

THIS LEAFLET IS NOT INTENDED TO REPLACE THE
ADVICE OF YOUR SPECIALIST HEALTHCARE TEAM

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MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT

TIPS AND INFORMATION ABOUT
HIGH AND LOW CALORIE DIETS



BODY WEIGHT AND HEALTH

Achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight is important for everyone. The risk of things like heart disease, strokes, diabetes and certain types of cancer increase if you are overweight and are reduced by being a healthy weight. On the other hand, people who are underweight often lack essential nutrients in their diet, such as calcium and iron, and their immune system can be weakened. Women who are underweight can find that their periods stop.

It's clear that being the weight that's right for you is a great goal for your health.

There are psychological benefits too. It can give you confidence and a sense of control. After all, even if achieving and maintaining your ideal weight takes a bit of effort, it

is something you can make conscious positive decisions towards, so it is important to set realistic goals.

You probably already have a sense of whether you need to gain or lose weight. There are some tools on the next page that you can use to see how healthy your weight is and to keep track of it if you choose to make changes to your diet.

Whatever weight you are, if you suddenly lose weight for no apparent reason, do talk to a doctor because it can be a sign of serious illness



HOW TO MEASURE AND KEEP TRACK OF YOUR WEIGHT

Measuring your weight before you make any dietary changes and then keeping track of it over time will help you to see how you are doing as you work towards a healthy weight.

Body mass index (BMI)

BMI takes into account both your height and your weight. It is worked out by taking your weight in kilograms and dividing it by your height (in metres) squared. There are handy BMI calculators available online from the British Dietetic Association at: www.bdaweightwise.com and on the NHS choices website. It offers a good basic understanding but isn't the only factor you should consider when thinking about your health.

What does my BMI mean?

- Less than 18.5 kg/m² = underweight
- 18.5 to 24.9 kg/m² = healthy weight
- 25 to 29.9 kg/m² = overweight
- More than 30 kg/m² = obese

Waist measurement

Although BMI gives a good guide of whether your weight is right for you, it doesn't measure how much fat is stored around your body. People who have a lot of fat on their waistline have a higher risk of health problems, so measuring your waist can give you some information about that. To measure your waist accurately, wrap the tape measure around your middle halfway between your lowest rib and the top of your hip bone.

What does my waist measurement mean?

- Less than 80cm (31 ½ inches) is healthy for women
- Less than 94cm (37 inches) is healthy for men
- For men of South Asian origin the healthy measurement is less than 90cm (35 inches)

Speak to your specialist healthcare team to see whether gaining or losing some weight would be good for you; they can also give you tips on how to lose or gain weight safely.



HIGH CALORIE DIETS

Being underweight can be as unhealthy as being overweight. It can be a sign that you're not getting enough nutrients or energy from your diet. If you're thinking that you might need a high calorie diet, or it's been recommended for you, here is some information that could help you to achieve your health goals.

The amount of energy in food or drink is measured in calories. A 'kilocalorie' is another word for what we usually call a 'calorie' (1,000 calories will be written as 1,000kcal on food packaging). Our bodies use the energy from food in everyday activity, which includes everything from breathing to running. To put on weight, the energy we put into our bodies must be more than the energy we use

A high calorie diet might be recommended for a number of reasons. For example, you might have lost weight because you have gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms like diarrhoea. That can cause weight loss because the body doesn't have enough time to get all the calories from the food. Also, GI symptoms like pain and constipation can make you want to eat less than normal.

People with Gaucher disease often need to eat more calories than others because the condition increases the body's metabolism, so energy is used up more quickly. Despite the need for more food, if you have an enlarged liver or spleen this can make you feel full even after just a few mouthfuls. That's because the enlarged organs don't leave enough space in the body cavity for a really full stomach.

People with Pompe disease may have difficulty swallowing, so a high calorie diet might help because you can get the energy you need from a smaller amount of food.

High calorie diets are good for gaining weight, meeting the needs of a high metabolism or for getting more energy from a smaller volume of food

Look at the tips for following a high calorie diet on page six of this leaflet.



LOW CALORIE DIETS

If a low calorie diet is recommended for you, there is no need to feel offended. You may already know in your heart of hearts that losing a few pounds would make you healthier. In fact, the majority of adults in the UK are overweight or obese according to national health surveys, yet research suggests we are a country in denial about our weight.

There are also reasons that a low calorie diet might be recommended even if you're not overweight. For example, some people with Pompe disease find that having a slimmer physique and lower body weight makes it easier to keep active despite their muscles becoming weaker. Also, if muscle weakness and breathing difficulties have made you less physically active, then a low calorie diet can help to avoid gaining too much weight.

When we eat and drink more calories than we use up, our bodies store the excess as body fat. If this continues over time we may put on weight. To lose weight, we need to eat fewer calories than the energy used up in normal daily activities and exercise

There are lots of slimming diets and weight loss clubs that can be helpful for anyone who wants to lose weight. However, research shows that it's best to think about changing your eating habits to a healthy plan that fits in with your lifestyle so that you can stick with it in the long term rather than 'going on a diet'.

Look at the tips for following a low calorie diet on the next page of this leaflet.



TIPS FOR STICKING TO A HIGH OR LOW CALORIE DIET

High calorie diet

If a high calorie diet is right for you, these tips can help you to make the changes you're aiming for.

There are lots of foods that are high in calories, but still healthy. Here are some suggestions.



It's best to gain weight gradually until you reach your target weight



Try to avoid relying on foods full of saturated fat and sugar (such as chocolate, cakes and sugary drinks) as these can increase body fat instead of lean body mass and increase your risk of high cholesterol



Aim for regular meals and occasional snacks

Breakfast: Porridge made with whole (full-fat) milk with chopped fruit or raisins sprinkled on top; or eggs on toast

Snacks: Milkshakes are a good snack and you can add protein and calories by stirring in extra milk powder. Unsalted nuts, and even peanut butter on toast, make tasty high energy snacks

Lunch: Jacket potato with baked beans or tuna on top, which contains energy-giving starchy carbohydrates and protein

Desserts: Yoghurts and milky puddings, such as rice pudding, are high in energy

Low calorie diet

If a low calorie diet is appropriate for you, these suggestions can help you to make long term healthy changes.



Take it gradually: for most people a regular weight loss of up to 1-2 lbs (0.5-1kg) each week is safe and the weight is more likely to stay off if you lose it slowly



Try to eat regular and planned meals and snacks



Eat a good breakfast to avoid feeling hungry and overeating later in the day



Allow yourself the odd treat, just keep the amounts small and infrequent - like a real treat should be




Keep yourself feeling full by eating plenty of fruit and vegetables



Choose low fat foods most of the time

There are lots more tips and suggestions at the British Dietetic Association's Weight Wise website: www.bda.uk.com



Exercise: Along with dietary changes, being more physically active helps with weight loss and has lots of other health benefits too, so it's good for everyone. Exercise can help to boost your confidence and make you feel good about yourself as well as toning your muscles and increasing your energy levels.

Although exercise can be challenging for people with an LSD or weakness or disability, physical activity is a great way to reduce stress and build strength, especially if you choose something you enjoy that fits into your daily routine. It will be helpful to talk to your doctor about exercises that might be appropriate for you.

With advice from your specialist healthcare team, your diet is one thing that you can take control of. Ask to see a dietitian so that you can have the healthiest possible diet with the right amounts of essential nutrients and energy for you.

Remember, the principles of a healthy balanced diet still apply whether you are aiming for a high calorie or low calorie diet. Refer back to the 'Eating well' leaflet in this pack for details

Additional information sources used in developing this guide

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- Louise Robertson, Specialist Dietitian, University Hospital Birmingham
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