

# An Adult Guide to an Active, Healthy Lifestyle



[TogetherCounts.com](https://www.togethercounts.com)



# Small Changes for an Active, Healthy Lifestyle

Are you ready to make some small changes that will have a big impact on how you feel and on your health? If you're ready, this booklet is a basic guide that can provide you with the information you need to know and help you to meet some of the challenges that might get in the way.

It's true, not everyone's body is alike and we all have different medical and family histories. If you have medical issues or are severely overweight/obese, you should speak with a medical doctor, nurse practitioner or registered dietitian. Obesity is a complex disease with a variety of causes. This guide lays out some basic concepts of balanced healthful living and provides a small snapshot of strategies and expert advice from government and national health organizations.

## Taking the First Step: Make the decision to take charge of your health and wellness

Making the decision to take control of your health is often the most difficult step as it can seem overwhelming and complicated with all the different advice available. However, once you have made the decision, the most important thing is to identify strategies that can help lead to long-term success. So what's the best way to establish healthy habits? To make them stick? To keep you strong, fit and feeling good today and in the future?

There's no magic bullet, no breakthrough diet or exercise gimmick that provides all the answers.





At the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation we encourage practical healthy habits that can be practiced daily. This resource guide, based on the free Together Counts™ program at TogetherCounts.com, is a good way to get started.



## Determining my daily calorie and physical activity needs for a healthy, active lifestyle.

Balancing the calories you eat and drink with the calories you use when you're actively moving sounds complicated, but the concept is really quite simple. Basically it's knowing how much energy (measured in calories) you need and how much activity is the right amount for you. Each person has unique calorie needs. Your calorie needs depend on a number of factors including: your height, weight, age and physical activity level. A calorie is defined as a unit of energy supplied by food. A calorie is a calorie regardless of its source. When we consume too many calories, the excess calories are stored as body fat.

To determine what your individual calorie balance is, you need to take a few factors into account. "Energy in" means the total calories you consume each day through foods and beverages and to understand how many calories you need specifically, consider the following:

- Your age
- Gender
- Your daily activity level:
  - \***Not Active:** You do only light activity needed for daily life. For instance, cooking or walking around the house.
  - \*\***Moderately Active:** You do physical activity equal to walking quickly for 1½ to 3 miles (about 30–40 minutes) each day. Plus, doing light activity needed for daily life.
  - \*\*\***Very Active:** You do physical activity equal to walking quickly for more than 3 miles each day (more than 40 minutes). Plus, you do light activity needed for daily life.



The chart below shows estimated amounts of calories needed to maintain energy balance for various gender and age groups at three different levels of physical activity. An individual's calorie needs may be higher or lower than these average estimates.

**Chart 1. Estimated Calorie Needs per Day  
by Age, Gender, and Physical Activity Level.**

Age (yrs.)	Calories for Sedentary Male	Calories for Moderately Active Male	Calories for Active Male	Calories for Sedentary Female	Calories for Moderately Active Female	Calories for Active Female
18	2,400	2,800	3,200	1,800	2,000	2,400
19–20	2,600	2,800	3,000	2,000	2,200	2,400
21–25	2,400	2,800	3,000	2,000	2,200	2,400
26–30	2,400	2,600	3,000	1,800	2,000	2,400
31–35	2,400	2,600	3,000	1,800	2,000	2,200
36–40	2,400	2,600	2,800	1,800	2,000	2,200
41–45	2,200	2,600	2,800	1,800	2,000	2,200
46–50	2,200	2,400	2,800	1,800	2,000	2,200
51–55	2,200	2,400	2,800	1,600	1,800	2,200
56–60	2,200	2,400	2,600	1,600	1,800	2,200
61–65	2,000	2,400	2,600	1,600	1,800	2,000
66–70	2,000	2,200	2,600	1,600	1,800	2,000
71–75	2,000	2,200	2,600	1,600	1,800	2,000
76+	2,000	2,200	2,400	1,600	1,800	2,000

Source: USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion



## Where to start:

### 3 easy steps that will make a difference

1. **Chart the Course:** Find out where you are and identify goals for weight loss.

One way to begin to determine whether you are at a healthy weight is to calculate your “body mass index” (BMI).

To calculate your BMI, see the [BMI Calculator](#).

([http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult\\_bmi/english\\_bmi\\_calculator/bmi\\_calculator.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html))

Or determine your BMI by finding your height and weight in this [BMI Index Chart](#). ([http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmi\\_tbl.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmi_tbl.htm))

- **If your BMI is less than 18.5**, it falls within the “underweight” range.
- **If your BMI is 18.5 to 24.9**, it falls within the “normal” or healthy weight range.
- **If your BMI is 25.0 to 29.9**, it falls within the “overweight” range.
- **If your BMI is 30.0 or higher**, it falls within the “obese” range.



Concentrating on reaching a healthy body weight is important but it's also important to consider what percentage of your weight is body fat. Scientific evidence has shown that it's possible to lose weight by only reducing your calorie intake. However, if being healthy and keeping the pounds off is your goal, scientific evidence shows that reducing body “fatness,” or how much fat you carry on your body, should also be part of the equation.

To determine your body fatness, measure your waist circumference with a tape measure: locate the upper hip bone and place a measuring tape around the abdomen (ensuring that



the tape measure is horizontal). The tape measure should be snug but should not cause compressions on the skin. Next, locate the widest part of your buttocks and measure around your hips and buttocks. Using your waist circumference measurement, calculate your waist-to-hip ratio by dividing your waist circumference by your hip measurement. Compare the results to the chart below:

**Chart 2. Waist to Hip Circumference Ratio Standards for Men and Women.**

	Age (years)	Disease Risk Related to Obesity			
		Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Men	20-29	<0.83	0.83-0.88	0.89-0.94	>0.94
	30-39	<0.84	0.84-0.91	0.92-0.96	>0.96
	40-49	<0.88	0.88-0.95	0.96-1.00	>1.00
	50-59	<0.90	0.90-0.96	0.97-1.02	>1.02
	60-69	<0.91	0.91-0.98	0.99-1.03	>1.03
Women	20-29	<0.71	0.71-0.77	0.78-0.82	>0.82
	30-39	<0.72	0.72-0.78	0.79-0.84	>0.84
	40-49	<0.73	0.73-0.79	0.80-0.87	>0.87
	50-59	<0.74	0.74-0.81	0.82-0.88	>0.88
	60-69	<0.76	0.76-0.83	0.84-0.90	>0.90

Source: Adapted from Heyward VH, Stolarczyk LM: *Applied Body Composition Assessment*. Champaign IL, Human Kinetics, 1996, p82.

- 2. Track It:** Calories are like a budget—you can only eat so many in a day. Spend wisely by choosing lower calorie, nutrient rich foods most of the time to help manage your weight. Take charge of your weight by tracking calories consumed or “energy in.”



Start a daily food log or use an online tracker like [Supertracker](https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/) (<https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/>) to make sure you're getting everything your body needs to stay healthy within your daily calorie intake. For best results, track your body weight over time. If you are gaining weight, or not losing at all, decrease your calorie intake (or increase your physical activity).

Food gives us nutrients—like vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber—which our bodies use to stay healthy. When keeping track of calorie consumption it's also important to ensure you are getting all the nutrients you need for good health. The US Dietary Guidelines advise adults to eat combinations of the following foods because they are all rich in the many different nutrients we need:

- fruits and vegetables
- whole grains, like oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice
- seafood, lean meats, poultry, and eggs
- beans, peas, nuts, and seeds
- moderate amounts of dairy (low-fat or non-fat milk and cheese, or substitutes).







The chart below illustrates how you can get all the important nutrients for a healthful diet while still staying within your calorie needs.

**Chart 3: A Sample of a Healthy U.S. Style Diet Food Pattern.**

Food Group	1,400 calorie	1,600 calorie	1,800 calorie	2,000 calorie	2,200 calorie	2,400 calorie	2,600 calorie	2,800 calorie	3,000 calorie
Fruit	1½C*	1½C	1½C	2C	2C	2C	2C	2½C	2½C
Vegetables	1½C	2C	2½C	2½C	3C	3C	3½C	3½C	4C
Grains	5oz.	6oz.	6oz.	7oz.	8oz.	9oz.	10oz.	10oz.	10oz.
Proteins	4oz.	5oz.	5oz.	5½oz.	6oz.	9oz.	6½oz.	10oz.	10oz.
Dairy	2½C	3C	3C	3C	3C	3C	3C	3C	3C
Oils	17g	22g	24g	27g	29g	31g	34g	36g	44g

Source: USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

Quantity equivalents for each food group are:

- Grains, 1 ounce equivalent is: ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cooked cereal; 1 ounce dry pasta or rice; 1 slice bread; 1 small muffin (1 oz.); 1 cup RTE cereal flakes.
- Fruits and vegetables, 1 cup equivalent is: 1 cup raw or cooked fruit or vegetable, 1 cup fruit or vegetable juice, 2 cups leafy salad greens.
- Protein Foods, 1 ounce equivalent is: 1 ounce lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 egg; ¼ cup cooked dry beans or tofu; 1 Tbsp. peanut butter; ½ ounce nuts or seeds.
- Milk, 1 cup equivalent is: 1 cup milk or yogurt, 1½ ounces natural cheese such as Cheddar cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese.







- 3. Find a Fitness Plan:** Participating in physical activity can help aid in weight loss and improve overall health. Physical activity can be enjoyed with friends and family!

Fun stuff counts as exercise! Get active with the family whether it's soccer in the backyard, dancing to music or taking a walk in your neighborhood. Being physically active can help

you achieve a healthy weight and prevent excess weight gain. Physical activity simply means movement of the body that uses energy. You can choose moderate or vigorous intensity activities, or a mix of both, each week. The table below provides examples from USDA on recommendations for physical activity:



Exercise	Times Per Week	Examples
Moderate-intensity aerobic activity	2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) (20 minutes per day)	- brisk walking - water aerobics - yoga - playing with children
AND		
Muscle-strengthening activity	2 or more days per week	- lunges - hip flexors - crunches - push-ups - pull-ups



OR

Exercise	Times Per Week	Examples
Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity	1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) (10 minutes per day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- jogging</li><li>- running</li><li>- kick boxing</li></ul>
AND		
Muscle-strengthening activity	2 or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- lunges</li><li>- hip flexors</li><li>- crunches</li><li>- push-ups</li><li>- pull-ups</li></ul>

OR

Exercise	Times Per Week	Examples
Mix of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity and Muscle-strengthening activities	2 or more days	All major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).





## Tips on How to Get More Activity In Your Day

Difficult to find time to exercise after a long day? Not motivated to move your muscles first thing in the morning? 10 minutes at a time is fine—30 minutes daily is the goal. Remember that you can spread your activity out during the day and over each week—you don't have to do it all at once. You can even break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day. It's about what works best for you, as long as you're doing physical activity at a moderate or vigorous effort for at least 10 minutes at a time.

### TIPS:

- Try using an app or pedometer to count your daily steps or map your distance online.
- Mix in some short runs with your walking to get your heart rate up.
- Use the stairs, not elevators or escalators. Add a few steps each time you go.
- Unload groceries from your car to your kitchen one bag at a time.
- Carry folded laundry upstairs one small stack at a time.
- Park far away from the store or mall and clock up more steps.
- Stand, don't sit, during phone calls. Walk while you talk!
- Each time you sit, squeeze in your abs for 5 seconds.
- Do desk exercises and stretches every hour while working at your desk.
- Get off the couch! During TV ads, do jumping jacks or march in place.
- Take a break from your desk, climb the stairs to the top floor and back.



For more ideas about activities that help to balance your calories visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) (<http://ChooseMyPlate.gov>)





## Incorporating healthy practices at all ages

Below are some quick tips and suggestions to incorporate healthful lifestyle habits at any age:



### Teens (ages 13-19)

- **Eat Breakfast-** Breakfast is an important part of the day, it kick starts your metabolism as well as provides your body with the energy it needs to conquer the day. Try including whole grain, fruits and proteins to your morning meal. An example of this is 2 slices of whole-wheat toast, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of raisins.
- **Learn Portion Sizes-** Consuming the adequate serving size can help you avoid eating too much food and help you stay on track with how many calories you are consuming. Look at the food label for the specific serving size and the number of calories in that portion.

### Millennials (ages 20-30)

- **Vary Your Meals-** changing your diet day to day is important in receiving a variety of nutrients! Try making a meal plan to incorporate new healthful foods each day.
- **Keep Healthy Snacks Around-** whether you are on the go or working late, having healthful, on-hand snacks such as nuts, granola bars, dried fruit, and cheese will replenish your body and brain with the nutrients it needs to stay focused.





### Young Families (ages 31-50)

- **Maintain Exercise Routines-** maintaining exercise is important for weight maintenance and muscle endurance. Exercise also strengthens your immune system to fight off viruses during sick seasons.
- **Fit in the Fiber-** Fiber is important for colon health and digestion and it leaves you feeling full longer to fight off hunger cramps! Foods high in fiber are: oatmeal, whole grain cereal, whole wheat bread, fruits and vegetables.
- **Keep Your Family in the Mix!** Modeling healthy habits for young children will help the whole family stay on track. Learn more about healthy, active living for the whole family at [TogetherCounts.com](https://www.togethercounts.com).



### Approaching Maturity

(ages 51-70)

- **Consume Protein-** progressive decline in muscle occurs over time, therefore consuming adequate amounts of protein can provide your muscles with the nutrients it needs to stay strong.
- **Regular Physical Activity-** Physical activity can help with muscle maintenance and help with balance. Staying active is also great in group settings or with friends and family.





## More resources are available for children and families at [TogetherCounts.com](http://TogetherCounts.com)

**For children ages 3-5:** Smart from the Start aims to provide educators and families of children ages 3-5 years with the tools and resources they need to provide their pre-schoolers with a strong beginning during the most crucial time in their development. Smart from the Start provides flexible activities that can be easily integrated into classroom or home environments. Smart from the Start aligns to a range of programs—including Head Start, WIC, SNAP-Ed, SHAPE America, NAEYC, EFNEP and CACFP—that focus on helping preschoolers build lifelong healthy habits. Learn more at [www.TogetherCounts.com/HeadStart](http://www.TogetherCounts.com/HeadStart)



**For children ages 5-12:** The Together Counts™ standards-aligned curriculum used in thousands of classrooms, developing skills children need for a lifetime of active, healthy living. Children learn why balance, moderation, daily activity and goal setting is important and the learning continues at home with resources and extensions designed especially for families. Find teacher incentives, useful tools for nurses

and administrators and many practical tips for parents at [www.togethercounts.com/at-school](http://www.togethercounts.com/at-school)

No matter what age you are or what your weight goal is, the most important thing to keep in mind is to eat a balanced diet with a variety of foods. Every time you keep your calorie intake in balance with your physical activity needs, you're on your way to a healthier life. Below are resources to help you along your way!

For more resources, visit [www.togethercounts.com](http://www.togethercounts.com)



HealthyLifeStars™



[TogetherCounts.com](http://TogetherCounts.com)





The IFIC Foundation provides consumers with many online resources related to weight management. The following is a short list of just a few of the resources available to help you succeed:



- *Finding Balance: Understanding How Calories Work.* This easy-to-read brochure explains what a calorie is, factors affecting calorie intake, importance of portion control and more.
- *Foods for Health: Managing Your Weight.* The IFIC Foundation partnered with best-selling author, David Grotto, RD, on this short and entertaining video filled with tips about slimming foods and lifestyle strategies for managing weight.
- *Weight Loss: Finding A Program That Works for You.* Having trouble knowing whether a weight loss method is safe for you to try? This booklet contains checklists for evaluating safety and effectiveness of different weight loss methods so you can decide what approach is best for you.
- *Weight Management Hot Topic Page.* This page on FoodInsight.org provides a place where the latest hot topics in weight management are right at your fingertips.

In addition to all that the IFIC Foundation has to offer, here are some other resources that you may find helpful:

- *Aim for a Healthy Weight.* The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has extensive information about weight-loss recommendations, physical activity and eating healthfully. It even features a menu planner and information about We Can! a program geared toward helping families be healthy.
- *Healthy Weight: It's Not a Diet, It's a Lifestyle!* This page from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides articles, interactive tools, the latest research, success stories and more to help you make healthful lifestyle changes.





Now that you have the information, tools, and tips to increase your well-being, it is time to apply your knowledge! Incorporating these healthful changes into your life puts you on track for a strong and long life! Taking the first step into balancing your calorie intake is an important step in weight loss and weight maintenance. Including healthful food items into your diet

along with managing your portions will help you stay on track with your weight plan. Staying active through fun activities will also help you reach to your goal weight and allow you to build muscles. There has never been a better time to start focusing on your health and making changes that will positively impact your life!



## A Simple Guide to Family Health

Families are overwhelmed with information as they try to determine what they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle to reduce risks of disease and to maintain a healthy weight. This simple chart shows the key things that you need to know. Many simple healthy lifestyle strategies help to prevent heart disease, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, cancer and obesity. If you have specific risk factors, see the additional disease-specific tips for staying healthy.

Heart	Osteoporosis	Cancer	Type 2 Diabetes	Obesity
Eat a balanced diet	Eat a balanced diet	Eat a balanced diet	Eat a balanced diet	Eat a balanced diet
Be physically active daily and get at least 150 minutes of moderate to intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week	Be physically active daily and get at least 150 minutes of moderate to intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week	Be physically active daily and get at least 150 minutes of moderate to intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week	Be physically active daily and get at least 150 minutes of moderate to intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week	Be physically active daily and get at least 150 minutes of moderate to intensity physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week
Maintain a healthy weight	Maintain a healthy weight	Maintain a healthy weight	Maintain a healthy weight	Maintain a healthy weight
Disease Specific	Disease Specific	Disease Specific	Disease Specific	Disease Specific
Moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least 2 days per week for additional health benefits	Eat a diet rich in Vitamin D & Calcium	Stay away from tobacco	Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables	Know your BMI
Manage your stress	Limit salt, caffeine and alcohol intake	Limit alcohol intake	Choose whole grains	Stay within your daily calorie needs
Stay away from tobacco	Include weight bearing exercises to build and maintain strong bones	Limit sedentary behavior such as sitting, lying down, watching TV, and other forms of screen-based entertainment	About ¼ of your plate should come from high protein foods	Muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).
			Limit alcohol intake	Limit sedentary behavior such as sitting, lying down, watching TV, etc.



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Please visit TogetherCounts.com  
<http://TogetherCounts.com>  
for the digital version of this booklet,  
where more resources are made available  
through embedded links to the Internet.



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