

Healthy habits count.

Your complete guide
to healthier eating
and exercise.





Maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall health.

The best way to do that is to improve diet and exercise habits — but it can be tough to know where to start. That's where your health plan comes in. We'll teach you about the health risks of being overweight, how to read food labels, and how to understand the importance of diet and exercise. Plus, we'll give you some resources you can use to make grocery shopping and meal prep fun for the whole family.

All right — let's get moving.

First, it's important to define what body mass index (BMI) means.

What is body mass index (BMI) and what does it mean?

BMI is a measure that helps gauge a healthy weight based on a person's height and age. A BMI of 30 or higher is considered "obese."

If someone falls into the "obese" range of BMI, it may be time to start thinking about changing some diet and exercise habits. These extra pounds can put people at risk for chronic health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.



1 in 5
children have obesity.*

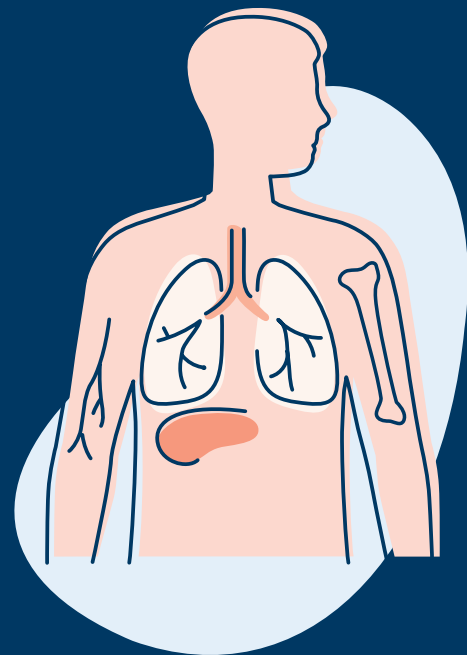
A higher BMI range can be caused by many things.

Some common factors include:

- Regularly eating high-calorie, low-nutrient food and drinks.
- Too much screen time, which keeps people from being physically active.
- Eating to cope with problems or to deal with emotions.
- Limitations on time and resources.

* Source: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

Being overweight can have some serious health consequences.



It puts people at higher risk for serious health conditions, like:

- Metabolic syndrome – a cluster of conditions including high blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and waist circumference that can increase your risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and other health problems.
- High blood pressure and cholesterol, which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- Breathing problems such as asthma or sleep apnea.
- Joint problems or musculoskeletal pain.
- Fatty liver disease, gallstones, and acid reflux.
- Early-onset puberty or menstruation.

People may also experience social and emotional issues related to weight, like:

- Anxiety and depression.
- Low self-esteem and quality of life.
- Bullying and stigma.
- Feeling isolated from friends and social events.

Making lifestyle changes now can reduce the risk for these diseases and chronic conditions in the future and, most importantly, help people live longer, healthier lives.

What you need to know about nutrition.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 9g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160 mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D	10%
Calcium 260 mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

Knowing what's in food can make meal choices easier.

The best way to find out what's in a food is to read the Nutrition Facts label. It can help you choose foods that are high in good nutrients and low in things like saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, and added sugars.

And it can help you understand and control portion sizes.

The Nutrition Facts label information is based on a serving size that a person would typically eat. Be careful – many packages contain more than one serving. That means if you choose to double a serving size, you will get double the amount of everything else on the label.



How to read a food label.

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Sodium	160 mg 7%
Total Carbohydrate	37g 13%
Dietary Fiber	4g 14%
Total sugars	12g
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein	3g
Vitamin D	10%
Calcium	260 mg 20%
Iron	8mg 45%
Potassium	235mg 6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Serving size

All the nutrition facts listed on the label are based on serving size. “Servings per container” are the total number of servings in a food package, based on the serving size.

A handy guide to serving sizes:

We know visualizing serving sizes can be tricky. Luckily, your hand is a great tool to measure your food.

Calories

Calories measure the amount of energy in a serving of food.

Remember, that number indicates the calories in one serving size, not necessarily the entire package.

- **Fingertip** = 1 teaspoon of butter, margarine, mayonnaise, or oils
- **Thumb** = 1 to 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, sour cream, hard cheese, or salad dressing
- **1 Handful** = 1 to 2 ounces of nuts, pretzels, or crackers
- **Palm** = 3 to 4 ounces of meat, fish, poultry, pasta, potatoes, or cooked vegetables
- **Fist** = 1 cup of fresh fruit, raw vegetables, salad, cereal, soup

Percent Daily Value (%DV)

This value can help you determine if a serving of food is high (20% or more) or low (5% or less) in a nutrient. Your daily value may be higher or lower, depending on your calorie needs.

Here's a quick breakdown of the nutrients on the label.

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Saturated fat

Saturated fat is found in many animal products, coconut and palm oils, and foods made with these items like baked goods. These foods can increase your risk of developing cardiovascular disease, so you should limit the amount in your diet.

Trans fat

Trans fat is found in highly processed foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils such as baked goods, margarine, and snack foods. These foods can raise cholesterol and increase risk for cardiovascular disease, so you should try to eat foods with 0 grams of trans fats.

Sodium

Sodium is a component of salt that's found in many pre-packaged foods. Excess sodium intake can increase your risk for high blood pressure, so you should aim for 1,500 mg (about 2/3 teaspoon) or less per day.

Dietary fiber

Dietary fiber is found in whole grain products, fruits, vegetables, and legumes and can help lower cholesterol levels, control blood glucose, support digestive functioning, and make you feel full.

Added sugars

Added sugars are the sugars and syrups added to foods during processing. Added sugar contributes calories but not nutrients, so eating and drinking too many added sugars can make it hard to maintain a healthy weight.

Protein

Protein is found in many animal and plant foods like poultry, seafood, beans, eggs, nuts, and seeds. These foods provide long-lasting energy and help your body grow and repair.

Let's not forget about those vitamins and minerals.

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Vitamins and minerals provide nutrients that support many important processes in your body. Eating enough of these vitamins and minerals can help reduce the risk of some diseases and chronic conditions, so try to eat foods with a high percent daily value of these nutrients.

Percent Daily Value (%DV)

This value can help you determine if a serving of food is high (20% or more) or low (5% or less) in a nutrient. Certain nutrients, such as trans fat, total sugars, and protein do not have a %DV.



Now that you know what to look for, you can make some healthier choices.

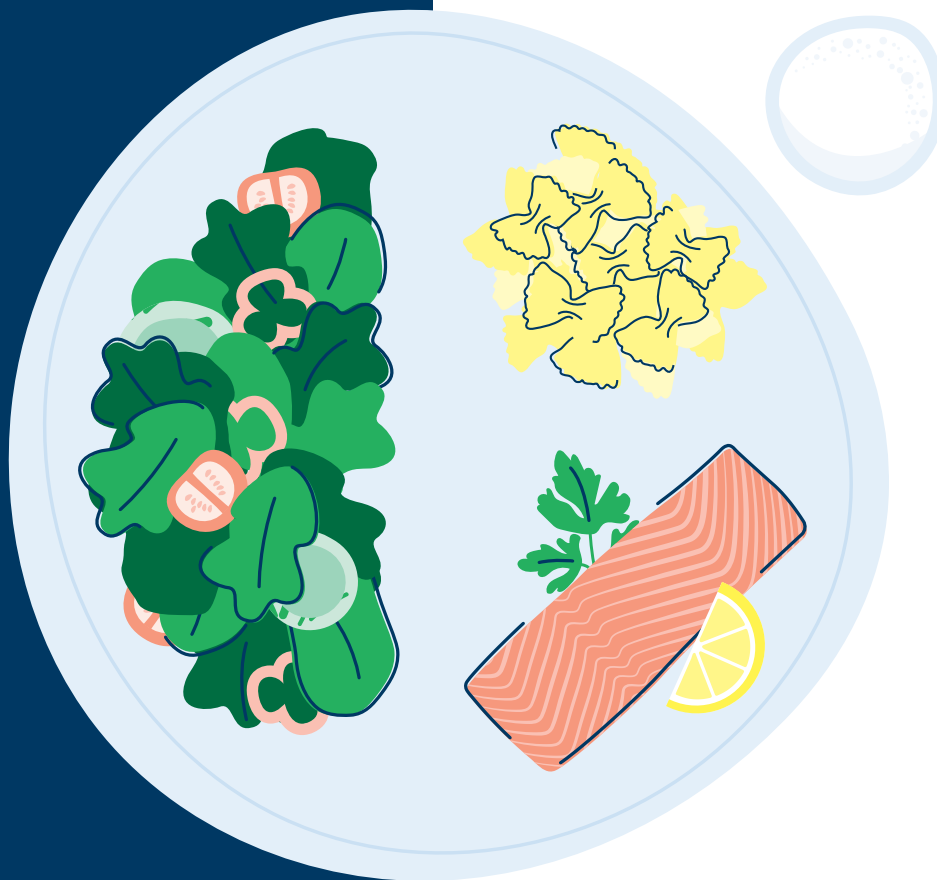


Follow a healthy eating pattern.

Eating patterns are the combination of foods and drinks eaten over time. A healthy eating pattern includes:

- Vegetables of all types – dark green, red, orange, starchy, and other vegetables.
- Proteins including lean meats, poultry, and eggs; seafood; beans, peas, and lentils; and nuts, seeds, and soy products.
- Fruits, especially whole fruit.
- Oils, including those from plants – canola, sesame, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower. Oils also are naturally present in nuts, seeds, seafood, olives, and avocados.
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grain.
- Dairy, including fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, and/or lactose-free versions and fortified soy beverages and yogurt as alternatives.

Create a colorful plate for meals and snacks.



A colorful plate is one that includes:

50% fruits and vegetables.

Eating fruits and vegetables reduces total calories and fat intake, helps you feel full longer to prevent overeating, and gives you energy.

25% protein.

Protein is important for energy, but it should not be the focus of the meal or snack. Choose protein sources that are low-fat.

25% grains.

Carbohydrates deliver many important nutrients, but skip the refined carbohydrates in foods like white bread, pizza, pasta, and white rice. Try to focus on whole grains, brown rice, beans, and nuts instead.

Dairy.

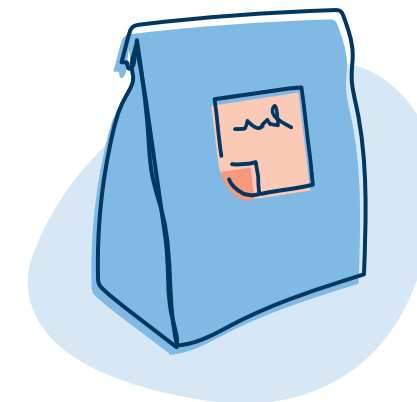
It's also important to include three servings of dairy each day. Dairy could include milk, yogurt, or cottage cheese.

How to manage meal sizes.

Controlling portion sizes is one of the easiest ways to make sure to eat the right amount of food.

Here are a few helpful tips for portioning out meals:

- 50% of your plate should be vegetables or fruit, 25% should be protein, and 25% should be whole grains.
- Use a smaller dinner plate to make it appear fuller.
- Try to keep the serving dishes out of reach to control how easy it is to get second helpings.
- Wait to have seconds, as it can take up to 15 minutes for the stomach to know it's full.
- Serve popcorn, chips, and other foods packaged in large bags in a single serving bowl based on the serving size noted on the bag.
- Eating out can be challenging because restaurants tend to serve bigger portion sizes. The best way to control the portion is to cut the meal in half and ask for a to-go container before digging in. The leftovers can be used as a meal for the next day, and you'll save money, too.



Here are the suggested serving sizes for each food group.

How much should a person eat each day? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends these serving sizes for a 2,000-calorie diet. Talk to your doctor about the daily number of calories that's best for you.

Food	Quantity
Fruits	2 cups daily
Vegetables	2 ½ cups daily
Dark green vegetables	1 ½ cups per week
Red and orange vegetables	5 ½ cups per week
Beans and peas	1 ½ cups per week
Starchy vegetables	4 cups per week
Other vegetables	4 cups per week
Grains	6 ounces daily
Whole grains	3 ounces daily
Enriched grains	3 ounces daily
Proteins	5 ½ ounces daily
Seafood	8 ounces per week
Meat, poultry, eggs	26 ounces per week
Nuts, seeds, soy products	5 ounces per week
Dairy	3 cups daily
Oils	1/8 cup daily
Maximum calories from solid fats and added sugars	240 calories daily

What does a serving size look like?

Refer to the handy serving size examples on page 10.

Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day.

Eating breakfast helps promote healthier eating and exercise habits overall. Plus, after hours without food, the body needs nourishment to kickstart its metabolism — giving it energy to start a new day. Skipping this important meal can cause fatigue, restlessness, or irritability.

For a high-energy breakfast, choose foods rich in whole grains, fiber, and protein and low in added sugars, like:

- Whole-grain cereal, skim milk, and berries.
- Oatmeal topped with nuts, bananas, and raisins.
- Whole wheat English muffin or waffle with peanut butter and fruit.
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fruit, unsweetened fruit sauce, or fruit canned in juice.
- Yogurt parfait with whole-grain cereal, low-fat yogurt, and fruit (non-fat Greek yogurt has more protein than regular yogurt).
- Whole-wheat pita filled with scrambled eggs, peppers, and salsa.

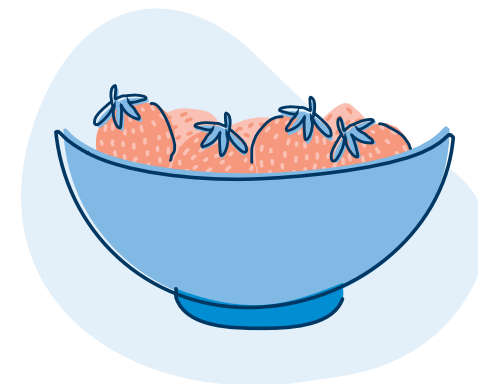
If you don't have much time to make a meal, here are some grab-and-go ideas:

- Hard-boiled egg.
- Low-sugar protein or granola bar.
- Yogurt cups or smoothies.
- Low-sodium cottage cheese cups.
- String cheese.
- Fresh fruit.
- Trail mix of cereal, nuts, and dried fruits in a sandwich bag.

Make healthy snacks count.

Choosing the right snacks is important.

Snacks can provide extra energy to get through the day. In fact, snacking helps boost the metabolism because it takes energy to digest food.



Here's what to look for in a healthy snack:

The healthiest snacks have the right combination of protein, fat, and carbohydrates for long-lasting energy without adding extra, empty calories. Foods like soda, chips, and candy have too much sugar and fat and can make you feel tired.

The best times to snack:

1. Mid-morning, between breakfast and lunch
2. After school, between lunch and dinner

Avoid snacking in the evening or before bed.

Try one of these healthy substitutes the next time a craving kicks in.

Instead of candy, choose:

- Apple slices dipped in peanut butter.
- Fresh fruit with a small container of yogurt or cottage cheese.
- Bananas or grapes with fat-free or low-fat milk or low-fat cheese.
- Blueberries with fat-free vanilla pudding.
- A smoothie made with yogurt, fresh fruit, ice cubes, and a splash of 100% juice.
- Frozen grapes or banana blended and topped with chopped nuts.
- Unsweetened dried fruit or freeze-dried fruit and nuts.

Instead of instant noodle soup, which is high in salt and fat, opt for:

- One cup of vegetable or bean soup.
- One cup of hot cereal, like oatmeal, topped with fresh fruit.

Instead of fast-food burgers or fries, fill up with:

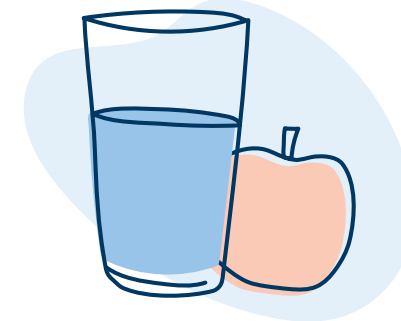
- Oven-baked potato wedges dipped in salsa.
- A slice of veggie pizza.
- A hard-boiled egg and whole-grain crackers.
- A veggie burger.

Instead of chips, try one of these crunchy snacks:

- Oven-roasted crunchy chickpeas.
- Whole-grain crackers and string cheese.
- Raw veggies dipped in hummus or low-fat dressing.
- Low-fat rice cakes with peanut butter.
- Sliced apple or pear with low-fat cheese.
- Celery with peanut butter.
- Cucumbers with fat-free onion dip.
- Baby carrots with fat-free ranch dressing.
- Whole-grain cereal and fat-free milk.

Avoid drinks like sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, or juice — they're filled with sugar and empty calories. Instead, choose:

- Water or sparkling water with fruit, veggies, or herbs for flavor. Try slices of orange, lemons, watermelon, cucumbers, or mint.
- Fat-free milk.



Meal planning can make all the difference.



Planning can help prevent last-minute meal choices that may not be healthy, like fast food or highly processed foods. The next time you go grocery shopping, keep these things in mind:

1. Check your refrigerator and pantry for foods you have and make a shopping list for the things you'll need to buy.
2. When you shop, take advantage of seasonal items and buy as much fresh produce as possible.
3. Look for time-savers, like fruits and vegetables that are already chopped, diced, shredded, or partially prepped.
4. Choose low-sodium alternatives when possible.
5. Buying foods that you can grill, broil, or steam makes preparation quick and easy and keeps calorie intake low.

Make meal planning fun.

Get yourself a planner. It can help get you inspired to write menus and shopping lists.

Designate a theme for each day. Taco Tuesdays, Sandwich Saturdays, the possibilities are endless.

Make a fun menu board to display. Use it to announce the food you'll have that day.

Get the whole family involved. Ask them what foods they want to buy or what types of healthy snacks they'd like to have around the house.

Get cooking. Have the whole family cook a meal together.

Movement matters, too.

Physical activity is essential for good health and maintaining a healthy weight.

Plus, it has a lot of physical, psychological, and social benefits. Having a family exercise routine can help:

- Build strong bones and tone muscles.
- Prevent heart disease.
- Reduce blood pressure.
- Raise HDL (good) cholesterol.
- Reduce the risk of diabetes and some kinds of cancer.
- Promote self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Connect with friends and family.
- Control weight.
- Provide energy.
- Improve sleep.
- Fight boredom.



Try your best to manage your family's screen time.



We know — that can be tough with children and teens.

The truth is, many people spend up to six hours a day in front of a screen, when the recommended limit is only two hours a day.* The time spent on a phone, watching television, and playing video games should be limited. Too much time with screens means less time for physical activity.

* Source: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

It's all about balance.

While we know it's unrealistic to completely eliminate screen time, you should try and set limits for your family. Balance screen time with physical activity to maintain a healthy body and have more time for personal interaction with family and friends.

Make fitness fun.

We all stick with things we enjoy.

So when it comes to physical activity, choose something you actually like. For example, if your child doesn't like school sports, they can always check out the local YMCA or Boys & Girls Club. Designating family exercise times throughout the week is also a great option.

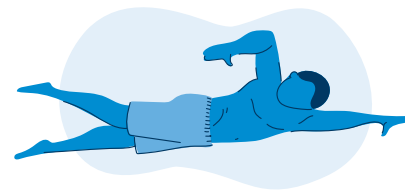
Here are some other ideas to get moving:

- Basketball
- Biking
- Dancing
- Games like tag
- Gardening
- Jumping rope
- Hula hooping
- Kickboxing
- Rollerblading
- Skateboarding
- Soccer
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Yoga



One hour a day can make a big difference.

It's recommended that children and adults get at least one hour of physical activity a day, including:



- Activities that raise the heart rate like walking, swimming, or running.



- Activities that strengthen the muscles like climbing or pushups.



- Activities that strengthen the bones like running or jumping.

If it seems hard to fit in a full hour of physical activity, break up the hour into 10- or 15-minute periods spread throughout the day and increase these time periods as you become used to the exercise.

You can also check out this website for more ideas:

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children/index.htm>

To sum it up — healthier eating and exercise can improve overall health.

Improving diet and exercise habits is one of the best things you can do to improve your physical and mental health, now and in the future. We're here to help you take the first step.

There's no one-size-fits-all method to any of this. Making small changes to the way we eat and how much we exercise can lead to better health. Be sure to talk with a doctor to figure out what works best for your situation. The doctor can also refer you to a dietitian or nutritionist for added support. In the meantime, you can check out some of the helpful resources below.

For general information on weight management and physical activity:

[fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

fueluptoplay60.com/tools

[healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

[choosemyplate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov)

The above constitutes a sampling of organizations that provide information about healthy eating and exercise. Other organizations may be available in your area. We do not recommend or endorse any one organization.

Notes

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