

# Food Fact Sheet: Weight Loss

*Want to lose weight and keep it off? Have you ever tried to lose weight but found it difficult? Lost a little and then regained it?*

If you have then this fact sheet is for you. Here you'll find advice and tools that will help you start to achieve the goals you want.

First of all, write down your reasons and motivations for wanting to lose weight and change your lifestyle. It's important that you decide it is the right time to make changes to your lifestyle.

## So do you feel ready?

If the answer is yes, these tools will help you start your journey:

- Learn more about your eating patterns by keeping a food and mood diary for a week. In this diary record everything you eat and drink, at what times and how you were feeling. For example, 'a cup of tea with one teaspoon of sugar and semi-skimmed milk at 3pm (feeling stressed)'. By looking back over this you will be able to see how times, places, people and your mood affect your food intake.
- Choose two or three small changes you can start with and write yourself an action plan with clear goals to follow, for example: I will increase my fruit intake and do this by having two pieces of fruit per day. When successful, you can move on to more changes or build on the ones you've already established.
- Make a list of non-food related tasks that will distract you from thinking about eating to use when you fancy a treat or because you're bored. For example, reading a chapter of your book or tidying 'that' drawer.
- Ask for the right support – it could be a friend, partner, health professional, group or website. This not only keeps you inspired but helps you through tough times.

## Set yourself realistic goals:

- Realistic goals are achievable and success boosts confidence in your ability to lose weight.
- Losing just 5-10% of your weight has massive health benefits.
- A weight loss of between 0.5 to 2 pound (lb) a week is a safe and realistic target.
- Remember to make your goals measurable so you know when you have achieved them.
- It's not just about your weight on the scales, losing inches from your waist helps to lower the risk of conditions like type two diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Think about goals that are not weight orientated – something else you would like to achieve such as being more active with your children or taking the stairs without getting out of breath.
- Don't forget activity. Doing more every day not only helps you burn more calories but can boost mood and improves long term success.

Small changes make a big difference in the long term.

Remember there is no quick fix. People who successfully lose weight and keep it off stay realistic and develop techniques to make their new lifestyle and activity habits an enjoyable way of life.

## Follow a healthy eating plan:

Plan ahead to help ensure you have the right foods to hand, at the right times.

- Start the day with a healthy breakfast. People who eat breakfast find it easier to control their weight and are slimmer than those who don't.
- Eat three regular, balanced meals a day. Try to have meals at planned times during the day and only include snacks if you are physically hungry.
- Aim to eat more fruit and vegetables – recommendations are to include at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. One portion is about a handful.
- Half fill your plate with vegetables/salad and divide the other half between meat, fish, egg or beans and starchy foods like potatoes, rice, pasta or bread.
- Choose foods and drinks that are low in fat and sugar and limit sweet, fatty and salty snacks.
- If you drink, moderate your alcohol intake. Alcohol is high in calories and dissolves your good intentions.
- Watch your portion sizes especially when eating out.
- Avoid eating at the same time as doing something else, for example when working, reading or watching TV, as this can cause you to overeat.
- Eat slowly, concentrate on and really taste the food you are putting in your mouth.
- Aim to drink two litres of fluid per day, choosing low calorie, non caffeinated drinks.
- It is important not to 'diet'. Diets are often extreme, strict and nutritionally unbalanced and dictate what you should and shouldn't eat resulting in you not sticking to them for very long.
- And finally, it takes time for your brain to know your stomach is full so wait at least fifteen to twenty minutes before deciding you need more food.

## Be more active:

Moving your body around means using up more calories than if you are sitting down – every little helps...

Slowly build on the amount of activity you do so that it becomes part of your daily routine and not just a passing phase you find too difficult to keep up. People who do this are far more successful with long term weight control and maintenance.

Look for easy ways to fit more movement into your day-to-day routine, for example, stand up when on the phone, use a toilet further away, park a bit further away from your destination, take the stairs or get off the bus a stop earlier.

## While on your weight loss journey:

- Accept that the occasional slip up is normal and that it's not the end of the world. Get straight back on track. Don't let a slip make you lose sight of your overall goals and the progress you have made, instead learn from it.
- Keep some form of food diary. People who do, lose more weight as it helps you to stay aware of what you are doing and deal with any problems like emotional eating. It also helps you feel more in control of your eating.
- Track your progress, you might want to do this by weighing yourself once a week, measuring your waist, reviewing your food diary or seeing what goals you have achieved at the end of each month.
- Plan for events like eating out, celebrations and parties. Decide what your plan of action will be and stick to it so that you can enjoy a guilt free good time. For example: when eating out, decide to have two courses instead of three or share a pudding that you would normally eat to yourself.
- Have a plan for your high risk situations to help prevent any slip up. The plan must be specific and detailed, for example: I am at high risk of stopping my healthy eating when I'm busy. My plan to handle this situation is to do menu plans weekly, write shopping lists, cook in bulk and freeze individual portions.
- Making changes to your lifestyle can require a lot of effort. When you achieve a goal reward your success with something you value that is non foodrelated (e.g. magazine, or trip to the cinema).
- Get the support that is right for you – it makes all the difference. Decide who can help you and tell them the best way they can do it. Ask a friend to go to an exercise class with you and ask your partner not to buy you food as a gift.

## Summary

Remember there is no quick fix. People who successfully lose weight and keep it off stay realistic and develop techniques to make their new lifestyle and activity habits an enjoyable way of life.