

Healthy Living

Fact Sheet



Ideal Weight

Dr John G. Clark, MD

What is ideal weight?

Ideal weight is the weight at which a person's body is the healthiest and least likely to succumb to disease. Ideal body weight is calculated based on Body Mass Index or BMI. To find a person's BMI, the height in centimeters and weight in kilograms must be determined. BMI then would be the weight in kilograms divided by the height in centimeters squared. A BMI between 18.5 and 25 is considered ideal body weight for males or females. BMI charts can also be found on the Internet.

What causes an excessive BMI?

An excessive BMI is often the result of a mismatch between energy consumption (in the form of food calories) and energy expenditure (through exercise or metabolism). A major driving factor in this equation is the ever-increasing consumption of refined, nutritionally poor, processed foods. People eat food that is low in nutrition and their body's nutrient requirements are not met even though their energy requirements are, leaving them hungry. In turn, they eat more, yet are never satisfied. There are 150-kilogram people walking around who are malnourished and still hungry, craving food continuously.

Encouragement

*"I can do all things
through Christ who
strengthens me."*

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)



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Natural lifestyle approach

Dietary Considerations

Appetite and food cravings are best satisfied with nutrient-dense foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, and plenty of pure water. A diet consisting of 80% fresh fruit and vegetables is recommended. It is especially important to avoid processed oils (like cooking oils, butter, margarine, and high fat condiments), animal products, and refined carbohydrates such as sugar, white flour products (such as pasta), white rice, and boxed cereals.

Exercise

Exercise helps maintain muscle and bone mass, while fat is lost.

Water

Many people are dehydrated, and eat food to quench their thirst. Thirst is often mistaken for hunger. Good hydration helps avoid this source of weight gain. Three litres or more of water a day is recommended.



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Mind–Body Connection

Jenifer Skues
Health Psychologist

Why is it so hard to maintain an ideal weight?

People with weight problems have increased over the years for various reasons. The majority of these people suffer from being overweight, while the minority suffer from being under weight. So what is the ideal weight? This is hard to answer, as there is a weight range we can be in that is considered healthy. Not one specific weight fits all. There are also many reasons why people struggle with weight problems. I have found that certain doctor-prescribed medications can cause weight gain or, at times, weight loss. Our metabolic rate combined with what and how much we eat is also a factor. Hidden fats and sugars in foods that we're not aware of can cause weight gain. Overeating and not recognizing when you have had enough can also stack the weight on. Not getting enough exercise can be an issue as we need to burn more kilojoules than what we consume. Research has also found that insomnia and sleep problems can affect our weight. When I'm helping someone get to their ideal weight there are many factors to take into consideration. A few things I recommend to maintain your ideal weight is to work out your metabolic rate (can do this online) and eat the right proportions of carbohydrates, protein and fats (no free fats or oils) for your specific needs. Work on your sleep hygiene if this is a problem. Chew your food really well, don't overeat and enjoy what you eat.

Encouragement

*"There is nothing better
for people than to eat
and drink, and to find
enjoyment in their work.
I also perceived that this
ability to find enjoyment
comes from God."*

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (NET)

What is the psychology of eating?

Many people who struggle to maintain their ideal weight have psychological components driving the problem. For example comfort eating is a major problem for many people. This is learned either from our models in early childhood or by finding solace via our taste buds when upset. Our first reaction when we are born is the sucking response to keep us alive, as well as for bonding with our mother who comforts us. Hence, as we go through life eating can become a comforter to calm our emotions and help us to feel secure. Some people eat too much or too little as it is sometimes the one thing that they can take control of, especially if they perceive that they are being controlled by significant others. Abuse and early childhood trauma can also be a precursor to weight problems because it's what they can control. Putting on weight can also deter the perpetrators. Our attitude to food and meal times (childhood programming) can be a weight gain factor. Your digestive system responds to what you think, how you feel and your environment. For example many people I meet who struggle to find their ideal weight have been given messages such as having to eat everything on their plate otherwise they're a bad child, have had a dieting parent or a parent obsessive about weight, as well as the messages they're given by family and peers. Furthermore, if anyone has been deprived of food when growing up, they sometimes eat as though it's their last meal, which is a survival mechanism. We can also be addicted to certain foods to help manage our emotions. Unfortunately we can't stop eating or we won't survive, so it's a real challenge at times to maintain your ideal weight. However the challenge is worth it.

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Try some of these tips to work on maintaining your ideal weight!

1. Exercise: Motivation to move

Many people aren't motivated to exercise. Motivation takes action. If you do nothing then you will procrastinate, lose energy, become lethargic, feel depressed and probably turn more to comfort foods. This of course can contribute to weight gain. You need to apply your will and choose to take action (don't think about it just do it) and motivation will follow. Research has found that walking is one of the best exercises to help manage your weight, especially in the morning. If you want to go for a walk don't set too high a goal. For example start walking 2-3 times a week. Preparation is important. Get your walking clothes and shoes ready to put on when you get up and organize a simple breakfast including fruit and wholegrain (remember your blood sugars are low when you get up). Upon rising focus your attention on the action of getting ready to go for that walk then you are more likely to do it and maintain it.

2. Satiation level: How much is too much?

Many people who struggle to lose weight overeat and no longer recognize when they are full. Too much food in the stomach can end up as fat cells and cause digestive problems. Of course recognizing when you are full is the answer to this problem. Work on eating slowly and thoroughly chew your food. Dr Clark suggested chew your food until it "squishes" through your teeth, there's a good challenge for you. This helps digestion but also gives the stomach time to register how full it is. When you think you've had enough stop and have a short break to see if you're still hungry. It takes about 10 minutes for the brain and body to give you that feedback. Rule of thumb, don't eat more than you need. In fact stopping just before you feel full is best. Also eating in between meals contributes to weight gain and digestive problems so cut out the snacks.

3. Mindless v/s mindful eating

There is a term now used in psychology called mindfulness. All it means is being focused in the present moment. How often do you try and remember what you just had for lunch, or worse still have you eaten anything at all? Consistency with meals and enjoying what you eat makes a huge difference in maintaining your ideal weight as well as your wellbeing. Practice focusing your attention on what you are eating by using your 5 senses including sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. If you turn your senses on and are present at each meal then your whole system will enjoy it, your digestion will improve, and your body will love you.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet presents principles designed to promote good health and is not intended to take the place of personalised professional care. The opinions and ideas expressed are those of the writers. Readers are encouraged to draw their own conclusions about the information presented.