

# Tips for Achieving a Healthy Weight

for People with Type 2 Diabetes



Obesity and being overweight can cause insulin resistance. Therefore, weight loss is often an important objective for many persons with type 2 diabetes. Short-term studies have shown that weight loss in type 2 diabetes improves insulin sensitivity, blood glucose (sugar), blood fats and blood pressure. However, in today's world of one popular diet after another, choosing the best approach to weight loss and weight maintenance can be very confusing, especially for someone with diabetes. Evidence suggests that structured weight management programs that emphasize lifestyle changes including education, reduced fat and calorie intake, regular physical activity and ongoing emotional support are successful in weight loss and weight maintenance in people with diabetes. To help you achieve the weight that's healthy for you here are some helpful tips to consider:

- **Before embarking on any weight loss diet, first check with your health care provider.** Your doctor or other members of your health care team can help you set realistic goals and offer advice on how you can best accomplish them. Together, you can determine what is considered a “healthy weight” for you and how best to achieve it with a slow and safe rate of weight loss. Most nutrition experts recommend a weight loss of 1-2 pounds per week. Health care professionals trained in diabetes care should be familiar with evidence based nutrition principles as recommended by the American Diabetes Association <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/cqi/content/full/25/1/148>

In addition, learning how to calculate your BMI (body mass index) can be a helpful tool for determining a “healthy weight” for you. Visit the BMI Calculator at: <http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm>

- **Ask your health care provider for a referral to a registered dietitian who specializes in medical nutrition therapy (MNT) for people with diabetes.** He or she will also evaluate your blood pressure, blood fats such as cholesterol and triglycerides and any other medical conditions you might have. While weight loss counseling is often not included in insurance plans, a growing number of insurance companies are providing coverage for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) and Diabetes Self Management Training (DSMT). For more information about these Medicare benefits visit [http://www.eatright.org/Public/GovernmentAffairs/98\\_8723.cfm](http://www.eatright.org/Public/GovernmentAffairs/98_8723.cfm) . To find a dietitian who is also a certified diabetes educator visit the American Dietetic Association website at <http://www.eatright.org/Public> or the American Association of Diabetes Educators website at <http://www.aadenet.org/> .
- **Continue to check blood glucose regularly and A1Cs as recommended.** Shedding those extra pounds is a great way to control your diabetes but good diabetes management also includes monitoring your blood glucose regularly and getting the necessary tests and exams you need to best manage your disease. These tests include: A1C, cholesterol and triglycerides, blood pressure, microalbumin (urine kidney test), foot and eye exams, as well as getting a flu shot and pneumonia vaccine. For more information about the Basic Guidelines for Diabetes Care visit <http://www.caldiabetes.org/> .

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*For further information: [www.caldiabetes.org](http://www.caldiabetes.org) or (916) 552-9888.*

- **Monitor your need for diabetes medications.** Weight loss and a reduction of carbohydrates (sugars and starches) can help lower your blood glucose. However, for people taking insulin or other diabetes medications weight loss and reduction of carbohydrates can lead to episodes of hypoglycemia (blood glucose that is too low). So as you lose weight, watch the trends in your blood glucose patterns and discuss modifications to your medication dosages with your doctor before your blood glucose levels get too low. For more information about diabetes medications visit: [http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/medicines\\_ez/](http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/medicines_ez/) .
- **Be physically active everyday.** People with type 2 diabetes should ideally exercise most days of the week. Exercise, even as simple as walking; not only strengthens your heart, lungs, and muscles but can also lower blood pressure, improve circulation and help control blood glucose. Because exercise improves your body's ability to use insulin, hypoglycemia can occur in people with diabetes who take diabetes medications. If this is a problem for you, work with your health care provider to adjust your medication dose and to be safe, always carry a non-fat, high carbohydrate snack while exercising. For more information about physical activity or how to start a walking program visit: [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/phy\\_act.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/phy_act.htm) or <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm>
- **Learn how to count the carbohydrate in the foods you eat, regardless of the weight loss program you choose to follow.** Many diet programs focus on counting other things like "points" or "calories" and haven't taken into consideration the importance of counting carbohydrates for people with diabetes. Learning to read the Nutrition Facts panel of food labels is a good source of carbohydrate information. In addition, try to be consistent with your carbohydrate intake. In other words, eat the same amount of carbohydrates each day about the same time of day. For more information about carbohydrate counting contact a registered dietitian or visit <http://www.eatright.org/Public/> or <http://www.diabetes.org/home.jsp> .
- **Limit the total fat you eat and choose healthy fats such as canola, olive and nut oils such as peanut and walnut oils.** This is important because people with diabetes are at high risk for developing heart disease and often have abnormal blood fats to begin with. Eating foods high in saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol can increase your blood cholesterol. Therefore, health experts recommend consuming 30% or less of total caloric intake from fat and no more than 10% from saturated fat. For information about lowering your cholesterol visit: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/smart1.htm#cutback](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/smart1.htm#cutback)
- **Eat a variety of food.** Eating a variety of foods helps provide vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals (other plant compounds), all of which may help reduce chronic disease risk. Unfortunately, many fad diets restrict certain foods or entire categories of food (i.e. dairy products, fresh fruit, or bread) leading to an unbalanced nutrient intake. Reducing food intake below 1200 calories a day in an attempt to lose weight can also cause deficiencies your nutrient intake. Consider taking a multivitamin and mineral supplement daily that provides 100% of the Recommended Daily Intake of essential nutrients. Learn about the diabetes food pyramid at <http://www.diabetes.org/nutrition-and-recipes/nutrition/foodpyramid.jsp>
- **Just because it's popular doesn't mean it's safe or effective.** The safety and effectiveness of low carbohydrate, high-protein diets (like the Atkins Diet) for long term weight loss and maintenance has not been adequately studied, especially for people with diabetes. However, because of the increased popularity of this type of diet, the National Institutes of Health has agreed to fund a long term study comparing the low carbohydrate, high protein diet to a traditional low fat, low calorie diet. Until results of such studies are evaluated and can be applied to people with diabetes, caution is still warranted before deciding to follow a low carbohydrate, high protein diet. Following this type of diet can result in ketosis (symptoms include fatigue, nausea, weakness, and irritability), electrolyte loss, dehydration, increase kidney disease, high cholesterol, and other health problems. To learn how to choose a safe and successful weight loss program visit <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/choosing.htm> .

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