



First, focus on health, not weight

I've tried every diet under the sun, but I always gain back everything I've lost and more. Before I completely give up, what can I try next?

First, you know this already, but I'll say it anyway: You are not alone. Most people who lose weight tend to put it back on. Studies suggest that we just tend to return to old habits that started the problem in the first place.

That's why, for years, nutritionists have recommended adopting a lifestyle change rather than a "diet," which people tend to think of as a short-term meandering off their normal routine. But adopting such behavior change can be extremely difficult, and is influenced by many things often out of your control.

That doesn't mean giving up is your only option. Here are some things to consider as you find a new path:

• **Focus on health, not weight.** Size and shape don't necessarily reflect health. Eat plenty of vegetables (about 2.5 cups a day) and fruit (about 2 cups a day). Choose whole grains over refined, and lean proteins over fattier options. When you use fat, reach for oil instead of margarine or other solid fats. Get regular physical checkups and monitor your blood sugar, blood cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure. If they're in normal ranges, you're doing a lot of the right things.

• **Move more.** We live in a sedentary society. Most of us spend too much time in front of a television or

computer monitor, never approaching the 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity we should get five days a week. Take a good look at your typical day and see if there's a way to add a 20-minute brisk walk to your regular routine. Whether or not you're already physically active, taking these extra steps (literally) will help.

• **Eat less.** That piece of advice is so simple it might sound, well, laughable. But portions have grown so much over the last few decades that it can be hard to tell what a real serving size should be. You might try a simple step: Fill your plate as normal — then remove one-third of the main dish and the starch (whether it's grain-based or a starchy vegetable). See if you're satisfied with the smaller amount; if not, have another serving of non-starchy vegetables to see if that does the trick.

At some point, you might try measuring a few foods you commonly eat to see if they're within proper portion sizes. If you're not sure how much of each food group you should be eating, download a PDF file of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Patterns at <http://1.usa.gov/FdPatts>. It has charts that show you how much of different types of foods are recommended for different calorie intakes. Then — step away from the computer and take that walk.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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