



# HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

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## BALANCING EATING AND EXERCISE

Keeping off weight can be tough. But there are many reasons to maintain a healthy weight. A healthy weight lowers your risk for chronic diseases, like diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. It can also help you stay more mobile as you age.

Excess weight comes from taking in more energy, or calories, than your body needs. Some extra energy may be stored as fat. Many factors influence your risk for weight gain. These include poor diet, lack of sleep, and not getting enough physical activity. Genes can also play a role. Certain medications affect weight gain, too.

Taking steps toward a healthy lifestyle—even small ones—can help you get on a path to a healthy weight.

## CALCULATING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

The definitions of overweight and obesity are based on body mass index, or BMI. BMI is based on your height and weight. Overweight for adults is a BMI between 25 and 29.9. Obesity is a BMI of 30 or greater. There are online tools to help you calculate your BMI.

If your BMI is high because of extra body fat, aim to lose about one to two pounds per week. “Some people might think losing weight quickly is the best strategy,” says Dr. Alison Brown, a nutrition scientist at NIH. “But really, the safer and more sustainable weight loss is gradual.”

To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you take in. “Combining both calorie restriction plus physical activity tends to be most effective for weight loss,” Brown says.

## CUTTING DOWN CALORIES

To lose weight, experts suggest taking in about 500 fewer calories than you burn per day. This should get you to about one pound per week of weight loss, says Dr. Susan Yanovski, an NIH expert on obesity and eating disorders.

Ask your doctor about tools to help you calculate exactly how many calories you need for your weight loss goals. Tools can take your age, sex, and level of physical activity into account.

Experts recommend limiting less healthy foods that are high in calories, saturated and trans fats, refined

carbohydrates, or sugar. “But there’s not one recommended diet for weight loss,” Yanovski says.

“The best diet is the one that you can stick with,” explains Brown. “It should be balanced and provide a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy or dairy alternatives.”

Creating an eating plan based on your likes and dislikes can help you stick with it. You can use nutrition labels to estimate how many calories a food has. But be sure to check the serving sizes and utilize nutrition labels.

A registered dietitian or a weight management program can also help you create a healthy eating plan.

## GETTING MORE ACTIVITY

Physical activity helps you burn off the calories you consume. Studies have found that it’s critical for maintaining a stable weight.

Experts recommend that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Aerobic activity is anything that gets your heart rate up and gets you breathing harder. Examples of moderate-intensity activities include brisk walking (faster than 2.5 miles per hour), swimming, and dancing.

If you’re able, start increasing your physical activity. Doing so slowly can help prevent injuries. Even light activity burns more calories than being sedentary. Start small. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Break up your day with short walks.

You can also break up moderate-intensity activity into short sessions. Every minute counts toward your weekly goal!

Don’t forget to do muscle-strengthening activities, like lifting weights. Experts recommend adults do them at least two days a week.

## STAYING ON TRACK

Creating new habits can help you lose and maintain your weight. Weigh yourself regularly to see if you’re meeting your weekly goals. You can use an app or journal to track your physical activity and food intake. Some devices can automatically track and record your activity. Calculate whether you’re burning more calories than you’re taking in.

Getting social support can help keep you motivated. Apps and social media sites may connect you with other people who support your goals.

“But often, people differ in terms of what they consider supportive,” notes Dr. Laurie Friedman Donze, a clinical psychologist at NIH. “So it’s important to communicate with your support system and let them know what you feel is helpful or unhelpful.”

“Trying to keep your stress under control and getting enough sleep are also good for preventing weight gain,” says Donze. “Stress can affect food cravings. Often, people will eat to reduce stress or as a way to comfort themselves. Not getting enough sleep may also increase your appetite or cravings for high-fat foods.”

“No matter what your weight loss goal is,” says Brown, “it takes time. Be patient with the process.”

It can be difficult to lose or keep weight off. Some people may benefit from medication or surgery in addition to lifestyle changes. If you’re struggling with losing weight or maintaining weight loss, ask your health care provider if medications or surgery may be helpful for you.

## ADDITIONAL MHBP RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOU

MHBP has extensive resources to assist you in supporting your healthy weight!

MHBP offers a Lifestyle and Condition Coaching Program, provides you or your covered dependents personalized support that helps you manage existing conditions, learn new habits and stay on their path to better health. Our Health Coach will partner with you to transform your health goals into action. Your Health Coach will provide guidance, support, and resources to help you overcome obstacles that may be keeping you from realizing optimal health. You can talk to a Coach Weight Management, Exercise, Nutrition, and Stress Management. To get started with Health Coaching call toll-free at 866-533-1410.

MHBP has a registered dietitian to help support your nutritional goals. MHBP also covers, when medically necessary, bariatric surgery and weight loss medications. If you have any questions or would like more information, please call MHBP at 800-410-7778.

### SOURCES:

- National Institutes of Health: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/>
- [MHBP.com](https://www.mhbp.com)

## UPDATE ON POSTAL SERVICE HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM (PSHBP)

Beginning January 1, 2025, Postal Service Active Employees and Annuitants will receive their medical health benefits through the Postal Service Health Benefits Program (PSHBP), which is a separate subset of the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHB), although it will still be administered through Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

### WILL MHBP BE A HEALTH PLAN IN PSHBP?

Great news, MHBP has been conditionally approved to be part of the Postal Service Health Benefits Program. OPM has indicated that it will not release final information about which insurers are in the PSHBP until Summer/Fall 2024. MHBP intends to offer the same three Plan Options in the Postal Service Health Benefits Program that we have now: Standard Option, Value Plan and Consumer Option. MHBP is your Union-sponsored health plan and Mail Handlers can count on MHBP to support their health!

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PSHBP?

Each Local Union has designated specific Union Members to be a key contact in relaying information and questions about the program. In addition, MHBP’s website contains up to date information from the Postal Service on educational materials and resources for the program at [www.mhbp.com/postal-service-health-benefits-program](http://www.mhbp.com/postal-service-health-benefits-program)

Fact Sheets provide basic information regarding the PSHBP. There are two Fact Sheets, one for USPS Active Employees and one for USPS Annuitants. These Fact Sheets are available on, [LiteBlue.usps.gov](http://LiteBlue.usps.gov) and [KeepingPosted.org](http://KeepingPosted.org). The Fact Sheets are an introduction to further education programs from USPS.

The USPS has developed a five-part educational video series about PSHBP and Medicare. You can access it through [www.keepingposted.org/pshb-videos.htm](http://www.keepingposted.org/pshb-videos.htm) In addition, the Postal Service Benefits and Wellness Team hosts lunch and learn seminars via zoom every other Thursday with 2 sessions, held from noon to 1pm and 4 until 5pm eastern through December. The schedule is available on [www.keepingposted.org/pshb-lunch-learn-seminars.htm](http://www.keepingposted.org/pshb-lunch-learn-seminars.htm) Finally, to ask questions by phone, the Postal Service has a PSHBP Navigator Line 833-712-PSHB (7742).

### WHEN DO I NEED TO SOMETHING?

The Special Enrollment Period is April 1 to October 30, 2024 for current postal service retirees who want to late enroll in Medicare Part B, without late penalty. Eligibility for the Special Enrollment period has been mailed to annuitants. If you have misplaced the notification letter or believe that you are eligible to participate in the Special Enrollment Period and did not receive notification letter, contact the PSHB Navigator Help Line’s toll-free number at 833-712-PSHB (7742), or email [retirementbenefits@usps.gov](mailto:retirementbenefits@usps.gov).

Open Season 2024 occurs November 11, 2024–December 9, 2024, when all Postal Service Active Employees and Annuitants can select or change a medical insurance plan in PSHBP.

In the meantime, please make sure the USPS and OPM have your current address, and, if you are an active employee, make sure you are able to access LiteBlue.