

# Winter Stewardship

## Dieting

DIET is a four-letter word to be sure but it should not be a dirty word. Diet is the food we eat everyday whether it is good for us or not. Losing or maintaining your weight comes down to burning more calories than you consume everyday. There are no magic pills, sweat suits, or machines involved. This article will discuss how many calories you should eat daily and how make healthier food choices and some suggestions for exercise.

How do you figure out your ideal weight? You can always ask your physician or NP what is right for your age and health. There are numerous height and weight charts available online. Body Mass Index (BMI) may also be used. It is a comparison of your height to your weight using a calculation to come up your individual BMI. Normal BMI range is 19 to 25; underweight is a BMI less than 19; overweight is a BMI greater than 25; obesity is a BMI greater than 30. Just be sure to set a reasonable goal for yourself. Consider setting more than one goal if you need to lose a lot of weight. This way you will be less likely to get frustrated. Remember you did not put this weight on overnight so it won't come off that way either. Have non-food rewards for each goal – like getting a book you have wanted to read or take that special day trip. Get a friend to join you, as there is strength in numbers.

Now that you know what you should weigh how do you get there? There are so many weight loss plans that it can make you dizzy. Always check with your healthcare provider before starting any diet, especially if you have any serious medical conditions. Plans that have consistently received high marks in studies on this subject include Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, and the South Beach diet. The diets to avoid are those the have you omit an entire food group such as carbohydrates or fats. Losing weight is about learning how to eat foods you like in reasonable amounts. Do not skip meals, especially breakfast. The body needs fuel to burn calories. Each meal should have some lean protein, whole grain carbohydrates, a small amount of a healthy fat and fruit or vegetables. You should also plan for healthy snacks during the day. Trying to wait until dinner if you are really hungry is dangerous to a diet. Planned snacks allow you to feel less tempted to reach for the potato chips or that candy bar that is calling your name. One-fourth cup

a raw almonds, pistachios in the shell or walnuts or try a piece of string cheese or a piece of fresh fruit between meals.

Don't forget to drink plenty of water everyday. Most people should drink 2-3 liters of fluid daily. This means not just water but all the other fluids you consume. Fluids to avoid are juices as they have little nutrition and most of the commercially prepared ones have some form of sugar in them. Soda, both regular and diet, have been shown to increase your appetite and help you pack on the pounds. Limit these to special occasions and small amounts.

Making healthy food choices when you eat out can be daunting. Just remember to watch for the following healthier choice words on the menu: baked, broiled, braised, marinara, primavera, poached, roasted, steamed, stir-fried (ask to use less oil), vinaigrette. Don't be afraid to ask for light options. Most restaurants will substitute vegetables for that giant loaded baked potato. Always get any sauce or dressing on the side.

Exercise is important in building muscles that burn more calories. This is a win-win situation. As you get stronger you burn more calories so you can do more. Again, check with your physician or NP before starting any new program. Walking is a great way to start an exercise program. Make sure you wear shoes that support your feet and cushion your step. Start with 10 to 15 minutes a day and gradually build to 20-30 minutes daily. Many shopping malls open the common area early for "Mall Walkers". This is a great idea if you need a flat, smooth surface for walking. If you have sore, stiff joints or if you have never done any exercise consider joining a gym that has certified athletic trainers. These folks know how to safely help you reach your goal. Consider aquatic exercise classes that take the strain off achy joints.

In conclusion, eating right and exercising can keep you healthy and strong. Making small changes in what and how you eat can make a huge difference on the scale.