



National University  
Polyclinics

# 101 Guide to Achieving a Healthy Weight

NUP Allied Health – Dietetic Services



# Why is Having a Healthy Weight Important?

Being overweight increases our risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and even certain cancers.



In Singapore, more people are becoming overweight due to an unhealthy diet and inactive lifestyle. The National Population Health Survey done in 2017 found that about 30% of Singapore residents aged between 18 to 69 years were overweight, and almost 10% were obese.

## What is a Healthy Weight?

First things first: we need to know what is a healthy weight. The easiest way to measure this is the BMI (Body Mass Index), which calculates your ideal weight based on your height. Everyone’s BMI is different as it depends on the amount of fat, muscles, bones and water in our bodies.



BMI is calculated as follows:

BMI =

Weight (kg)

Height (m) x Height (m)

\*Note: A higher BMI may be acceptable for athletes and body builders who have more muscle and less body fat. Pregnant women shouldn’t use BMI.

Once you have calculated your BMI, check it against the Asian classification of BMI and its corresponding health risk below:

BMI, in kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Health risk
< 18.5	Risk of nutritional deficiency diseases and osteoporosis
18.5 – 22.9	Low (healthy range)
23.0 – 27.4	Moderate
27.5 and above	High

If you have a BMI of 23.0 and above, you are at greater risk of developing health problems.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ kg

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ m

BMI: \_\_\_\_\_ kg/m<sup>2</sup>

Health Risk: ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High

## How do I Maintain a Healthy Weight?

Weight is determined by:

- How much energy we take in (calculated by the amount of calories we put into our bodies in the form of food and drinks).
- How much energy we use up through our daily physical activities.

We gain weight when the amount of energy we take in exceeds what is used up. If we want to lose weight, we have to either take in less calories (from food and drinks) or use up more energy.



Energy Input **MORE THAN**  
Energy Output → **Weight gain**



Energy Input = Energy Output  
→ **Weight maintained**



Energy Input **LESS THAN**  
Energy Output → **Weight loss**

How we lose weight is also important. Some people go on crash diets in an attempt to lose weight quickly, but this can cause stress to the body and is difficult to sustain. Many people end up eating more after the diet and gain even more weight!

The best way to lose weight successfully in a healthy way is to take a longer-term approach, consisting of a healthy diet and regular physical activity.

Aim to lose weight slowly over a period of time, not drastically. Make little changes that you can sustain, instead of ambitious goals that are difficult to stick to, and might cause you to give up.



## How do I Lose Weight through My Diet?

First, set a goal for your weight loss. A realistic target is to lose 5 to 10% of your body weight in 6 to 12 months. Try not to lose more than 1kg a week, as this might not be healthy.

To lose half to 1kg a week, you would need to cut 500 to 1,000 calories a day from your diet.



### Set a realistic target:

Current weight: \_\_\_\_\_ kg



Target weight to achieve: \_\_\_\_\_ kg in \_\_\_\_\_ months

You may seek the help of NUP dietitians to work out a diet plan for you.

# EAT A BALANCED DIET

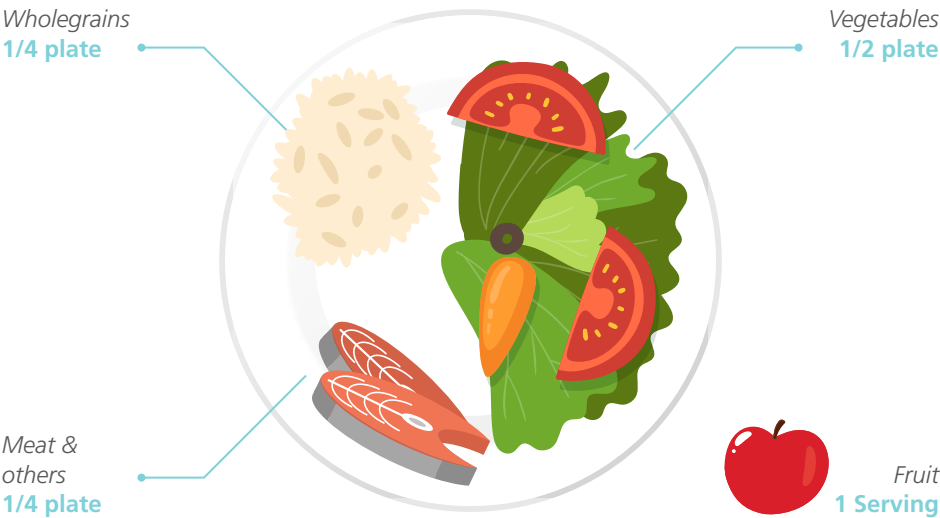
The type of calories we take in is as important as the number of calories. A bar of chocolate might have the same number of calories as a glass of milk, but the nutrients are very different!



We get energy from carbohydrates, protein and fat. The same quantity of each of these energy sources contains different amount of calories.

Energy Source	Carbohydrate	Protein	Fat	Alcohol
Calories (kcal per gram)	4	4	9	7

Our body needs nutrients from different food groups in order to be healthy and to function well. An excellent way to ensure you have a balanced meal is to follow the concept of ‘My Healthy Plate’ as a guide to help you eat a healthy balanced diet. If you eat a balanced diet, you have a higher chance of maintaining a healthy weight.



# 7 HANDY TIPS TO ACHIEVE A HEALTHY WEIGHT

## Eat Regular Meals

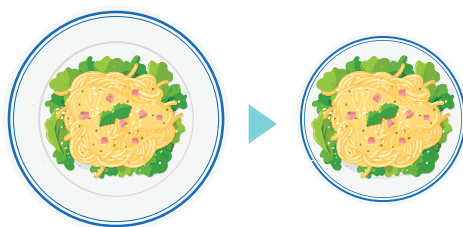
Sticking to a regular routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner prevents your body from being starved or stuffed. This means that you are less likely to over-eat at any meal or feel hungry again quickly. If you find your tummy rumbling before the next meal, eat a healthy snack, like a piece of fruit.

Having regular meals also helps to control your blood glucose level. Try not to choose sugary foods that can cause your blood sugar level to spike.



## Eat Smaller Portions

The easiest way to control your diet is to eat smaller portions. Instead of eating until you are very full, stop when you are no longer feeling hungry. Chew your food well and stop every now and then to check if you are still hungry.



*(Same amount of food on plates of different sizes)*

Another tip is to drink some water 30 minutes before your mealtime. This helps to keep hunger pangs at bay and cuts down the amount of food you tend to eat.

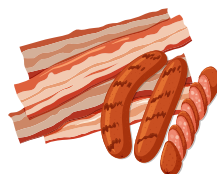
You can also 'trick' yourself into eating less by using a smaller plate. The same amount of food will look more!



## Cut Down on Fat

Some of us may have more fat in our diet than we need. You can reduce the amount of fat you eat with these practical tips:

- When eating meat, remove fat that you can see and remove chicken skin.
- Steer clear of processed meats, such as bacon, sausages and luncheon meat. These are high in fat and salt.
- Salads are healthy when not drenched in rich, creamy sauces! Stay away from mayonnaise and thousand island dressing. Use olive oil, balsamic vinegar or lemon juice instead.
- When eating toast, spread a thin layer of trans fat-free margarine instead of butter.
- When eating dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt, choose the low-fat variety.
- Nuts are high in fat, even though they are considered “good” fats. Limit your intake of nuts to a handful a day.



You can also reduce the amount of fat used in cooking:

- Instead of deep-frying, try grilling or steaming your food. If you are unable to resist deep-fried food, limit it to once a week.
- Coconut milk is high in fat. When preparing curry or gravy, try using low fat milk or yoghurt instead.
- Use healthier cooking oils. These are marked with the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS).



## Say NO to Sugar

Sugar is not sweet news when it comes to your health! It is high in calories, yet has no nutritional value. Sugary foods also tend to be high in fat. Here are some easy ways to reduce your sugar intake:

- When ordering drinks, ask for less sugar or syrup. Even better, drink water! It is calorie and sugar-free.
- 3-in-1 beverages are generally high in sugar. Try not to drink them or choose the lower sugar options.
- Some drinks are already naturally sweetened, such as fruit juice. Choose fruit over fruit juice as fruit juice contains more calories than one serving of fruit.
- Indulge in sweet desserts only as an occasional treat, and share them with family or friends!



Lower in Sugar



## Fibre Up!

Fibre keeps your digestive system healthy and helps you feel fuller for longer. Eating high-fibre foods can help you eat less.

Examples of food that are high in fibre are fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, wholegrain bread and cereals, and brown and unpolished rice.

Here are some ways you can add fibre to your diet:

- Choose an extra portion of vegetables instead of meat at each meal.
- Choose to eat fruit instead of drinking fruit juice.
- Add some vegetables when you are making soup, noodles, pasta or sandwiches.
- Throw in some beans to salad, stew or rice dishes.
- When choosing cereal, buy the wholegrain variety or those that contain oats.



## Stay Away from Alcohol

Alcoholic drinks are not only high in calories, they are linked to health problems such as liver disease. It is best to abstain from alcohol altogether. However, if you wish to drink, do set yourself a limit and try to stick to it.

In general, try to keep your alcohol intake to:

- two standard drinks a day for men
- one standard drink a day for women

### What is 1 standard drink?

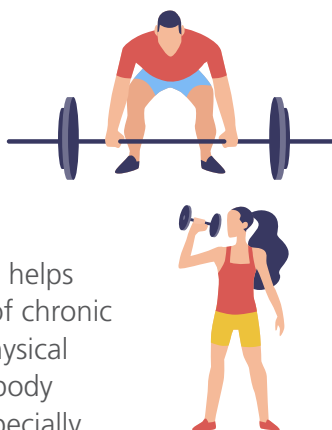
- ▼ one can of beer (330ml) (5% alcohol content)
- ▼ half a glass of wine (100ml) (15% alcohol content)
- ▼ one shot of spirit/hard liquor (30ml) (40% alcohol)



## HOW DO I LOSE WEIGHT THROUGH EXERCISE?

The second, and equally vital part of the equation to lose weight is physical activity. To keep your weight in the healthy range, it is important to include physical activity into your daily life.

The health benefits of physical activity are many. It helps you to manage your weight and lowers your risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Physical activity increases your muscle mass, reduces your body fat, and helps you build strong bones, which is especially important as you age.



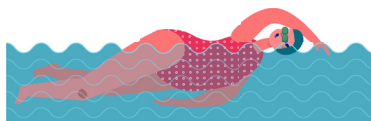
## Let's Get Moving!

Aim for 150 minutes of physical activity a week at moderate-intensity. One way to do this is to exercise five days a week for 30 minutes each day. If 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity sounds too much, here's the good news: you do not have to do it all at one go. You may break it down into three 10-minute sessions throughout the day.

If you are just starting out or have any existing physical conditions, check with your doctor before starting any exercise routine.

Physical activity of moderate intensity includes:

- Brisk walking or walking
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Aerobics
- Cycling



Physical activity does not necessarily mean hitting the gym. Even if you are busy at work or looking after your household, you can easily include physical activity in your day-to-day routine. For example:

- Housework burns calories!  
Vacuuming, washing, cooking – they all use up energy.
- Walk whenever you can. Park your car further away or alight from the bus one bus-stop earlier, and walk the rest of the way.
- Vertical climbing is great exercise. Take the stairs instead of the lift.



## WHAT IF DIET AND EXERCISE DON'T WORK?

A balanced diet and regular exercise should help you achieve a healthy weight. If you are still unable to lose weight after trying diet and exercise, you might want to consider meal replacements.

Meal replacements are nutrition drinks that replace one or two of your regular meals. They can help you lose weight because they are lower in calories and still provide you with the nutrients you need.

However, meal replacements are NOT a long-term solution. You should only take them for a few months until you're ready to go back to regular food. Do ask a dietitian for advice on how to manage your diet.

### References:

Appropriate body-mass index for Asian populations and its implications for policy and intervention strategies.  
[http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/bmi\\_asia\\_strategies.pdf](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/bmi_asia_strategies.pdf)

# YOUR PERSONALISED MEAL PLAN

Breakfast	Morning tea	Lunch
__ slice of wholemeal bread	__ slice wholemeal bread	__ bowl rice/noodles or __ bowl porridge or __ piece chapati/thosai
__ dessertspoon of oats	__ wholemeal biscuits	__ palm size of fish/lean meat/ poultry (without skin)
__ bowl porridge	__ serving of fruit	__ egg
__ bowl rice/noodles	Coffee/tea/ __ glass of low fat milk/soymilk	__ serving of bean curd/tofu
__ piece thosai /idli /chapati		__ cup of vegetables
__ wholemeal biscuits		__ serving of fruit
Coffee/tea/ __ glass of low fat milk/soymilk		
Afternoon tea	Dinner	Supper
__ slice of wholemeal bread	__ bowl rice/noodles or __ bowl porridge or __ piece chapati/thosai	__ slice of wholemeal bread
__ wholemeal biscuits	__ palm size of fish/lean meat/ poultry (without skin)	__ wholemeal biscuits
__ serving of fruit	__ egg	Coffee/tea/ __ glass of low fat milk/soymilk
Coffee/tea/ __ glass low fat milk/soymilk	__ serving of bean curd/tofu __ cup of vegetables __ serving of fruit	

Others:

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Note:

Bowl = 1 'Chinese' rice bowl

Glass/cup/mug = 250ml

Dessertspoon = 10ml

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

