

# LOSING WEIGHT, HEALTHY EATING, AND FIBER

These three subjects can be discussed as one, since each works with the other and they all have a common goal. Losing Weight and Healthy Eating will make you look better on the outside, feel better on the inside, and, give you a major edge in avoiding cancer, heart attacks, high blood pressure and stroke. These are the major killers in our society. The science behind Losing Weight and Healthy Eating is overwhelming. Of all the things you personally do, nothing comes close to their health benefit. Vitamins, minerals, herbs or any other supplement cannot reduce the risk of these illnesses like Losing Weight and Healthy Eating can.



What is Healthy Eating? It is simply eating those foods known to promote good health in the amounts to achieve a good weight. Females who are overweight seem to have the most problems losing weight. Some of this is perhaps genetic and some hormonal. However, in the end, the weight loss is directly related to calories eaten. The old adage still stands - there are no fat people in concentration camps. Fortunately, Healthy Eating combines weight loss, diet and fiber together like an interlocking puzzle. When all three fit together, they produce a beautiful picture of a new you, physically and mentally. Let's talk about each of these. The discussion won't be too long as there are diets on each of these three topics in the Patient Education section.

## Losing Weight

There are no secrets here. Weight loss will occur if the calories you eat are less than what your body needs. What you need is a plan with short-term and long-term goals.

1. **Do not lose weight rapidly.** It will come back just as quickly. A slow weight loss of 1- 2 pounds per week is plenty. Five pounds a month is a realistic goal as is 20 pounds in six months.
2. Get a good **waist high** or **full upright scale** or weigh yourself on such a scale at the YMCA or health club at least three times a week. Do not use a wimpy floor scale. They tend to be inaccurate on small weight changes. Permanent weight loss is serious business. Use a serious scale.
3. **Analyze yourself.** Are you a do-it-yourselfer, a group person, a binge eater? Do you need support from your spouse, a friend, a group program? There are so many types of weight loss programs available. Most health clubs, including the Y, have them. Weight Watchers is a traditional low cost program, especially if you avoid the expensive foods they sell. Hospital dietitians are available. What is right for you? Only you know this and can decide.
4. **Activity.** If you spend less time eating, you need something to fill the void. Activity, starting with vigorous walking, is almost a necessary part of the program. A 30-60 minute rapid walk once or even twice a day does wonders in clearing the head. Do not expect to burn off a whole lot of calories unless and until you get into aerobic exercise - i.e. swimming, jogging, bicycling, etc. Do not try to do exercise at home, especially on exercise equipment bought through TV ads. Home exercisers tend to quickly burn out. Go to a health spa or Y. Make friends with people who have similar interests.
5. **Head games.** Changing eating habits is like changing your instincts for breathing or sex. They are really part of ourselves, usually learned at an early age. How much food makes me full? Do I binge eat when I get stressed out? How do I deal with these feelings? This is difficult, make no mistake about it. Yet, to be successful, it must be addressed. Your

physician, spouse or friend, or even clergy, may be able to help. Perhaps you can learn relaxation techniques or some other self-contemplative stress reduction method.

You may go to the [Diet list](#) of the Patient Education section to find a weight loss program written by a registered dietitian. Let's go to the next part - Foods.

## Healthy Eating

Changing from the high animal and saturated fat diet of the past to one high in cereals, fruits, vegetables and fish is critical to good health. Cancer and heart risk can be dramatically reduced by this eating pattern. Like weight loss, the science behind this action is solid and incontrovertible. The major points are as follows:

1. **Reduce saturated fats and meat in the diet.** Use them occasionally, perhaps once or twice a week. Saturated fat can be hidden everywhere - in whole milk, even 2%, most dairy products, spreads, butter, all types of baked goods, cookies and sweets. Read the food labels. Look for the fat content and the total calories. There is now a wealth of good nutrition information on them.
2. **Eat fish two or three times a week.** Tuna is fine. There is something about the unsaturated fats in fish that is quite healthy. It appears that those who are regular fish eaters have less coronary heart disease and heart attacks. Asian women who eat a low saturated fat, high fish diet, have a much healthier form of fat in their breasts and have a much lower incidence of breast cancer than American women. There is increasing evidence for the role of fish in reducing both heart disease and cancer. Poultry without the skin is the other healthy high protein food.
3. **Vegetarian** pizza, salads, grains, beans and pasta are incredibly healthy as are high protein substitutes for meat and poultry meals. You don't need these latter high protein foods every day. A vegetarian day once a week or more is not a bad idea.
4. **Cereals, grains and pasta.** These are the cornerstone of Healthy Eating. They provide adequate calories in the form of complex carbohydrates, but also all the minerals you need and most of the necessary B vitamins. Grains and beans are exceptionally good protein sources.
5. **Vegetables.** You need lots of vegetables. Two or three servings a day is recommended. Green and brightly colored vegetables have good vitamin and antioxidant value. The cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, Brussel sprouts and cauliflower, have chemicals in them that seem to have anti-cancer effects in the body.
6. **Fruits.** Two or three servings a day are recommended. A glass of orange juice is a serving. So is an apple or pear. Fruits have vitamins and a healthy dose of fiber.

So you slip once in awhile. You have an ice cream sundae with friends or a Hershey candy bar. No big deal. Simply step forward into your new Healthy Eating pattern the next day.

Full details on the [Pyramid, Mediterranean, Asian and even Vegetarian Diets](#) are available in the Diet Section under Patient Education.

## Fiber

Fiber goes hand in hand with Healthy Eating and Losing Weight. You will have noticed that fibrous foods such as fruits and vegetables make up a large part of the Losing Weight and Healthy Eating food programs. Still, what is it about fiber that is so important?

Fiber, chemically, is a polysaccharide, a sugar-like substance. Fiber comes in thousands of forms. It is that part of the plant the human body cannot digest. Every vegetable and fruit has

some fiber. That is why eating the whole fruit or vegetable is so much healthier than simply the juice which has just the calories, minerals and vitamins.

But what does fiber do in the body? It is important to know that there are two major types of fiber - **insoluble and soluble**. The insoluble fiber absorbs water thereby creates bulkier stools and helps to regulate the stool pattern. The bacteria in the lower bowel or colon do not break down this fiber. The increased bulk in stool is from the absorbed water. Examples of insoluble fiber are wheat, barley, rye, corn and rice. The second type of fiber is soluble. Soluble fiber, too, absorbs water and becomes gelatinous and sticky. Examples of soluble fiber are oats, oat bran, fruit pectins, gum and gum arabic. So is psyllium which is in the products Metamucil and Konsyl. Soluble fibers are metabolized and used as a food source by the beneficial and necessary colon bacteria. These bacteria, thereby, actually create the nutrition needed by the cells lining the colon. The stool bulk created by soluble fiber is mostly due to increased bacteria growth. Soluble fiber can lower the cholesterol 10-15%. The down side for soluble fiber is that harmless gas forming bacteria in the colon may cause bloating, discomfort and increased rectal gas or flatus. Methylcellulose is a synthetic fiber that is present in the product Citrucel. It is only slightly soluble in water and probably only partly digested by colon bacteria.

The health benefits of fiber are now well proven. You need 20 -30 grams of fiber every day to gain those benefits. A high fiber diet is helpful in irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, diverticulosis and perhaps hiatus hernia. Rural Africans who eat 50 grams a day of fiber from their unprocessed grains have few of these diseases. A Harvard University study on their graduates showed that men who ate more than 25 grams of fiber a day had more than 33% fewer heart attacks than those who ate below 15 grams a day. It was previously thought that fiber protected one from colon cancer and polyps. There is now mixed evidence for this benefit in the medical literature. A recent study suggests no benefit. Whenever we see negative and positive results such as this, it is likely that the benefit is minimal or weak. For detailed information on prevention of this disease, go to the [Colon Cancer Prevention](#).

So fiber is very important. For much more information, click the [High Fiber Diet](#) in the Patient Education Diet section. I have written this in its entirety. Also check out the [Jackson Fiber Cocktail--Lite and Malt](#).

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