

FitFacts®

Keeping Your Weight in Check

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE AVERAGE AMERICAN ADULT GAINS 1-2 POUNDS EVERY YEAR? THIS MAY NOT SEEM LIKE MUCH, BUT OVER TIME THIS RAISES OUR RISK FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES, HEART ATTACK, STROKE, AND CANCERS. THIS EXTRA WEIGHT ALSO MAKES US FEEL TIRED, ACHY, AND EVEN DEPRESSED.

It turns out that these added pounds are not a 'normal' part of aging. A 20 year study of over 120,000 U.S. men and women revealed that people who gained weight over time shared these not-so-healthy practices:

- Regular consumption of refined grains, processed foods, sugary drinks, and alcohol
- Low physical activity levels
- Frequent TV watching (this could also include other sedentary activities such as computer time and video games)

On the other hand, the same study showed that people who maintained a healthy weight had the following healthy behaviors:

- A diet full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and yogurt
- Six to eight hours of sleep each night
- Regular physical activity

So what can you do to be a weight-maintainer and not a weight-gainer? Stay at a healthy weight through your adult years by adopting these 5 healthy habits:

1. **Focus on foods.** Identify the refined, processed foods in your diet that need to go. Choose healthier, whole grain carbohydrates to take the place of white breads, white rice, white pasta, baked goods and sugary cereals. Embrace a diet filled with fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy, lean protein and healthy fats. [DASH](#), [MEDITERRANEAN DIET](#)
2. **Ditch the drinks.** Drinking your calories is an easy way to gain weight. Substitute water and other low calorie beverages for sugary drinks like soda and juice. Drink alcohol sparingly.
3. **Engage in exercise.** Regular physical activity is an absolute must. Aim for 150 minutes of physical activity per week (but if you don't get that much, do as much as you can!). Pick a few activities that you enjoy so it is easier to stick with and doesn't get boring.
4. **Have healthy hobbies.** Turn off the TV or computer and engage in free-time activities that keep you moving. If you have a few favorite TV shows, do jumping jacks or crunches during commercial breaks.



5. **Don't skimp on sleep.** Getting enough sleep (6-8 hours each night) helps your body function at its best and gives you the mental energy to make healthy food choices.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

Mozaffarian, D., Hao, T., Rimm, E.B., Willett, W.C., & Hu, F.B. (2011). Changes in diet and lifestyle and long-term weight gain in women and men. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 364 (25), 2392-2404.