UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™
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TIPS
to a
HEALTHIER YOU

INSPIRING GREATNESS

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY WEIGHT IS HEALTHY?

The most common way of deciding whether a person's weight is appropriate for their height, is to calculate their BMI (body mass index) as it provides a guide for the appropriate weight for a person's height. However, BMI does not take into account the distribution of body fat and can therefore not indicate whether central obesity (excess weight around the waistline is present) and is not suitable for people shorter than 1.5m or taller than 1.9m. BMI can be calculated as follows:

Body Mass Index (kg/m^2) = weight (kg)/height (m^2)

A BMI of 25- 29.9 kg/m^2 is considered to be overweight whereas a BMI of 30 and above is considered to be obese. Weight gain only occurs when energy intake is more than the amount of energy used by the body over a considerable period of time. Even the intake of a small amount of energy in excess of the body's need will result in a slow but progressive weight gain. In a similar way, a gradual decrease in levels of physical activity associated with factors such as ageing or a change in life circumstances could provide a further explanation for weight gain. The amount of energy required by the body varies from person to person, depending on age, gender, physical activity and the person's metabolic rate i.e. the rate at which the body burns energy.

When looking at the relationship between body weight and chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and stroke, it is also important to be aware of where the excess body fat is situated. Fat that occurs around the waistline (referred to as central obesity or an apple body shape) carries a greater risk for the development of chronic diseases of lifestyle than individuals who gain weight in the lower body (also referred to as a pear shape).

Waist circumference measurement (see block 2) is often used as an indicator of body fat distribution and is also an indicator of fat inside the abdomen. This is called intra-abdominal fat and is a better indicator of the risk for developing heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases of lifestyle than BMI.

ENERGY INTAKE

Consuming too much energy, especially in the form of a diet that is high in energy (especially fat and sugar) can make a significant contribution to weight gain. The energy in food is measured in kilojoules. The higher the energy content of a food or beverage, the more kilojoules it contains.

One gram of fat contains 38 kilojoules while a gram of protein and carbohydrate both contain 17 kilojoules. A gram of alcohol falls somewhere in-between by containing 29 kilojoules per gram. In addition, high fat diets do not appear to trigger the stop-eating (satiety) response as quickly as carbohydrates or proteins. Foods such as meat, chicken, full cream milk, cooking oil, brick margarine and fried foods such as vetkoek and chips contain a lot of fat.

Although obesity is more common among women than men, how common it is (prevalence) varies according to age. People who were obese as children are more likely to be obese as adults because when weight is gained during infancy and early childhood, new fat cells form. People who become obese during childhood may have up to five times more fat cells than people who maintained a normal weight. Because the number of fat cells cannot be decreased, weight can only be lost by decreasing the amount of fat in each cell. This may limit how much weight can be lost and make maintaining a normal body weight more difficult.

When it comes to consuming more energy than the body needs, it often happens because we might not be eating or drinking too much but are merely not aware of how much "hidden energy" some foods and beverages contain.

Energy in Beverages

COLD DRINK	ENERGY (kJ) CONTENT PER CAN/ BOTTLE	TEASPOONS OF SUGAR PRESENT
Ice Tea (500ml)	665	4
Appletiser	572	0
Fanta / Cream soda (can)	825	7
Red Bull (small)	643	8
Oros	480	1.5
Coke (500ml)	1250	11
Vitamin water	102	6
Flavoured water	85	5
Low fat drinking yoghurt	795	11

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	TOTAL ENERGY CONTENT (kJ) /DRINK
Double brandy and Coke	940
Double brandy and Coke Lite	532
Double whiskey and water/ soda water	522
Single whiskey and water/ soda water	261
Beer (can)	585
Hunters lite	425
Windhoek lite	381
Savanna	825
Savanna lite	554
Glass of wine	596
Vodka and orange juice	783

TIPS WHEN DINING OUT

Dining out makes it easy to lose sight of your overall eating pattern. The best way to dine out healthily is to choose a restaurant that offers plenty of variety and to ask the following questions:

- Ask about preparation methods – many restaurants are willing to change preparation methods such as frying to grilling if requested.
- Ask if salad dressings, sauces and gravies can be served on the side. This way you can control your intake.
- Ask how large portions are. Ordering a starter as your main course may be an option.
- Ask if balked and broiled items are basted while they cook.
- Ask if vegetables are cooked with butter or margarine.

Starters:

- Clear soup, a vegetable salad with a vinegar-based salad dressing or fruit make a good starter.
- When ordering a salad, always ask for the dressing on the side.
- Avoid anything marinated in oil.
- Oysters or a seafood platter (without fried items) can add spice to your dining experience

Sandwiches:

- Choose ham, chicken, tuna or roast beef fillings.
- Should the restaurant not be able to leave out the mayonnaise, ask them not to spread butter or margarine on the bread.
- As for the sandwich to be made with a health- or seed loaf instead of white or brown bread as it is more filling.

Meat, fish, chicken and seafood:

- Chicken and fish are generally the best main course selections as they are naturally low in fat and can be prepared with minimal or no use of fat and still taste delicious.
- Order grilled items served as ladies' portions but be aware that many grilled dishes are basted with oil-based sauces.
- Where possible, ask that all visible fat, including chicken skin be removed before cooking

Potatoes, rice and pasta:

- Give preference to baked potato, steamed rice and pasta served without a cream sauce.
- Pasta salads and fried rice contain large amounts of fat.
- Baked potatoes are just as tasty if served with cottage cheese instead of sour cream

Vegetable:

- Grilled, broiled, steamed or baked vegetables are good choices.
- Request that no additional cream, margarine, butter or cheese be added after the cooking process is complete

Desserts:

- Fresh fruit, meringues and plain apple tart served without cream or ice cream are good choices. Alternatively skimp on your main course and "budget" for indulging in the sweet treats
- It's often wise to divide large portions before you start eating – eat one half and take the other half home or share it with your dining companion. Dividing food before you start eating makes it easier to avoid overeating.

Steakhouses:

- Start your meal with a garden salad, sprinkled lightly with a touch of olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
- Very lean steak or lamb chops, grilled baby chicken or seafood will do as a main with side orders of baked potatoes or steamed vegetables.
- Order ladies' portions of the grill options if you are worried that the excess won't make it to the doggie bag.
- Order sorbet as dessert or if all else fails, share ice cream and hot chocolate sauce with a friend

Indian cuisine:

- Steer clear of fried foods such as samoosas and dishes made with ghee or coconut milk.
- Naan and chapatti are healthy, tasty options served with a salad or vegetables served with a yoghurt dressing on the side. So is lentil soup.
- Tandoori-style chicken or fish is a good choice with basmati rice as an accompaniment.
- Sago pudding and sweetened rice puddings are in order.

Italian fare:

- Starters can include warm bread, green salad (insalata) or minestrone soup.
- Marinated calamari, pasta with a tomato-based or non-creamy seafood sauce, pizza with less cheese and a hearty vegetable and/or fruit topping is a winner.
- Italian ice (granita) and cappuccino will round things off without leaving a lasting impression on your waistline.

Buffet dining:

- Check out all the foods available and decide which are the lower fat and kilojoule choices – choose more of these foods.
- Having a conversation next to a groaning buffet table is not a good idea – walk outside or stand in the middle of the room once you've had enough.

Alcoholic drinks

- Take the following into consideration the next time you opt for an alcoholic beverage as 1 gram of alcohol = 29kj. Furthermore, you normally drink alcohol in addition to food. Alcohol in moderation (2 drinks) stimulates the appetite. Salty snacks served at a bar make you thirsty and alcohol acts as a diuretic. Two reasons why one drink makes you drink more.
- A hangover is a sign of dehydration.
- Alc 12.5% (label on a bottle of wine) means that the wine contains 12.5g alcohol/100ml but remember a small glass of wine = 180 ml
- 4.7% alc/vol (label on a bottle of beer) means that the beer contains 4.7g alcohol/100ml but remember a bottle of beer = 330ml

Mixers like Coke, lemonade and fruit juice can add a substantial amount of kilojoules (energy) to an alcoholic beverage. Water/soda water and/or lots of ice are the best ways to make an alcoholic drink "last longer" and also preventions dehydration.

MAKING RECIPES HEALTHIER

1. Reduce the amount of fat, sugar, salt (sodium).

With most recipes you can reduce the amount of fat and sugar (and therefore energy) and sodium without losing the flavour. General guidelines to help you leave out certain ingredients without affecting the flavour and consistency of the food include the following:

- *Fat:* Use half the butter/margarine/oil the recipe calls for and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or prune puree.
- *Sugar:* Reduce the amount of sugar by one third to one half. Add spices such as cinnamon, cloves, all spice, nut meg or flavourings such as vanilla extract or almond flavouring to enhance the sweetness of the food.
- *Sodium:* Reduce salt by one-half in baked goods that don't require yeast. For foods that require yeast, do not reduce the amount of salt as it is necessary for leavening. Without salt the foods may become dense and flat. For main dishes, salads, soups and other foods however, you can reduce the salt by one half or eliminate it completely.

2. Make a healthy substitution.

- Use fat free/skim milk or low fat/2% milk instead of full cream milk to make a dessert. If you use fat free instead of full cream milk you will save 265kj and almost 8 grams of fat per cup.

3. Delete an ingredient.

- In some recipes you can delete an ingredient altogether e.g. items that are added out of habit or for appearance such as coconut or nuts which are high in fat and energy.
- Optional condiments such as pickles, olives, cream, butter, mayonnaise, syrup, jelly and mustard as they can have large amounts of sodium, sugar, fat and kilojoules.

4. Change the preparation method.

- Use healthy cooking methods such as braising, boiling, grilling and steaming.
- Instead of frying the ingredients in oil or butter as stated in the recipe, rather try baking, boiling or poaching the food instead.
- Do not add sugar, honey and margarine/butter to your vegetables such as carrots, mixed vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach etc.
- If the recipe directions call for basting the meat or vegetables with oil or meat drippings, rather use wine, fruit juice, vegetable juice or fat-free vegetable stock
- Use non-stick pans or spray pans with non-stick cooking spray.
- Do not add/use oil when cooking pasta, noodles, spaghetti, rice etc.
- Do not add/use oil when cooking mince meat (use a little bit of water instead)
- Add flavour to dishes with herbs, lemon juice, beef /chicken/lamb/vegetable stock, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, Thai sweet chilli sauce, tomato sauce and chutney

5. Add fibre to your meals

- Add vegetables, digestive bran, oat bran, legumes like lentils or sugar beans to dishes.
- Substitute some of the meat in your dish with legumes.

6. Change the portion size

- No matter how much you reduce, switch or omit ingredients, some recipes may still be too high in sugar, fat or salt. In these cases, reduce the amount of food you eat. Smaller portions have less fat, kj and sodium and allow you to eat a wider variety of foods during a meal. Eating a variety of foods well ensure that you get all the energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Preventing weight gain for those that are of a normal weight as well as those who are already overweight or obese should be the main goal for weight management. The next goal should be to achieve a medically meaningful weight loss in overweight and obese individuals. This is normally 5%-10% of their current weight. In other words, there is not a set amount of weight an obese person should lose, nor should they aim to achieve and an unrealistic BMI. Therefore, weight loss goals should be realistic and can be moderate. A weight loss of about 5-10% of body weight is associated with a substantial improvement in blood sugar (glucose) and blood pressure levels and blood fat levels such as cholesterol.

However, the major change is not achieving weight loss but rather maintaining any weight lost over a long period of time. It is generally felt that in order to ensure long-term success with weight loss, emphasis should be placed on slow but permanent losses of 0.5-1.0kg/week. Clients should always be reminded that weight gain occurs slowly over many years. As a result , it is unrealistic to expect rapid weight loss. In addition, the rate of weight loss between individuals varies greatly. From a public health perspective it would be better to prevent obesity or treat it more conservatively.

Energy in Fast Food

MENU ITEM	TOTAL ENERGY CONTENT (kJ)
McDonalds Quarter Pounder Deluxe	2347
Medium French fries	1100
Medium Coke	598
Total energy content of meal	4045
Wimpy burger and chips	3232
Fried chicken, medium breast e.g. KFC	1513
Grilled chicken, medium breast e.g. Nando's	1160
Margherita Pizza (one wedge)	394

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT TIPS

1. Eat a high fibre breakfast cereal/porridge at least 5 mornings per week.

2. Drink 6-8 glasses of water daily. Women at least 1 litre/day and men at least 1.5 litres/day. For example:
- 1 glass when waking up,
- 1 just before leaving home for work,
- 1 when getting home after work,
- After exercising/before eating supper,
- After/during supper

3. Other fluid recommendations:
- Do not drink carbonated regular soft cool drinks such as Coke, Fanta, Sprite
- You can drink diet/artificially sweetened drinks up to 4 servings of a 250ml/day
- <4 cups of coffee/day (without sugar)
- <8 cups tea/day without sugar
- Remember to subtract milk in coffee and tea from milk in the milk allowance showed in the meal plans provided.

4. Use low fat/2% or skimmed/fat free milk.

5. Do not add sugar, margarine or oil to vegetables during or after preparation or cooking. The best method for cooking vegetables is to steam them for a short time period in very little water and to flavour them with herbs.

6. Do not add oil/margarine/fat to rice, pasta, etc during cooking or afterwards.

7. Choose low fat protein sources and:
- Remove skin from chicken
- Cut visible fat from meats
- Try venison/ostrich meats and mince

8. Concentrate on eating slowly.

9. Make an extra effort to increase your daily activity levels.

Fat Content of Protein Sources

VERY LEAN MEAT
Poultry e.g. chicken (no skin)
Fish: Fresh/frozen/canned in water e.g. tuna
Game: duck/venison/ostrich
Fat free cottage cheese
Processed sandwich meats with <1f fat (read labels
Dried beans, lentils, peas (uncooked), baked beans, bean salad with no added oil
Extra lean mince
LEAN MEAT
Beef: lean with visible fat trimmed off e.g. sirloin, steak, roast, T-bone
Pork: lean with visible fat trimmed off e.g. chops, ham
Lamb: lean with visible fat trimmed off, roast, chop
Veal: lean with visible fat trimmed off, roast, chop
Fish
Cheese: low fat cottage cheese
MEDIUM FAT MEAT
Beef: Most beef products e.g. meat loaf, corned beef, short ribs, prime grades of meat with visible fat trimmed
Pork: top loin chop
Lamb: rib roast
Veal
Fried chicken with skin/fried fish
Cheese: low fat feta, mozzarella, ground parmesan
Egg
Vienna/bacon with <5g fat/serving (read labels)
Tofu
HIGH FAT MEAT
Pork: spare ribs, ground pork, pork sausage, bacon rashers
Cheese: all regular cheeses such as cheddar, gouda, Camenbert, Edam, Brie
Processed sandwich meats e.g. salami
Boerewors, Vienna sausage

FIBRE

We require about 30g of fibre per day. 25g for women and 38g for men. When we talk about following a high fibre diet it means eating this amount of fibre per day. The question that arises is what are the advantages related to following a high fibre diet? Some of the advantages include the following:

- Fills you up/reduces hunger levels.
- Influences stomach emptying. Fibre is not digested in your gut. It therefore adds bulk to the gut contents. It slows down stomach emptying due to its ability to thicken the stomach contents. This makes a meal travel slowly through the small intestine. This results in a feeling of fullness for a longer time.

Fibre content of breakfast cereals

Name	**Portion size** (in grams)	**Fibre content** (in grams)
All bran	40	7
High fibre bran	40	13
Special K	40	3
Corn flakes	40	1.2
Rice crispies	40	0.4
Coco pops	40	0.8
Weetbix	2 pieces	4
Pronutro whole wheat	½ cup	11.7
Pruntro original	½ cup	8.4
Jungle oats	40g	4.32
Jungle oatso easy	50g	4
Muesli	60g	6
Maize porridge	½ cup	0.6

Fibre Content of Fruit, Vegetables, Bread and Legumes

Food group	**Food item**	**Fibre content** (in grams)
Fruit	Apple	3.5
	Banana	1.3
	Orange	5.8
	Pear	5
	Peach	3
	Peach dried (1 half)	1
	Grapes (1/2 cup)	1.8
Bread	White	1.2
	Whole wheat (varies)	2.6
Vegetables	Carrots (½ cup cooked)	2.3
	Broccoli (½ cup cooked)	2.0
	Green beans (½ cup cooked)	2.6
	Butternut	2.0
Legumes	White kidney beans (½ cup cooked)	9.7
	Harricot beans (½ cup cooked)	6.4
	Sugar beans (½ cup cooked)	8.2
	Lentils (½ cup cooked)	4.95
	Soybeans (½ cup cooked)	4.1
	Split peas (½ cup cooked)	5.0

HOW TO SPOT A FAD DIET

There is no scientific evidence that supports the use of fad diets to lose weight. These diets are unhealthy as they do not supply all the nutrients needed for good health. Examples of fad diets include the high protein-low carbohydrate diet and diets that emphasise one food like the grapefruit diet. In order to spot a fad diet, watch out for the following:

1. Diets that recommend a very low energy (food intake).
2. The promise of fast, easy and large weight losses in a short period of time (e.g. a loss of more than 1.5 kg/week is not acceptable)
3. Guaranteed success without any effort, hardship or self-discipline. Especially where there is no increase in physical activity and/or energy restrictions mentioned.
4. When emphasis is placed on increasing, decreasing or leaving out specific foods or food groups such as carbohydrates. The motivation usually given is that the foods are either bad/toxic or have "magical" qualities to help you lose weight.
5. When emphasis is placed on not combining certain foods because they cause health and weight problems if combined. The best example is the claim that carbohydrates and proteins should not be eaten in the same meal.
6. Emphasis on any other combination of food or meal patterns that are not in line with the South African guidelines for healthy eating.
7. Claims that certain food components, supplements, hormones, pills and potions help the melt the fat away. Examples include grapefruit, pineapple and apple cider vinegar as well herbal concoctions.

If any of the above diets mentioned worked, there would not be as many obese people worldwide as there currently are. This is because people find it hard to accept the fact that the only way to deal with weight problems effectively and permanently is to change inactivity and unhealthy eating permanently. Sensible weight loss programmes teach people how to make safe, sensible gradual changes in eating and lifestyle habits.

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