

For more information about healthy weight, please contact **The Weight-control Information Network (WIN)**—a national information service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) of the National Institutes of Health.

Weight-control Information Network

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Reference

Adapted from: National Institutes of Health. *Improving Your Health: Tips for African American Men and Women*. NIH Publication No. 04-3494. August 2004. Revised July 2006.

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Improving Your Health:
**Tips for African
American Patients**

Diabetes

Improving Your Health: Tips for African American Patients

You do not have to stop eating chocolate cake or start running marathons to improve your health. Making small but steady changes in your eating and physical activity habits—over time—may help you lose weight if you need to, feel better, and improve your health. The information in this brochure can help you start to change your physical activity and eating habits. When you make changes to improve your health, you may also move your friends and family to do the same.

Am I overweight?

To find out if your weight is healthy, you can visit **Weight-control Information Network** at www.win.niddk.nih.gov. Their fact sheet, *Weight and Waist Measurement: Tools for Adults*, can help you evaluate your body weight.

What if I think I look fine?

Even if you are overweight according to charts and measures, you may like the size and shape of your body and not want to lose weight. Your friends and family may think you look great too. But the health benefits of getting fit and eating well are clear. Once you decide to lose weight, your loved ones may want to join you on your journey to better health.

Am I risking my health by being overweight?

Being overweight can be dangerous to your health. If you are overweight or obese, you are more likely to develop:

- ▶ Type 2 diabetes
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ Certain forms of cancer

You can help lower your risk for many health problems by losing weight. Losing 5% to 10% of your body weight can help improve your health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 10 to 20 pounds may help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Slow and steady weight loss of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 pounds per week is the safest way to lose weight.



How do I start to lose weight and improve my health?

To start towards a healthy weight and improve your health, try to:

- ▶ Be more physically active
- ▶ Eat healthier

Be more physically active

Regular moderate-intensity physical activity can be fun and help you feel great. When you share physical activity with your friends and family, it can also be a social event. Make it your goal to try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical



activity on most, or better yet, all days of the week. You may need to be physically active for more than 30 minutes a day to help you lose and keep off extra weight.

If you are a man and over age 40, or a woman and over age 50, or have chronic health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, or obesity, talk to your health care provider before starting a vigorous physical activity program.

What is moderate-intensity activity?

- ▶ Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes
- ▶ Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes
- ▶ Dancing fast for 30 minutes

Sometimes starting and sticking with a physical activity program can be a challenge. Figuring out how to beat your physical activity roadblocks may make it easier for you to get and stay active.

Beat your physical activity roadblocks!

If you...	Then try...
Do not have child care	Sharing physical activities such as walking, biking, or playing tag with your child each day
Do not have time or are too busy to be physically active	Doing 10 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity 3 times a day, or putting more energy than normal into activities like housework, yard work, and playing with the kids
Do not like or do not want to exercise	Doing something you enjoy like dancing to the radio, or planning active outings with a friend, family member, or group
Do not feel safe being physically active in your neighborhood	Forming a group of people to walk, jog, or bike together, working out with videos in your home, or walking in a shopping mall

Eat healthier

When you begin to change your eating habits to improve your health, try to:

- ▶ Make healthier food choices
- ▶ Eat just enough food for you

Make healthier food choices

A healthy eating plan includes a variety of foods from every food group. In January 2005, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly

released the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines outline recommendations to promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease through nutritious eating and physical activity.

The guidelines encourage Americans over 2 years of age to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods. Recommended items include fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, and whole grains such as brown rice and whole-wheat bread. The guidelines also recommend a diet low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.



For more information about recommended daily intakes from various food groups, visit www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

Eat just enough for you

- **A healthy eating plan calls for making healthy food choices and eating just enough for you.** Larger amounts of food have more calories. Eating more calories than your body needs may lead to weight gain.
- **Learning about the serving sizes of foods can help you eat just enough for you.** Try to measure your food for a few days. This can help you learn to recognize what 1 serving of a food, such as ½ cup of rice, looks like on your plate.

► **To lose weight, learn to eat fewer calories.**

Do this by selecting foods that are lower in fat and calories from each food group. For example, choose low-fat cheese and extra lean meat. Also, choose plenty of vegetables. They are lower in calories and fat than other foods and can help you feel full.

Lower-fat versions of favorite foods

Instead of this	Try this
Fried chicken	Baked, roasted, broiled, grilled, or oven-fried chicken with the skin removed
Ham hocks, salt pork, or fatback to flavor vegetables	Onions, garlic, low-sodium chicken broth or bouillon, smoked turkey, turkey bacon, or turkey ham. (These meats are high in salt, so use just a little bit.)
Regular ground beef	Extra-lean ground beef or lean ground turkey breast
French fries	Mashed potatoes made with fat-free milk, a baked potato topped with a vegetable or fruit salsa, or a salad
Sour cream	Low-fat or fat-free sour cream or plain yogurt, or low-fat cream cheese
Salt	Spices, herbs, lemon, lime, or vinegar. (Salt is not fattening, but it may contribute to high blood pressure in some people.)