



## Several tactics can help with weight loss

**Since I turned 50, I seem to gain weight much more easily, and it's much more difficult to take off. My husband says I shouldn't blame age, but doesn't aging have an effect?**

It's true that the body's metabolism tends to decrease as people age, and that means the body burns calories more slowly. But a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that many other factors likely play more of a role in weight gain than how many candles were on your last birthday cake.

The Harvard study, which included only people under age 65, got specific: Researchers found that increased consumption of certain foods were associated with more weight gain. Those foods were:

- Potato chips.
- Potatoes or french fries.
- Processed meats.
- Unprocessed red meats.
- Butter.
- Sweets and desserts.
- Refined grains.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages and 100-percent fruit juice.

On the other hand, increased consumption of other foods, such as vegetables, nuts, whole grains, fruits and yogurt, was associated with weight loss.

Compare those foods with what you typically eat. Try cutting back on those that help pile on the pounds,

and increase your portions of those that help you take them off.

The study also noted that increasing physical activity and reducing television watching and alcohol use helped keep weight under control, as well as getting six to eight hours of sleep a night.

There are many other possible reasons for weight gain. There's a small chance that an endocrine disease or other medical condition may be the culprit; consult with your doctor to rule that out.

But a more likely cause is simply that Americans tend to consume more calories than we used to, from both food and beverages. Portion sizes have increased incredibly in recent years, and there's ample evidence that when adults have more food in front of them, they tend to eat more.

Snacking can also increase your calorie intake more than you might think: The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that women under 60 on average consume about 450 calories in snacks a day; it's 600 or more calories a day for men. That amounts to a fourth meal.

Try reducing your portion sizes (using a smaller plate for meals works well for many people) and cutting back on the extras — both food and high-calorie beverages. Those tactics can help no matter what your age.

*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@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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**For the week of  
July 24, 2011**

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