

Extra Pounds Tip the Scale Away From Good Health



People Live Longer Now— Make Your Years Healthy Ones

Plan ahead to keep yourself in prime health as you grow older.

Business people do strategic planning to keep their companies on the cutting edge.

Homemakers must budget for long-term family needs. Take care of yourself as well.

Be alert to the leading health problems and act now to reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and stroke. Diet and exercise can help maintain good health.

Regular checkups are also important to detect cancer and other health problems early enough for effective treatment.

Extra pounds may increase the risk of premature death from heart disease and some cancers, including breast, colorectal, pancreatic and prostate cancers and cancers of the gallbladder, ovary, uterus and cervix. Overweight is also related to high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, stroke, non-insulin-dependent diabetes, gallbladder disease, arthritis and breathing problems.

Yet Americans continue to bulk up, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Oct. 27, 1999). The report used the newest measure of a healthy weight, body-mass index, to evaluate men and women of all ethnic backgrounds between 1991 and 1998.

A body-mass index of 19 to 24.9 is considered normal adult weight. The survey found that more than 55% of American adults exceeded that figure, including 20% who met the definition of obese with a BMI of 30 or more.

“Only smoking exceeds obesity in its contribution to total

mortality rates in the United States,” said one of the survey authors, William H. Dietz, M.D., Ph.D., director of the nutrition and physical activity division of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Another study found the risk of death was lowest for men with a BMI between 23.5 and 24.9 and for women with a BMI between 22.0 and 23.4 study.



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American Cancer Society researchers reported their results in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Oct. 7, 1999).

This 14-year study showed that obesity doubles a person’s risk of dying in the next 10 years compared to someone with a

BMI of about 25. Being underweight isn’t healthy either. A BMI of less than 18.5 also increases the risk of death but not as much as being too fat.

The BMI formula is based on universal measurements, using weight in kilograms divided by the square of your height in meters: $\text{Weight} \div \text{Height}^2 = \text{BMI}$. A kilogram is about 2.2 pounds; a meter, 39.37 inches or about 3.3 feet. Many Internet health sites will tell you your body-mass index when you enter your weight and height.

You can also calculate your own BMI with a relatively simple mathematical equation adjusted for American usage:

$$\frac{\text{Weight (in pounds)} \times 704.5}{\text{Height in inches}^2} = \text{BMI}$$

For example, someone who weighs 150 pounds and is 5’6-1/2” in height would multiply 150 by 704.5 (105,675), convert height into inches (66.5), square that number (66.5 x 66.5 = 4422.25) and then divide the result into the multiplied weight figure: $105,675.00 \div 4422.25 = 23.8$ —a healthy BMI value, especially for a man.

BMI is more useful than old height-weight guidelines for assessing health risks. However, (continued on page 2)

Provided as a community service by Fox Chase Cancer Center, this publication should not be considered personal medical advice. Please consult your doctor about your individual health needs. For information about cancer prevention, detection and treatment programs, call 1-888-FOX CHASE.

How Do You Shape Up?

Weight watching for your health shouldn't focus solely on body-mass index. Other useful guides include the ratio of total body fat to muscle (a measurement best done by a trained technician at a doctor's office or fitness center). The shape of your body is also a major clue to your future health.

The proportion of your waist to your hips is a major factor not just for looks but for long-term risks of many diseases. Your waist-to-hip ratio tells you if you're pear-shaped, which means that fat gravitates to your hips, thighs and buttocks; apple-shaped, with fat building up at your waist, belly and upper body; or avocado-shaped, somewhere in between.

Eating an apple a day is fine, but being built like one just isn't healthy. Excessive fat above the hips and in the upper torso is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers, such as cancers of the breast, uterus and colon.

Your mirror will tell you whether you're closer to an apple or a pear, but for a more precise measurement, get out your tape measure. Divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement.

If the result is .75 or less, you are pear-shaped. If the number is .75 to .80, you're closer to an avocado. Try eating apples instead of apple pie.

A result greater than .80 puts you roundly in the apple category.

You'll benefit from a diet and exercise program to take off some of those upper-body pounds.

Avoid crash-diets—they can backfire by leading to changes in metabolism that cause you to retain fat. Adding low-calorie vegetables and fruits to your diet, cutting down on fatty foods and exercising regularly is the surest, most healthful way to achieve and maintain your goal.



Extra Pounds Tip the Scale (continued from page 1)

the healthy BMI guideline of 19 to 25 does not apply to young people who are still growing, pregnant women and athletes with a high proportion of muscle, which weighs more than fat

(Michael Jordan's BMI is 26.4).

For people older than 65, a BMI of up to 29 also does not appear to be unhealthy. It may provide a useful energy reserve in case of illness.

Important Steps to Detect Cancer Early

Be sure to take advantage of screening to detect cancer at its earliest stage. Along with reducing your risk of dying of cancer, early detection means you'll need less extensive treatment in most cases.

Women of any age, including those who have completed menopause:

- ▶ One of the most important steps is to have a Pap smear as part of a regular gynecologic examination. In this test, the doctor or nurse collects a few cells from the cervix—the neck of the womb—so laboratory study under a microscope can detect any abnormalities.

Pap smears done regularly prevent most deaths from cervical cancer, because it is almost 100% curable when detected early. Regular Pap smears also detect precancerous abnormalities, which can be treated with drugs or very minor surgical techniques even before a cancer develops.

- ▶ Gynecologic exams should always include a breast examination. Women should also do a breast self-exam each month. The National Cancer Institute's toll-free Cancer Information Service—1-800-4-CANCER—can mail you pamphlets on the best way to do this.

Women age 40 and older:

- ▶ At age 40, all women should begin having annual screening mammograms. These low-dose X-rays can detect breast cancer up to two years before it can be felt. Should

you feel a lump, however, call your doctor promptly rather than waiting for your next screening exam.

Men in their 30s and younger:

- ▶ Check for abnormal lumps in the testicles every month. Detected early, testicular cancer is almost always curable and treatment does not affect sexual function. For a pamphlet on how to do testicular self-exam, call 1-800-4-CANCER.

Older men:

- ▶ Starting at age 50—or earlier with a family history of prostate cancer—all men should have an annual prostate exam that includes a blood test for prostate-specific antigen (PSA). High PSA levels often indicate cancer or another problem. This test and a physical exam detect more prostate cancers earlier than either method alone.

Men and Women:

- ▶ Starting at age 50—or earlier with a family history of colon or rectal cancer—everyone should have a periodic colon exam and an annual test for fecal occult blood as well as a yearly digital rectal exam. Recommended tests include sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy, which use a flexible tube that lets the physician view the inside of the colon.

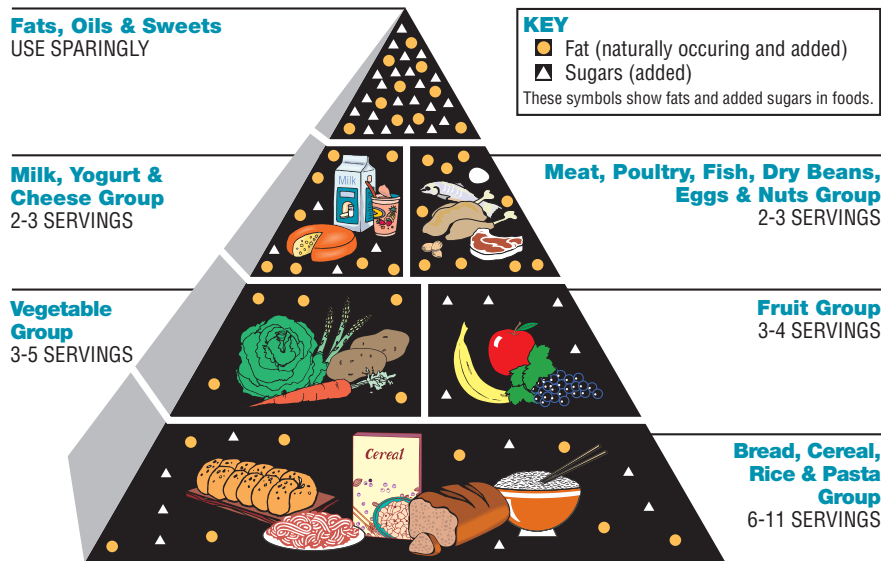
These tests can detect colorectal cancer at an early stage, when it can be cured with no change in bowel function. A colonoscopy can also help prevent cancer by detecting and removing precancerous growths called polyps.

ABCs of Good Health

The advisory committee on Dietary Guidelines for Americans issued updated recommendations in 2000. These guidelines place new emphasis on weight control and exercise in light of Americans' growing girth. All 10 guidelines (up from seven) are intended to point the way to good health for adults and children (aged 2 and older).

The foundation is simple: Aim for fitness. Build a healthy base. Choose foods sensibly.

Variety is the keynote for food choices. As evidence mounts about the cancer-preventing agents in fruits and vegetables, researchers are even more aware of how little is known about the thousands of plant nutrients (phytochemicals). Many nutrition experts believe that much of the benefit derives not from a single nutrient but from the interactions of several, including phytochemicals not yet identified.



Dietary Guidelines:

- ▶ **Aim for a healthy weight.** Keep track of your weight and your waist measurements and take action if either increases.
- ▶ **Be physically active each day.** Balance the food you eat with activity to maintain or improve your weight.
- ▶ **Choose foods wisely according to the Food Pyramid.**
- ▶ Eat a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- ▶ Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables daily—at least five servings a day.
- ▶ Keep food safe to eat.
- ▶ Choose a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- ▶ Choose beverages and foods that moderate your intake of sugars.
- ▶ Choose and prepare food with less salt.
- ▶ If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

Too Much Sugartime

One visible reason for the excess pounds Americans keep gaining is the rising intake of refined sugars—sweeteners added to food and beverages in the form of cane, beet or corn sugar and high-fructose corn syrup. Since 1983, sugar consumption has gone up 28%.

The average American eats about 20 teaspoons of such sugars—twice the recommended amount—daily. This adds up to a whopping 153 pounds of refined sugar a year per person. At 20 calories per teaspoon, or 1920 calories per pound, it provides energy but otherwise has little nutritional value.

Because of high energy needs,

the recommended daily allowance of sugar for teenage boys is up to 18 teaspoons. In fact, they average 34 teaspoons of sugar a day.

Soft drinks are a major culprit. A 12-ounce cola contains more than 10 teaspoons of added sugar, and many people choose the 20-ounce size. Not only candy and desserts but other more healthful snacks pander to America's sweet tooth. A cup of sweetened fruit yogurt contains about 7 teaspoons of sugar.

Moreover, sugar often hides in foods that aren't sweet, such as salad dressings. This is especially true of low-fat or fat-free dressings, which usually contain

some form of sugar as a major ingredient to replace flavor that otherwise would come from fat.

Don't assume that a fat-free dressing or other low-fat food is low in calories. Check the labels and compare a regular-fat version of the product.



Mental Gymnastics

Your brain also needs regular exercise. Do cross-word puzzles, acrostics or other word games such as Scrabble. Play chess or bridge. Research shows that you'll be stimulating the part of the brain necessary for such activities.

Some simple techniques can maintain or improve memory, including rhyme, word association and just plain practice.

Think of 10 friends, organizations or shops you telephone often. Do you know their numbers by heart? If not, try to memorize them and add to your list regularly. Or learn a few words in a foreign language, up to 20 words every few days. This could include the botanical names for some of your favorite garden plants.



Why Exercise? A Dozen Reasons

Exercise doesn't have to be high-intensity to benefit your health and fitness. Moderate exercise—such as *briskly* walking, mowing the lawn or raking leaves—helps reduce health risks just as much as running and jogging. Walking or running a mile burns about 100 calories—walking just takes longer.

1. Exercise combined with a reduced-calorie diet can help you lose weight gradually.
2. Equally important, exercise can help you keep off the weight you lose.
3. Exercise helps you avoid disturbed sleep patterns by relaxing muscles, reducing stress or warming your body.¹
4. Active women are 30% less likely to need surgery for gallstones than inactive ones.²
5. Exercise promotes healthy bowels and, in two studies, the most active people had half the risk of colon cancer as the least active people did.^{3,4}
6. Moderate exercise, either aerobic or strength-training, can reduce joint swelling and pain in people with arthritis.⁵
7. Aerobic exercise helps reduce anxiety and depression.⁶
8. Exercise reduces the risk of heart disease among men and women.^{7,8}
9. Moderate or low-intensity aerobic exercise three times a week helps lower high blood pressure or help maintain normal blood pressure.⁹

10. Exercise lowers your risk of diabetes, especially if you're already at higher than average risk because of overweight, high blood pressure or family history.¹⁰
11. Men walking two to three hours a week can lower their risk of an enlarged prostate gland.¹¹
12. Exercise, especially strength-training, can stave off osteoporosis by increasing bone density in middle-aged and older people.¹²

Footnotes refer to the publication of a scientific study in a professional journal by volume, issue and year.

¹J. Amer. Med. Assoc. 277:32, 1997 • ²New Eng. J. Med. 341:777, 1999 • ³J. Nat. Cancer Inst. 89:948, 1997 • ⁴Ann. Intern. Med. 122:327, 1995 • ⁵J. Amer. Med. Assoc. 277:25, 1997 • ⁶Arch. Intern. Med. 159:2349, 1999 • ⁷J. Amer. Med. Assoc. 273:1093, 1995 • ⁸New Eng. J. Med. 341:650, 1999 • ⁹J. Clin. Epidem. 45:439, 1992 • ¹⁰J. Amer. Med. Assoc. 282:1433, 1999 • ¹¹Arch. Intern. Med. 158:2349, 1998 • ¹²J. Bone Min. Res. 11:218, 1996

- ▶ Women who have passed menopause may be eligible for the second national breast-cancer prevention trial, STAR—a Study of Tamoxifen and Raloxifene. For information, call Fox Chase Cancer Center at 215-728-4750 and leave your name and phone number. The STAR program coordinator will return your call.
- ▶ Men 55 years of age or older (50 years or older for African-Americans) and in generally good health may be eligible to take part in the Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial—SELECT. This study, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, hopes to determine if taking vitamin E or selenium can help prevent prostate cancer. For more information, call 1-800-ENROLL-ME.
- ▶ Free of charge, a video on breast cancer, *Breast Health Alert: Know Your Breast Cancer Risk and How to Reduce It*, and a video on prostate cancer screening and prevention, *Taking Charge: Prostate Cancer Risk and What You Can Do About It*, are available from Fox Chase Cancer Center on request. Call 1-888-FOX CHASE.
- ▶ Our cancer-prevention services include programs to help people with family histories or other specific risks of breast and ovarian cancer, gastrointestinal cancers, lung cancer and prostate cancer.

Call 1-888-FOX CHASE for more information.



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