

# Getting started with your weight loss plan



## Have a plan

- Write down your goals and reasons for losing weight.
- Keep a food diary or use a phone app/tracker to keep a record of what you eat.
- Focus on your total energy intake over the whole day, rather than how often you eat. There is no clear scientific link between body size and the number of times you eat a day. However, the more often you eat, the more likely you are to unnecessarily increase your energy intake.
- Look for help from a registered health practitioner, such as a dietitian, doctor or practice nurse.
- Include your family in your goal to make healthier eating choices, and look for support from friends and family to achieve your weight loss goal.



## What you eat

- Eat breakfast each day, so you don't overeat later in the day.
- Eat more vegetables and fruit. Most people don't eat the recommended 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit each day. Vegetables and fruit are high in vitamins, minerals and fibre and low in energy (calories).
- Plan meals ahead, and where possible pack or prepare lunches in advance, to help you avoid the temptation of buying food that is high in saturated fat, salt or sugar. Involve your household (your partner, family or flatmates) in this task.
- When you eat out, order half or smaller portions, share with others, or ask for a doggy bag to take extra food home.
- Prepare healthy nutritious snacks to keep in the fridge or handy (eg, vegetable sticks or pieces of fruit, nuts or plain popcorn).
- Don't snack directly from bags or containers. Instead, put one serving onto a plate.
- Drink water throughout the day.
- Cut down on alcohol. Alcohol contains energy, and can influence your food choices.
- Cut down on sugar-sweetened drinks, such as fizzy drinks, fruit juice, energy drinks and sports drinks. These contain large amounts of energy from sugar, and are bad for your health.
- Eat together as a family. Your healthy choices will encourage your children to eat healthier too.
- Avoid watching TV while eating. Children, young people and adults all tend to eat more while watching TV. The same effect may also happen with other screens (eg, computers and phones).



## How you eat

- Think before you eat. Are you hungry, or are you wanting food because you are tired, bored or stressed? Are you just eating it because it's there?
- If you eat when you're stressed or bored, have a plan for those times, such as going for a walk or bike ride. Try to identify and address the cause of your stress or low mood.
- Chew your food well, and eat slowly. Be mindful, and pay attention to food while you eat. Stop eating when you feel full
- Use a smaller plate to control your portion sizes.
- Read food labels. The Health Star Rating makes it easier for you to choose healthier packaged foods – foods with more stars are healthier than similar foods with fewer stars. Alternatively, read the nutrition information panel on the back of packets, and choose the food product with the lowest amount of saturated fat, sugar and sodium per 100 grams.
- Don't ban any particular foods. This can make you want them even more. Instead, try to only have these foods as a special treat, in a small portion.
- Make your home junk-food free, to help you to avoid impulse eating.



## Get active and get enough sleep

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a day, and if possible 60 minutes.
- If you have not been active for a while, or have been unwell recently, start your physical activity slowly, and build up gradually.
- Some people find it helpful to set themselves an exercise goal, such as being able to walk or run 5 km at a time, or to complete a particular event. Some find it easier to exercise in a group setting, or with friends. Others prefer to exercise alone, walking the dog, or using a Fitbit, activity-tracking app or pedometer. Consider 'active commuting' (walking, running or biking) to work or part of the way to work. Think about what motivates you, and what you can maintain long term.
- Don't forget that sleep is important. Have a regular sleep routine. Try to aim for 7–9 hours of sleep a night (7–8 hours if you're over 65).



## Monitor your progress

- Some people find it helpful to check their weight regularly (eg, once or twice a week) at the same time of day to monitor progress and stay motivated.
- Researchers have found that even very modest weight loss (as little as 2.5 kg) can result in health benefits.
- One slip-up is not a reason to give up. Managing weight is hard. Go back to your goals, and consider whether you need to change anything in your plan to help you stay on track. Seek help if necessary.
- Remember, it's better to make small changes to your lifestyle that you can maintain long term than drastic changes that you cannot sustain.