

FitFacts®

Weight loss: Tipping the Scales in the Right Direction

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE ON A ROLLER COASTER OF LOSING AND GAINING THOSE SAME UNWANTED POUNDS OVER AND OVER? IF SO, YOU ARE NOT ALONE. MOST PEOPLE IN YOUR SITUATION HAVE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY DIETS, PILLS, SHAKES, AND GADGETS THEY HAVE TRIED IN HOPES OF FINALLY LOSING WEIGHT FOR GOOD. IT'S TIME TO STOP SEARCHING FOR A MAGIC CURE AND LEARN WHAT IT REALLY TAKES TO LOSE POUNDS AND KEEP THEM OFF. THESE 6 STEPS OFFER A NO-NONSENSE APPROACH TO LOSING THE WEIGHT FOR GOOD:

1. **Understand weight loss.** There is no other way around it—in order to lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you consume. One pound of body fat equals 3,500 calories. If you want to lose 1 pound per week you need to average a caloric deficit of 500 calories per day. Ideally, this is done by increasing physical activity and making some cutbacks in your diet. Realize that the weight will come off more quickly at first, but then slow down.
2. **Calculate your daily caloric requirement.** The amount of calories that you need in a day depends on your basal metabolic rate (BMR). This is the amount of calories your body uses at rest. BMR accounts for roughly 60 to 75% of all the calories you burn in a given day.

Calculate your BMR and daily caloric needs:

Set a realistic weight loss goal. A goal of losing no more than 1 to 2 pounds per week is realistic and attainable. Larger, quicker weight loss will most likely be regained.

3. **Determine your strategy.** No matter what your weight loss goal is, the best approach is to create a caloric deficit by decreasing your caloric intake and increasing your physical activity. For example, to create a 500 calorie deficit per day, cut back 250 calories from your diet and burn 250 calories doing a physical activity that you enjoy. [If you are considering a specific diet program or regimen, refer to our Fit Fact “10 Tips for Choosing a Quality Weight Loss Program”]
4. **Find ways to cut back on calories.** Some suggestions include:
 - Decrease portion sizes
 - Eat smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day
 - Avoid skipping breakfast
 - Don't drink your calories (i.e. soda, juice, alcohol, coffee with cream)
 - Substitute healthy fats for unhealthy saturated and [trans fats](#)



- Eat the “[My Plate](#)” way-load up on fruits, veggies, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and good [carbs](#)
 - Be consistent throughout the week instead of dieting more strictly on certain days of the week
5. **Burn more calories by getting active.** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week. ([link to fit fact starting exercise plan](#)). Adding strength training will also elevate your basal metabolic rate, so that you burn more calories even when you are resting. Check with your health care provider if you are not sure if you are healthy enough to begin exercising.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

[American Council on Exercise](#)