

## Losing weight sensibly

Before you start a weight reduction diet it is important that you find out if you really do need to lose weight by either measuring your Body Mass Index (BMI) or waist circumference or by consulting with your doctor. If you have a BMI over 25 or your waist measurement indicates that the fat in your body is stored in places that put your health at greater risk, you should take steps to try and reduce your weight or at least try to stop further weight gain.

If you get the 'ok' from your doctor to go ahead and try and lose weight, decide on a weight loss plan that meets your goals and preferences, or that you can tailor to suit your own lifestyle, and then stick to it. Don't be tempted by crash or faddy diets that don't work in the long term, or tales of other dietary theories and successes because everybody is different – we all lose weight at different rates, and from different parts of the body.

All in all, the key to reaching a healthy weight and staying there is to gradually adjust your diet and lifestyle for life. Losing weight is all about changing your 'energy balance'. The calories in your food and drink give your body the energy it needs. If you take in more calories than your body needs, it will store the extra energy as fat. And, if you take in fewer calories than your body needs during exercise and in your day to day activities, it will burn up the fat your body has stored to make up the difference.

If you don't have the willpower to do it on your own, there are a number of health organisations offering weight loss advice, top tips and encouragement for everyone to work towards being a healthier weight by eating more healthily and increasing activity levels.

For lots of information on how to lose weight sensibly visit the British Dietetic Association (The professional body for dietitians in the UK) <http://www.bdaweightwise.com/index.htm> | or [www.teenweightwise.com](http://www.teenweightwise.com), the British Heart Foundation [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk), Food Standards Agency <http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/asksam/healthydiet/healthyweightq/> or NHS Direct [www.nhsdirect.co.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.co.uk)

Alternatively try a reputable weight loss club like Weight Watchers, Rosemary Conley, Slimming World or if you feel you need more personalised advice, you can always make an appointment to see your GP and ask to be referred to a State Registered NHS Dietitian or visit [www.dietitiansunlimited.co.uk](http://www.dietitiansunlimited.co.uk) – an online resource to help you find and locate qualified freelance State Registered Dietitians in your area.

## Food Diary

People who manage to successfully lose weight and keep it off, often keep an eye on what they are eating, by writing down all that they eat during the day in a 'food diary'. This can be really beneficial if you are struggling to lose weight, as it allows you to see what you are eating and drinking, how much you are eating (your portion sizes) and when and where you are eating. It can also help you to keep track of whether your appetite has changed – whether you are eating more over the day, having larger portion sizes at your main meals, picking at the children's food, drinking more often in the evening or you're simply snacking too often in between meals. It will give you a starting point to assess your current eating habits and see where you can make necessary changes to lose weight.

## Guideline Daily Amounts

If you want to keep tabs on what you're eating, it is useful to know about Guideline Daily Amounts, which give us a guide to what the average adult of normal healthy weight should eat on a daily basis. As getting to the point that I was an expert on where all the toilets were in the high street. I used to love shopping and getting out and about, but these days I have to plan the simplest trip.

Nutrients	Women	Men
Calories	2,000	2,500
Protein	45g	55g
Carbohydrates	230g	300g
Sugars	90g	120g
Fat	70g	95g
Saturates	20g	30g
Salt	6g	6g
Sodium	< 2.4g	<2.4g

For more details on Guideline Daily Amounts visit –

Food and Drink Federation – [www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk)

IGD – The Food and Grocery Experts – [www.igd.com](http://www.igd.com)

## How many calories do you need?

We all have different needs, depending on age, gender, activity levels and body weight.

The younger and more energetic you are, the higher your energy (calorie) requirements. If you are overweight, your energy needs are also higher than those of someone who's a healthy weight. Even so, in order to lose weight, you need to take in fewer calories and/or be more physically active.

Cutting your daily calorie intake by around 500–600 a day will help you to lose weight steadily and healthily – around 1 lb/0.5kg per week. You may lose more, if you're more active too. This is because 1lb/0.5kg body fat contains 3500 calories. So if you want to lose 2lb a week, you simply need to double your calorie saving and lose 7,000 calories in a week or 1,000 calories a day! You should not try to lose any more than this amount in a week. Use the chart below as a guide:

To lose	Cut your daily calorie intake	In one month you could lose
½lb a week	250	2lbs
1lb a week	500	4lbs
1½lbs a week	750	6lbs
2lbs a week	1,000	8lbs

It is worth remembering that most men will lose weight on 1,800 calories a day and most women on 1,500 calories.

Do remember that any change in your calorie intake is hard because you are eating less than your body is used to, but not because you're not eating enough!

Don't get discouraged by the occasional setback. When days don't go according to plan, don't give up. Think positively, focus on your desired body weight and overall goals and get back on track.