

It's NEVER too LATE to be at a HEALTHY WEIGHT

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Have you been gaining a few pounds every year? Studies show that people tend to gain about a pound of fat and lose up to 1/2 pound of muscle each year, starting in their 30's. This is partly due to changes in metabolism: as we get older, our metabolisms slow down, and we tend to lose muscle. Because muscle burns more calories than fat, the less muscle you have, the fewer calories you burn. Over the years, the extra pounds can really add up.

Here are some reasons for putting on pounds:

- Being less active
- Not maintaining muscle through strength training
- Eating more calories, even as metabolism slows down
- Gradual loss of body cells which leads to burning fewer calories while at rest

As those of you who have tried to diet know, fat cells are stubborn. Deprive yourself of too many calories, and you'll go into starvation mode. This lowers your metabolism even more and jump-starts your desire for fat and sugar. It's a sure prescription for weight gain.

What can you do? You guessed it – exercise and eat sensibly.

As you age, your body becomes less able to handle large meals, and it's more likely to store the excess as fat. So eat small meals. And eat when you're hungry. Skipping a meal may cause you to overeat at the next one. Consume most of your calories during the day, when your metabolism is higher. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables – they make great snack foods.

Think about your food choices: In the past 25 years, the American diet has changed. We eat more total calories – about 250 more per day than people consumed in the early 1970s. We eat less fat, and about the same amount of protein, but our carbohydrate intake has increased by about 7%. Many of the low carbohydrate diets are unhealthy and should be avoided, but simply cutting back on your high sugar and white flour food choices can help to bring you back into balance.

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for your health. If you are overweight and lose just 10 to 15 pounds you can:

- Reduce your risk of heart disease
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce your risk of developing diabetes
- If diabetic, improve blood sugar control
- Reduce stress on joints

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