

***FIT*after50**

Weight Loss Essentials

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Introduction

Let's be honest: you know that obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight is healthy for you. And you know that exercising and eating right are important. So what's new?

Although many of the basic principles of healthy weight management haven't changed, we know a lot more today than we did years ago.

For one thing, we understand better the complex challenges we face in managing our weight. We've also discovered how people can get around these obstacles. And most importantly, we've learned that when it comes to health, there's no such thing as "one size fits all."

Weight control is about creating a healthy lifestyle that works for YOU, one step at a time, day by day. This handbook will help you do it.

Why Is a Healthy Weight Important?

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight is good for your overall health and will help you prevent and control many diseases and conditions. We know that an increase in weight also increases the risk for heart disease, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, gallbladder disease, gynecologic disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and even some lung problems.

Maintaining a healthy weight has many benefits, including feeling good about yourself and having more energy to enjoy life.

A person's weight is the result of many things—height, genes, metabolism, behavior, and environment. Maintaining a healthy weight requires energy balance: balancing the calories you get from food and beverages with the calories you use to keep your body going and being physically active.

- If calories IN and calories OUT over time are equal, your weight stays the same
- More calories IN than OUT over time = weight gain
- More calories OUT than IN over time = weight loss

Your energy IN and OUT don't have to balance exactly every day. It's the balance over time that your weight in the long run. It's our overall habits, not what we do occasionally, that determines our outcomes.

For many people, this balance means eating fewer calories and increasing their physical activity. Cutting back on calories is a matter of choice. Making healthy food choices including unrefined, minimally processed foods such as vegetables and fruits, whole grains, healthy fats and healthy sources of protein, and avoiding highly processed snack foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, refined (white) grains, refined sugar, fried foods, foods high in saturated and trans fats, and high-glycemic foods such as potatoes can help you cut back on calories, as can paying attention to portion sizes.

This handbook will provide you with information to figure out your body mass index and weight related risk for disease. It will also give you information on when and how to lose weight, including tips on healthy eating and physical activity, setting weight loss goals, and rewarding your success.

First, let's gather some information—

Check Your Body Mass Index

Your body mass index (BMI) is a good indicator of your risk for a variety of diseases since it gives an accurate estimate of your total body fat.

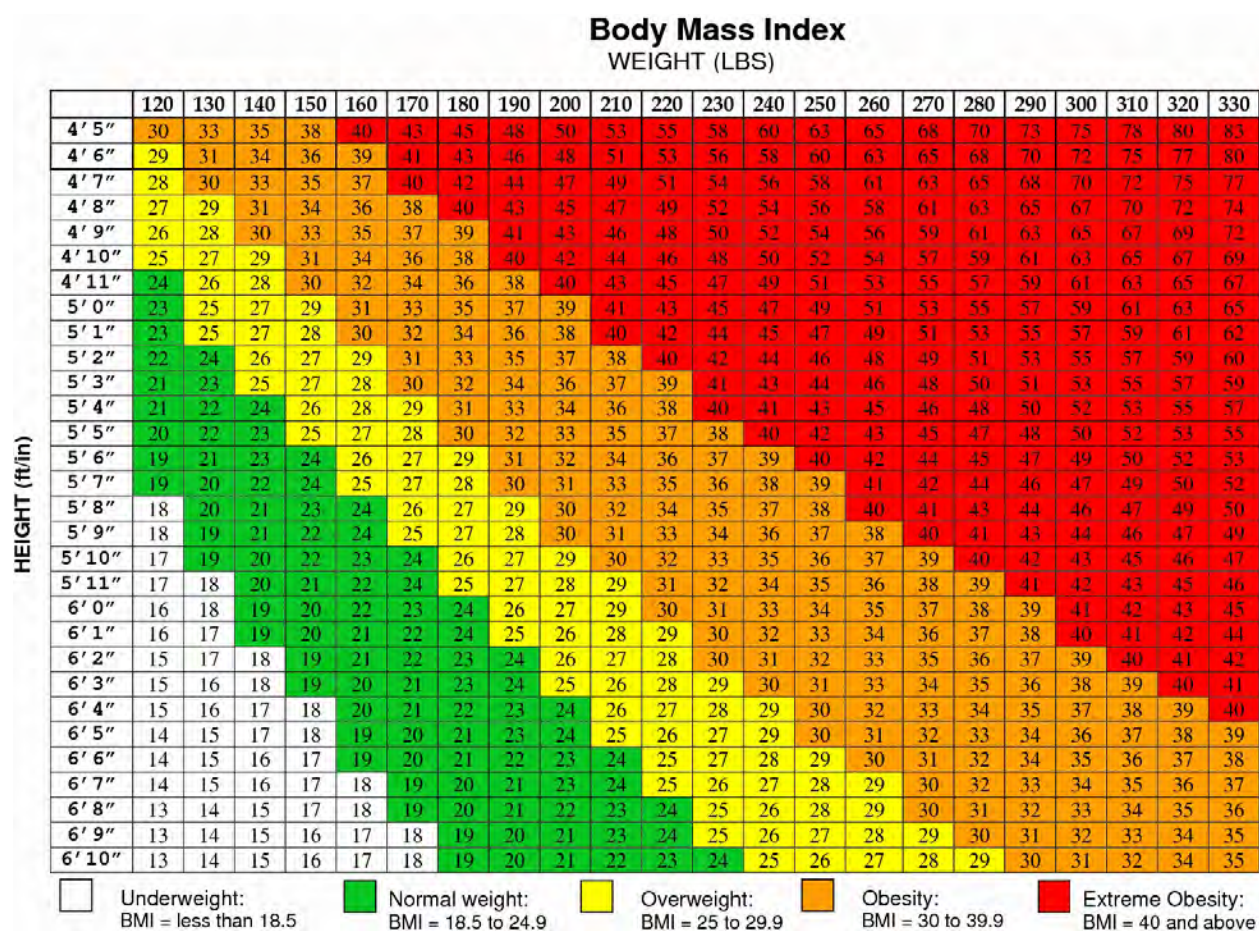
Use the chart on the next page to find your weight and height and then go above that column to find your BMI.

You can also find your BMI another way by doing this: Divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared and then multiply the total by 703.

Look at the bottom of the BMI chart to see the BMI ranges for underweight, normal weight, overweight, and obesity.

While BMI is valid for most men and women, it does have some limitations:

- It may overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build.
- It may underestimate body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle mass.



What is your risk?

If you're overweight, you have more risk of having health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. If you carry your extra weight around your waistline, your risk is even higher.

It's a lifestyle, not a crash course.

If losing weight were simple and easy, everybody would have done it by now! Give yourself some credit for persisting in the face of adversity. The fact is, it can be extremely challenging to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, particularly in this culture of conveniences, extremes and excesses. Plus, with so many complex diet and weight-loss programs out there (and so much conflicting advice), you can easily spend years working your way through them all without ever achieving an ideal balance or lasting results.

To make sense of weight loss once and for all, it may be that what you really need is a high-altitude overview of what's required and how it all fits together — and maybe a study guide to coach you through the core material.

In this handbook we'll outline some essential ideas in four key topic areas — the ones you most need to master in order to manage your weight successfully. We won't suggest that these simple ideas represent the be-all and end-all compendium of weight-loss knowledge. But we do contend that understanding these ideas is an essential start to obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight.

Getting Started

Wherever you are is a great place to start

Have you tried to lose weight before, or is this your first time? Have you been overweight a long time, or did you put on weight recently? Are you trying to lose

a lot, or just a few pounds? Or, are you just trying to keep from gaining in the future?

Wherever you are, the principles are the same. As you get started, keep these things in mind:

1. **Weight management is a lifestyle**, it's not a diet. Diets aren't permanent — they have a beginning, middle, and end. When you adopt a healthy weight lifestyle, it starts today and doesn't have an end date. You're changing your lifestyle for good.
2. **Focus on health and fitness first**, weight second. The healthier you are, the easier weight loss becomes. And if you lose weight at the expense of your health, you're unlikely to keep it off.
3. **Set realistic goals**. Think about what you want to achieve and why. Set a positive-minded, health and fitness oriented goal that you know you can accomplish. Be specific and realistic, with a clear objective to create sustainable habits that you'll incorporate permanently into your lifestyle.
4. **Start where you are and make gradual changes**. Take pride in your progress, learn as you go and, most important, take slip-ups and setbacks in stride. Every so-called failure is really just feedback about what doesn't work for you.
5. **Focus on one change at a time**. This handbook is full of ideas for lifestyle changes that could help you lose weight. But don't take them all on at once. Focus on one change at a time.
6. **Pay attention to the details**. Notice when you are triggered to overeat or skip workouts. Observe the impact certain foods have on your energy, digestion, water retention, etc. Start reading labels on everything you buy — coffee creamers, sauces — in order to suss out toxins like trans fats

(hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils), artificial sweeteners and flavors, and blood-sugar-spiking sugars (e.g., high-fructose corn syrup).

7. **Say “NO” to big portions.** Keep in mind that the average adult stomach has only about a 1-quart capacity, so eating a platter-size meal makes no sense. Overstuffing also impedes digestion and gives your body more calories than it can put to good use at one time. If you’ve got a big appetite, start your meal with a large vegetable salad.
8. **Past attempts to lose weight are learning experiences.** It’s not about success or failure. Each attempt has given you information, increased your awareness, and given you tools to build on. All of these things can help you succeed.
9. **You can enjoy a healthy lifestyle.** An active life, healthy eating, and other healthy habits will make you feel better. Take pleasure in your new habits every day.
10. **Change your life and your body will follow.** Even small steps — like drinking more water, walking around the block in the morning or refusing to eat while watching TV — can start you in the right direction.
11. **Remember, weight loss is individual.** We all have different bodies and different metabolisms. So don’t fret if your best friend seems to be shedding weight at a faster rate. Just keep your eyes on the prize: healthy weight loss and whole-body vitality that lasts.
12. **There are people who can support you.** Find friends or coaches who can encourage you. Better yet, get your friends to do this with you. Nobody can lose weight for you, but you may not be able to do it alone.

13. **You can do this.** Tell yourself, “I’ve done other hard things, and I can do this, too.” Give yourself the same encouragement you would give a friend who was trying to lose weight.

How to Start Losing Weight

Successful weight loss doesn’t rely on any one magic bullet or secret weapon. Instead, it results from taking a lifestyle approach that combines four separate but intertwining components:

- **It’s a Lifestyle**
- **Weight Management**
- **Nutrition**
- **Fitness**

Lifestyle

Seasoned weight-loss experts all agree that people who commit to making lasting changes to several aspects of their lives are the most successful in losing weight and keeping it off. This means that you must define the deep motivation and reason you want to lose weight, whether it’s living to enjoy your grandchildren, feeling freer to express your true nature, or another priority.

Most of us want to look better, of course, but underlying that desire is almost always some other, more essential motivation, such as wanting to feel more confident, more like our best self, etc.

Research shows that you are more likely to succeed at making large-scale life changes if you start gradually and attempt to adjust only one behavior at a time. For most people, trying to do everything at once most often results in failure.

What works best is to start your plan with a relatively simple commitment, like cutting out dessert one week. The next week add some exercise, and the week

after that make the switch from soft drinks to water. As you accumulate small successes and feel their impact on your energy and self-esteem, it will become easier to undertake larger adjustments.

Keep in mind that your body and mind are linked. Nutrition and fitness can have huge physiological impacts on your emotional and psychological well-being. Both affect the hormones responsible for communicating brain-body messages and for regulating metabolism, so it's common for people to start exercising and eating better and suddenly find themselves more energized, optimistic and motivated overall!

If you really want to lose excess weight and keep it off (or if you just want to maintain your current weight and stay healthy for the long haul), start by putting aside any worries about your love handles or saddlebags. Instead, start focusing on the space between your ears. Weight loss starts with the brain, not the belly. Any weight-loss misconceptions or misinformation harbored there could present a real danger to your weight-management success.

Sleep well

Not sleeping enough can switch on the hormones that make you feel hungry. The more sleep-deprived you are, the more likely you are to be overweight.

In fact, people who sleep fewer than 5 hours a night are also far more likely to have diabetes, depression, or anxiety. Any of these can make it harder to manage your weight.

Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. To make sleep come more easily, set up a regular bedtime routine. Make sure your room is dark and quiet and comfortable. Don't drink caffeine or alcohol close to bedtime.

Stress less

Recent research shows a connection between stress and being overweight. It seems that higher levels of cortisol, the so-called “stress hormone,” increase our tendency to store excess fat — especially around our waist. Activities that can help manage stress include exercise, meditation, hobbies, and being with supportive friends. These things can make your weight loss efforts more successful.

Find social support

Family and friends can impact your lifestyle choices and your weight — for better or for worse. Ask your family and friends to support and encourage you. Better yet, ask them to do this with you. Look for partners and supporters for each of your goals.

Take care of your mental health

Feelings of sadness, loneliness, or depression can make it hard to manage your weight. In addition, medications used to treat mental health conditions sometimes cause weight gain.

Remember this: Exercise is one of the most important treatments for both mental health and weight management. If you’re having trouble keeping your spirits up, try to increase your exercise. Try sharing your feelings with a trusted friend.

NUTRITION

One of the biggest mistakes people make in losing weight is approaching their eating habits as a diet. The problem with diets is that they have a beginning, a middle (the diet), and an end. This implies a temporary change. When you adopt a healthy weight lifestyle, it starts today and doesn't have an end date.

Forget about finding instant fixes and miracle cures.

As much as we all might like the idea of a “magic bullet,” most experts agree that healthy, sustainable weight loss doesn't come from extreme measures or single-faceted diets. Nor does it come from relying on heavily marketed low-fat or low-carb foods and diet drinks (which, in fact, have been shown to hinder weight-loss efforts by messing up metabolism, contributing to cravings and undermining energy levels).

It is far more useful to approach eating as a pleasant and positive “fueling” activity, the whole point of which is to provide you with the best energy and vitality possible.

When you start thinking of eating right as a way of supporting your body's natural health and weight-regulating systems — rather than merely as a way of limiting calories — nutrition becomes a lot more interesting.

And the more you learn, the more empowered and motivated you'll be to make good choices. It's a sad fact that very few people understand that good nutrition makes losing weight far easier.

The most basic thing you need to understand about proper, healthy nutrition is that our bodies are adapted to process fresh, whole foods — the only foods our ancestors had available. Sadly, technological advances have transformed much of the North American diet to contain too much CRAP (Carbohydrates, Refined sugars, Additives and Preservatives). Our bodies don't recognize these foods as

viable sources of nutrients. Worse, by acting as toxins, pro-inflammatories and immune suppressors in our system, they can actively interfere with weight loss.

A healthy, balanced diet consisting of fresh, whole foods including vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, beans, nuts, seeds, olive oil, whole grains, teas, herbs and spices provides whole-body health and vitality. The health of our metabolism — the machinery that dictates how we burn fat and produce muscle — requires whole, “real” foods and the complex, synergistic blend of nutrients they contain in order to function properly. This is why replacing whole foods with “diet” fare (or foods selected exclusively on the basis of their low-calorie, low carb, high-protein or low-fat characteristics) tends to work against long-term weight management goals.

Our bodies require a consistent balance of healthy macronutrients (complex carbs, high-quality proteins and healthy fats), as well as micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytochemicals), plus adequate enzymes, fiber, water, and so on in order to function optimally. When we don’t get these things, our energy levels drop, our hormones and neurotransmitters get imbalanced, and our metabolism stops working efficiently.

When you understand how our bodies process food, you’ll see that having a bagel for breakfast sets you up for sugar cravings in the afternoon, and missing out on good nutrition at lunch may cause you to overeat at night. Biochemical and nutritional problems can also make it very difficult for people to lose weight.

If you restrict caloric intake but fail to properly manage your blood-sugar levels or to correct nutritionally related hormonal imbalances, you may find that your body simply adjusts by metabolically slowing down.

Getting an appropriate balance of protein, carbs and fats is important, but just as important is monitoring the nutritional character and quality of those macronutrients. Getting adequate essential fatty acids is necessary to support

thermogenesis — your body’s ability to burn fuel for warmth. Getting a good supply of amino acids is crucial to neurotransmitter production, which in turn affects both mood and energy. Eating in a way that supports consistent blood sugar levels helps you reduce cravings and sustain activity.

But while many people can intuitively accept that getting adequate nutrition is essential to weight loss, far fewer understand the nutritional principles involved. It’s complex because our bodies are complex, but once you understand the biochemistry of eating, it’s incredibly empowering and liberating.

Striving for good variety and high quality in your food choices (freshness, wholeness, healthy preparation) is far more important than achieving some “perfect” mathematical ratio of carbs, fats and proteins. Still, carbs (from fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains) are critical for energy. Proteins (from eggs, meats, dairy, legumes and nuts) are essential for building and maintaining lean muscle. Fats (naturally occurring and added in the form of healthy oils) are crucial for satisfying hunger and supporting a variety of important biochemical operations — including some, like thermogenesis, that are key to losing weight!

Emphasizing fresh whole foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, will make weight loss easier for a variety of reasons. These foods have relatively low energy density, which means they’re high in water and don’t contain many calories. You can eat quite a lot of them to help satisfy your hunger, which helps you avoid overeating more calorie-dense foods.

You also need the nutrients, phytochemicals and fiber from whole fruits and vegetables to stay healthy, to feel energetic and keep your digestion working properly. Drinking plenty of water throughout the day can also facilitate weight loss and keep thirst driven “phantom” cravings at bay.

In addition to making smart and healthy food choices, of course, you also need to consider how much you eat. Eating smaller meals and adding two or three small

snacks to satisfy cravings and energy needs can help you reduce your desire for large portions. Try tracking your intake in a food journal. You will probably note that as your nutrition improves, your desire to overeat will also naturally diminish.

Important Stuff to Know

All calories are not created equal

Many of us know instinctively that not all calories are the same. A lollipop and an apple may contain similar numbers of calories but the apple is clearly better for us.

It is true that if you take in more calories than you burn, you will gain weight. But it's also true that the nutritional quality of those calories plays a big role in how many calories your body burns. So if you're simply counting calories without looking at the nutritional value of what you're eating, you're asking for trouble. Looking only at calories ignores the metabolic effects of each calorie; the source of the calorie changes how you digest it and how you retrieve energy from it.

Rather than looking at calories, it's better to understand glycemic index (GI) as a more accurate measure of a food's value (good or bad). When something has a low glycemic index, it raises your blood sugar levels slowly, increasing your insulin levels gradually. That's good, because too many insulin spikes result in insulin resistance, where your body stops responding to insulin it is producing, and results in type 2 diabetes.

High-glycemic foods, on the other hand, cause blood sugar levels and thus insulin to rise quickly, prompting the overproduction of insulin and fat storage. Shift your food intake to low-glycemic foods like whole-grain pasta, wheat bread, fruits, beans, and nuts. High-glycemic foods include candy, sweet drinks, croissants, and scones. By choosing the low-glycemic foods and thus the minimally processed foods, people can lose more weight, feel fuller longer, and remain healthier.

Why? Because our bodies require a consistent balance of healthy macronutrients (complex carbs, high-quality proteins and healthy fats), as well as micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytochemicals), plus adequate enzymes, fiber, water, and so on in order to function optimally. When we don't get these things, our energy levels drop, our hormones and neurotransmitters get imbalanced, and our metabolism stops working efficiently.

We simply aren't as healthy as we should be, and our bodies don't regulate much of anything (including our weight and body composition) as well as they are designed to.

The health of our metabolism — the machinery that dictates how we burn fat and produce muscle — requires whole, “real” foods and the complex, synergistic blend of nutrients they contain in order to function properly. This is why replacing whole foods with diet foods or processed foods tends to work against long-term weight management goals.

To Lose Weight, Eat Healthy

Many weight-loss diets call for a dramatic reduction in daily caloric intake, which tends to deprive the body of the very nutrients it needs to effectively release and process unwanted fat. But eating too little or skipping meals has another extreme downside: It puts the body in a starvation-like “fat conservation” mode.

When you take in fewer calories than are necessary to fuel your resting metabolic rate (the base amount of caloric energy your body requires while at rest), your body simply compensates by reducing your metabolic rate. Goodbye, caloric burn.

Your body thinks it's starving to death, so it not only cuts back on the energy you need to exercise and move about, it also sets off chemical processes inside you that force you to eat more.

Net result: weight gain.

You can get a very rough estimate of your resting metabolic rate by multiplying your weight in pounds by 10 (if you weigh 150 pounds, for example, your resting metabolic rate would be approximately 1,500 calories per day. If you eat less than that amount, your body will instantly perceive danger and turn on the alarm system that protects you from starvation and slows your metabolism.

The best approach is to adopt a lifestyle where you choose fresh, whole foods, and choose once and for all to eat healthy for life. Enjoy delicious, high-quality foods in ways that nurture your body and your senses for the long haul.

Focus on Good Fats

The human brain – your brain – is 60% fat. With that in mind, does it make sense that fat is evil? Or does it make more sense that avoiding fats is a mistake? The fact is, taking in an adequate supply of healthy fats is essential to proper body composition, whole-body health and long-term weight management.

One of the keys to losing weight, is to understand the differences between bad fats (notably trans fats and rancid fats, found in most processed foods) and good fats (including monounsaturated fats, like those found in nuts, seeds and fish. It's also okay to eat small to moderate amounts of saturated fat, the kind found in real butter, cream, grass-fed meats and virgin coconut oil). It may seem counterintuitive that our bodies need fat in order to burn fat, but nutrition experts agree that have to consume good fats if our bodies are to function properly.

Your body needs not only the much-touted omega-3 fats, they say, but also some plant-based omega-6s and a certain amount of the much-maligned saturated fat, in order to nourish your brain, heart, nerves, hormones and cell structures.

Fail to get these fats and both your health and weight-loss efforts will suffer for it. If you fail to get adequate healthy fats your energy drops, your nerves don't fire

efficiently, glands malfunction, and your hormones and metabolism cease to function properly.

While eating an excessive amount of any kind of fat will compromise bodily function and lead to weight gain, eating a moderate amount of the good fats found in whole foods not only helps our bodies stay healthy and vibrant, it also delivers the benefit of controlling blood-sugar levels and appetite, both of which have a direct impact on successful weight loss and maintenance.

Most nutrition experts suggest taking in between 15 and 25 percent of your daily calories as fat. If you're vigilant about including fat in the form of nutritious, whole foods like avocados, nuts, fish, healthy oils including cold-pressed olive, seed, and nut oil and small-scale saturated-fat indulgences like real butter and cream, grass-fed meats, and coconut, you'll get all of fat's weight-management benefits, without compromising your waistline. You'll also find it easier to say no to fatty processed foods and other unhealthy indulgences of all kinds.

Reduce Inflammation

While inflammation is new to the lexicon of obesity, its role in weight gain is piquing interest among top scientists. Nutrition researchers at Harvard Medical School conclude that inflammation precedes obesity.

Here's a simplified explanation:

The immune system's inflammatory response is a good thing when it happens on a small scale. A localized cut or infection calls for an outpouring of white blood cells to mop up the mess. You see some swelling, some irritation, but within a few days, things are back to normal.

When toxins in the diet irritate the lining of the gut on a constant or near-constant basis, however, the immune system may go into overdrive and can do more harm than good. Swelling and irritation may occur throughout the body.

Antibodies build up and start confusing and compromising the body's organ and endocrine systems, which can result in inflammatory reactions

Over time, a food sensitivities can trigger an inflammatory response, resulting in disrupted hormone levels, brain chemicals and the immune system. The end result is weight gain — and increased risk for chronic diseases of all sorts.

So the bottom line is that if you aren't following an anti-inflammatory diet, anything else you are doing to live a healthier life, such as exercising and taking vitamins, doesn't work nearly as well as it could.

FITNESS

No weight-loss program is complete without an adequate fitness plan. Fitness helps you burn lots of calories and develop lean muscle mass – and since muscles burn calories, the more lean muscle you have the more calories you burn, even at rest. Moderate exercise builds immunity and keeps you healthier overall. Exercise gives you energy, balances blood-sugar levels and helps you build self-esteem. And one of the best parts about improving your fitness is that it makes losing weight easier and more enjoyable overall.

Studies show that roughly eighty percent of people who succeed in losing weight list exercising three or more times per week as their primary strategy.

How much exercise do you need to lose weight? That depends in part on what you are eating, but most experts, including the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) all recommend you get at least 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise five times per week.

Personally, I strongly recommend you get more than 30 minutes per day. Why is that? The longest-lived people in the world have several things in common, and one of them is that they move regularly throughout the day. Think about it: if you sleep 8 hours per day, and get just 30 minutes of exercise per day, what are you doing the rest of your day? Sitting? Sitting for 15 ½ hours per day? Does that sound like the recipe for a healthy, lean body?

get at least 30 minutes of exercise five times per week.

And after 50, it becomes extremely important that you include a balance of strength training, high intensity interval training, balance training and flexibility work in your exercise lifestyle. If it feels overwhelming to undertake all of that at once, start with what appeals to you and what you can do.

Plan to periodically review and expand your fitness program as you get stronger, more confident and more motivated. The most important thing is just to start. It's

an interesting fact that Newton's first law applies to people: Newton's first law says "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion." You'll find that as you begin to get regular exercise, you'll find that

*A person at rest stays at rest, and
A person in motion stays in motion*

The trick is starting to get yourself in motion. It becomes habit forming. As you start to get regular movement, educate yourself about how your body works and how you can help it work better.

Most experts recommend monitoring your progress in a weekly journal or fitness log, noting when you worked out, how long, what you did, plus changes in your diet and any weight you may have lost. If you've been sedentary for a long time, and you're just starting an exercise routine, don't be surprised if you don't lose weight right away, since you'll be adding lean muscle mass as you lose fat, and muscle is more dense than fat – so don't get obsessive about weighing yourself all the time.

Instead, start paying closer attention to how your body feels, how your clothes fit, and to the changes taking shape beneath the surface. Be ready to adjust and fine-tune your program as you go along, and remember that even if you do everything right, your weight is likely to fluctuate up and down by a few pounds on a regular basis.

As you put on muscle and lose fat, you will see and feel a positive difference. And if you don't? More than likely something is missing: It could be a lifestyle or psychological thing, a food or nutrition component, or some combination of all of the above.