

How to lose weight if you have Diabetes (Page 1 of 2)

Being overweight can make it more difficult to control diabetes.

Losing some weight can make a big difference to your health. For example losing as little as 10 % of body weight – that is 1 ½ stone (10 kg) for a 16 stone (100 kg) person - can help:

- Improve your blood glucose (sugar) control
- Lower levels of cholesterol (fat) in the blood
- Lower your blood pressure
- Reduce your risk of complications such as heart attack and stroke
- You to feel less tired and better about yourself

Keeping to a healthy weight can be more difficult for people with diabetes as some treatments cause weight gain (e.g. sulphonylureas and certain insulin therapies) – partly due to the need for regular meals and snacks. If you have gained weight due to your diabetes medication, talk to your Doctor or Nurse, as there may be alternative treatments that can help you. Remember that losing weight can help to reduce your insulin and/or tablet needs, as the insulin your body uses will work better.

Having diabetes makes no difference to how you lose weight. You either have to eat less calories (energy), or use up more calories by increasing the amount of physical activity you do – ideally you should do both.

Aim to lose weight slowly by eating sensibly. Losing 1-2 lb (1/2 – 1 kg) per week on average is good. Keep to a healthy diet that is low in fat and calories, and try to increase the amount of activity that you do. By losing weight slowly and steadily, you can still maintain good diabetes control whilst the weight you lose is more likely to stay off.

Avoid drastic (“crash”) dieting. These diets are attractive because of very quick weight loss to begin with. However most people find that the weight goes back on again as soon as they go back to eating normally. Some diets can seriously affect diabetes control, so are best avoided unless under the supervision of a Doctor or a Dietitian.

Set yourself realistic targets. If your weight is increasing, your first target should be not to put on further weight. Focus on 2 or 3 small changes that you can make to your diet and lifestyle each week – and stick with them. Remember any weight loss is better than none.

**Produced by the Nutrition and Dietetic Department
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Try to....

Eat three meals a day – a breakfast, a light meal and a main meal. Never miss meals as you will be more hungry and likely to snack on high calorie foods or overeat. Missing meals also makes diabetes more difficult to control.

Base meals on high fibre foods such as wholegrain bread and cereals, wholewheat pasta, brown rice, jacket potatoes, fruit, vegetables and pulses. These foods help to control blood glucose levels better and are more filling, so that you do not need to eat so much.

Eat less fat and fatty foods as these are very high in calories:

- Choose lower fat foods such as lean meat and low fat dairy products (e.g. skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, cottage cheese and low fat, low sugar yoghurts)
- Grill, bake, microwave cook, steam or poach your food instead of frying.
- All spreading fats and cooking oils are high in fat and calories – those based on monounsaturated fat (e.g. olive oil) are a better choice, however use sparingly and avoid adding any extra fat or oil when cooking.
- Limit the amount of biscuits, cakes, pastries, chips and crisps that you eat, including the low fat varieties – these are not always low in calories or sugar.
- Check food labels – look for foods containing 3 g of fat or less per 100 g.

Eat less sugar and sugary foods - have low calorie, low sugar foods and drinks such as no added sugar squash, sugar free jelly and low fat, low sugar yoghurts instead.

Drink less alcohol (if you drink). Alcohol is very high in calories and increases your appetite. Try low calorie mixer drinks such as “slimline” tonic, “diet” cola and lemonade, which are virtually calorie free.

Not have second helpings, unless these are of vegetables or salad.

Avoid eating between meals. If you are hungry, try eating fruit, raw vegetables sticks or drinking a large glass of water or low calorie drink instead.

Be as active as possible as often as you can – choose an activity that you enjoy (e.g. walking, swimming, cycling, gardening, etc.). Aim to build up slowly to 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity activity every day.

Avoid weighing yourself more than once a week. Remember you are aiming to lose no more than 1-2 lb (1/2 –1 kg) each week.

This information sheet is intended to help get you started losing weight. Ask your Doctor or Nurse about what other help is available to help you to lose weight.

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