

Weight Loss Tips

for Cancer Survivors



This fact sheet is one in a series developed for cancer survivors who have finished active treatment. Eating well and maintaining a healthy weight may help lower the chances of some cancers returning and improve overall health.

Having a healthy body weight may reduce the risk of cancer returning and improve survival. Many studies have shown that people who keep to a healthy weight have better survival rates than those who put on weight during and after cancer treatment.*

** Most studies have been in women with breast cancer.*

Why else should I lose weight?

Cancer survivors are at a higher risk of developing heart disease and diabetes than the general population, so being a healthy weight is good advice for reducing the risk of these conditions as well.

How do I get a healthy body weight?

To achieve a healthy body weight, you need to balance the energy (kilojoules or calories) you get from food and drinks with the energy you use up

from physical activity each day. You should focus on making moderate, realistic and lifelong changes to your current eating and activity patterns.

To help reach your target healthy body weight:

- eat and drink according to your energy needs
- make the basis of your diet fruit, vegetables, cereals and other low-fat foods
- be physically active
- be realistic about the changes you make.

Changing your diet and exercise habits gradually is usually easier and more long lasting than trying to make many changes at once. It's also okay to enjoy the treats you love every now and then.

Where do I start?

Choose one thing to change from each of the tip boxes and set a goal and timeframe. When you've got those goals under your belt, choose some more.



Tips for healthy eating and cooking

- Listen to your body – only eat when you're hungry and stop eating when you're full.
- Keep portion sizes moderate. Use a smaller dinner plate or serve a slightly smaller amount than usual.
- Eat slowly and wait 20 minutes before deciding if you need another helping – it takes this long for your brain to tell your stomach that it's satisfied.
- Don't skip meals, especially breakfast – you will only eat more later.
- Use low-fat cooking methods – grilling, steaming, poaching or baking. Use a non-stick frypan or a spray of oil when pan frying.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim as much fat as possible before cooking. Remove the skin from chicken.
- Try the low-fat varieties of dairy foods (e.g. low-fat milk, yoghurt or cheese).
- Reduce the number of high-fat takeaway meals that you eat
- Avoid snacks that are high in fat, such as crisps and biscuits.
- Use only a scrape of margarine – or none at all – on sandwiches. Avocado is a healthy alternative to butter.



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Tips for eating more fruit and vegetables

- Shop for fruit and vegetables every week to ensure you have a fresh supply available.
- Enjoy fruit as a snack or for dessert.
- Add fresh or canned fruit to breakfast cereal as a topping.
- Fill half your dinner plate with vegetables. Include at least three different coloured vegetables.
- Use frozen, dried or canned fruit and vegetables if fresh produce is not on hand.
- Adapt your recipes to include more vegetables – e.g. add carrot, celery and peas to bolognaise sauce.
- Include salad with your lunch.
- See the fact sheet *Fruit and Vegetables* for more tips.



Tips for healthy drinking

- Drink at least 2 litres of water each day. Thirst can disguise itself as hunger.
- Watch your intake of soft drink, cordial and juice – these are high in sugar and kilojoules.
- Replace sugary drinks with water or diluted juice.
- Limit your alcohol intake, as alcohol is high in kilojoules. If you choose to drink, alternate alcoholic drinks with water.
- Use low-fat or skim milk in tea and coffee, and reduce the amount of sugar you add. As an alternative, try herbal teas such as peppermint, chamomile, ginger or green tea.



Tips for being more active

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Three 10-minute sessions a day is okay too. Aim for moderate intensity (causing a slight but noticeable increase in your breathing and heart rate).
- Walk with a friend or join a walking group.
- Try an exercise class at a gym or your local community centre.
- Hire exercise DVDs from your local library, such as tai chi, yoga, aerobics or dancing.
- Enjoy active fun such as bike riding, ball games in the park or bush walking.
- Join a sporting team.
- Do vigorous housework such as vacuuming, mopping or mowing the lawn.
- Use a pedometer to monitor your activity.
- See an exercise physiologist for advice increasing your activity.

This fact sheet provides general information only and is not a substitute for individual health advice. You should talk to your doctor or dietitian about your specific situation.

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