learn best by watching what others do.
- ◆ **We can limit screen time** (time in front of the TV, computer or video games) to no more than one hour a day.
- ◆ **We can encourage children to play actively for at least one hour every day,** and encourage them to play outside.
- ◆ **We can offer water** instead of juice, soda or sports drinks.
- ◆ We can offer fruits and vegetables for snacks. We can offer dried fruit instead of candy, and crunchy raw vegetables instead of chips.
- ◆ We should not use food to reward or punish children. We can use stickers, books or a trip to the park as a reward for good behavior. We should not force children to eat anything.
- ◆ We should not put children on a diet. Instead, we can offer healthy foods for meals and snacks and let them decide how much of the healthy food they want to eat. Then we can encourage them to play and be active all day long. We can be active with them!

