

Health Promotion in Motion

Weight Loss Plans

Are you ready to lose a few pounds? You can increase your chance for success by making a plan that includes:

- Smart goals
- Rewards
- Setback plans
- Supportive people



Set Smart Goals

- Setting smart goals is an important first step in weight management. Often, people focus on one goal, weight loss, but it turns out that it is best to focus on eating and physical activity changes. Both lead to long-term weight loss and weight management.
- People who successfully manage their weight select two or three goals at a time, and they set goals that are **specific**, **attainable**, and **forgiving** (less than perfect). For example:



“Be more active” is not specific. “Walk five miles every day” is specific but if you are just starting, it may be too ambitious. “Walk 30 minutes every day” is more attainable, but what will you do if you work late or there’s a thunderstorm during your walk time? “Walk 30 minutes five days each week” is specific, attainable, and forgiving. That’s a goal you can live with!

Sample Goals

Pick one of these goals or make your own:

- I will take a 30 minute walk five days per week.
- I will bring a fruit or veggie snack to work four days per week.
- I will eat one or two veggies at dinner five nights per week.
- I will park at the far end of the parking lot five days per week.
- I will try a new low fat recipe once a month until I have 10 recipes I love.
- I will use the stairs instead of the elevator twice a day.
- I will substitute sugar-sweetened beverages with water and other low-calorie drinks five days per week.



Reward Yourself

- Reward yourself early and often! A small reward each time you meet a small goal is more effective than one big reward for a long, difficult effort.
- Decide how you will reward yourself – without using food as a reward. Your rewards can be **tangible** such as a movie, a music CD, flowers, or a plant. Or, your rewards can be **intangible** such as an afternoon off from work or a quiet hour alone. You know best what will work for you.

Plan on Setbacks

Life comes with setbacks. The important thing is to pre-plan how you will deal with them.

Illness How will you maintain your goals when you get sick?



- **Physical Activity** If you need to stop your physical activity routine while you are sick, be sure you have a plan to get back into your routine as soon as you can. Take care to not over-do the first few days.
- **Fruits and Veggies** Perhaps you can plan to eat applesauce or steamed carrots. If you are too sick for that, give yourself permission to stop eating fruits and vegetables until your stomach feels better. As you begin to feel better, slowly add fruits and veggies back into your meals and snacks. Keep frozen and canned veggies on hand for times when you do not feel like cooking a complicated meal.

Vacations When you go on vacation, don't take a vacation from your weight management plan. Instead, plan ahead and be sure to build in some fun!

- **Physical Activity** Before you leave home, find ways to add activity into your vacation. Look online for local walking tours, hiking trails, and hotel gym equipment. Trips to zoos or amusement parks are a great walking opportunities. In the winter plan to go sledding, ice skating, or snowshoeing. In the summer, plan to walk, hike, or go swimming. Anything you do to add activity into your day will pay off.
- **Fruits and Veggies** Explore restaurant menus online before you leave home. It's wise to save up calories during the day for a daily treat. Ask at restaurants if you can substitute fries for a salad or steamed vegetables. Many salads and broth-based soups will fill you up without adding too many calories. For a quick, low fat meal, try a grocery store salad bar.



Visiting Friends and Family for Holidays and Special Occasions

- **Physical Activity** Plan a group walk or outing. How about tubing or sledding or swimming? Or, consider taking a break from the group and going on a solo walk.
- **Fruits and Veggies** Bring a fruit salad or a vegetable platter to share. Or, cook up a new low fat recipe.

Write Down Your Goals, Rewards, and Setback Plans

- A goal in your head can quickly be forgotten. Write down your goals and keep them where you will see them often – perhaps in two locations. Consider adding a monthly reminder to your electronic calendar.
- Keep your set back plans where you can find them when you need them most.



Build in Support

- Tell at least one other person about your goals, rewards, and setback plans. Select someone who will be supportive. Better yet, select someone who has had success with weight loss and can give you some extra pointers.
- If you find yourself tempted to ditch your plans, ask that same person to give you a little time to help you come up with a new plan – or simply to listen. Sometimes, that's all it takes.