A HEALTHY APPROACH TO WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Finding What Works For You

Many factors affect a person's weight, ranging from genetics to lifestyle. There is no single solution to helping any one of us to be the most healthy weight we can be. However there are some essential components of a quality weight management program, which are described below. To work out what combination of these components will be most effective for you, take some time to consider:

Do you think that a lot of your eating is something we call 'non-hungry eating' (for example, eating when not physically hungry could be due to things such as boredom, habit, sadness, feeling bad about your body)?
If so, you’ll probably find that nutritional advice alone will not help you manage your weight. Doctors, psychologists and counsellors who specialise in this area can help you address the underlying issues and regain control over your eating.

Do you think you have gained weight because your lifestyle has made it more difficult to eat healthily and be physically active?
If so, support from qualified fitness and nutrition professionals, who are experienced in the area of weight management and behaviour change may be helpful.

Why do you want to lose weight? Do you think you could be trying to achieve an unrealistic size and shape, which you think might solve a whole range of life problems/difficulties?
If this is the case, it may be helpful to consider other ways of improving the quality of your life that are not so dependent on your weight or shape.

Components of a sound weight management plan - Which ones are the most important for you?

Behavioural change techniques
Most of us need some help making lifestyle changes. Helpful strategies include finding appropriate support, self-monitoring, problem solving and learning how to deal with the times when we go off focus.

Learning how to reduce non-hungry eating
Eating when we are not physically hungry is a major contributor to weight gain for many people. If this is true for you, it may well be helpful to learn ways of dealing with the underlying reasons for non-hungry eating. This could involve simply being more aware of the non-hungry eating you might be doing, making more time for self nurturing (the more you can nurture yourself, the less likely it will be that you will need to depend on food), or learning stress management techniques (as learning effective ways to cope with the demands of life can help reduce stress-related eating or drinking).

Body Image and self-esteem
Many people want to lose weight to improve the way they feel about their bodies and to boost their self-esteem. It is important to learn how to improve your body image and self esteem regardless of what happens to your weight. Developing a positive attitude to your body will also motivate you to want to look after your body, rather than punish it through strict diets.
Regular and enjoyable physical activity
Finding an enjoyable form of physical activity that can be integrated into your lifestyle should be one of the highest priorities in a weight management program.

Nutrition education
Sound nutrition education will help protect you from the vast array of misinformation that exists about food and weight loss. Individual support can also provide you with advice about all the nutrients you need that take into account your current eating habits, lifestyle, food preferences, ethnicity and any medical conditions.

Cooking and shopping tips
These will give you the 'how to' of selecting and preparing nutritious and tasty meals.

... And don't forget - that while you're aiming to be the healthiest weight you can, it's important to be accepting of your inherited size and shape.

Acknowledgement to Body Image and Health Inc