

Living Well/Aging Well

Healthy Weight



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

Why is a healthy weight important?

A healthy weight can reduce the risk of weight-related diseases and other health problems. Managing your weight creates a foundation for good health starting now and into the future.

Body Mass Index (BMI) and waist circumference measurements are common screening tools to estimate weight status. BMI alone is not a formal diagnostic tool since it does not measure body fat composition. Some individuals with increased muscle mass, such as athletes and weightlifters, may have an elevated BMI yet are not overweight.

A BMI range of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered a healthy weight. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a BMI calculator for ease of determining your personal BMI ¹. Wherever your BMI is, it is important to give yourself acceptance and support. If weight loss is needed to achieve a healthy weight, get support, and surround yourself with others working towards the same goal. Embracing a hopeful attitude that you can make a change is the key to empowerment.



While a high BMI is often associated with metabolic and chronic diseases, it is possible to have no other associated medical conditions. However, maintaining a healthy weight can be a protective factor against disease. A healthy weight promotes balance in the body's systems and helps to keep hormones and the immune system in harmony.

Osteopathic physicians treat patients from a whole-health perspective and provide well-rounded interventions to support patients in developing a healthy body, mind, and spirit. Discussing healthy weight with your physician can open the door to honest, trustworthy conversations that can start a shift in beneficial lifestyle changes.

Interventions

Healthy Eating

Healthy eating habits can promote a healthy weight. Eliminating processed foods (boxed or packaged items), sugary beverages, and alcohol can improve healthy weight by reducing inflammation and stress. Approach food as medicine and information for the body. By giving the body what it needs, such as adequate water, protein, vitamins, and nutrients, it will

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respond effectively. Too much sugar and unhealthy fats in the diet can cause disruptions in blood sugar balance, leading to Type 2 diabetes over time. Try shopping with your local farmers and co-ops, when possible, to buy organic fruits and vegetables to reduce pesticide exposure.

Physical Activity

Physical activity can promote a healthy weight since the body was designed to move. Muscles and bones produce hormones and chemicals that direct the body on how to function. Movement can look different for everyone. The key is to do something you enjoy daily, such as walking with a friend, gardening, riding a bike, swimming, etc. Finding joy and consistent performance are the answers. Improvements in mood can be a bonus. Strong social support is the growth factor that will make physical activity performance stick.

Stress Reduction and Refocus

The ability to be resilient and meet life challenges as they arise are important skills in maintaining a healthy weight. Chronic stress can signal the body to hold onto weight as a protective mechanism and trigger a perceived threat and lack of safety. Finding ways to be present, having a positive focus, and practicing deep, slow breathing are steps that let the body know it is safe to rest and improve energy. This state of inner balance will promote healthy weight.



Optimal Sleep

Research has shown that sleep is essential to health and recovery. During sleep, the body recovers, repairs, and “takes out the trash.” A consistent lack of sleep is a step towards ill health and promotion of weight gain. Certain sleep conditions can negatively impact health. One such sleep condition known as sleep apnea reduces airway flow. This restriction impacts the body’s ability to receive oxygen and causes risk for other medical conditions. Weight gain can trigger sleep apnea. Speak with your physician to learn more about available testing options for this condition if you are concerned about the quality of your sleep.

Minimize Toxin Exposure

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) defines the term “obesogens” as toxic chemicals that can change the body’s hormones and metabolism¹. These toxins can increase the production of fat cells in the human body². You can minimize toxin exposure by choosing “green” or reduced-chemical-based products such as those used for household cleaning products, cosmetics, furniture, carpets, and other materials for your home and office. This is particularly important for areas where you sleep and spend most of your time. High-quality air filters, in-house air purifiers, and water filter systems are simple methods to reduce daily toxin

exposure. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides tools and resources to help you learn more about environmental exposure and help to reduce your chemical footprint ³.

Resources

- [Adult BMI Calculator:](https://www.cdc.gov/bmi/adult-calculator/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html)
https://www.cdc.gov/bmi/adult-calculator/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html
- [Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html) (English/Spanish):
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html>
- [Physical Activity for a Healthy Weight](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/physical-activity/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical_activity/index.html) (English/Spanish):
https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/physical-activity/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/physical_activity/index.html
- [Finding a Balance of Food and Activity](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/about/tips-for-balancing-food-activity.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/calories/index.html) (English/Spanish):
https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/about/tips-for-balancing-food-activity.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/calories/index.html
- [Benefits of Healthy Eating](https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/php/resources/healthy-eating-benefits-for-adults.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html) (English/Spanish):
https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/php/resources/healthy-eating-benefits-for-adults.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html
- [Good Nutrition Starts Early:](https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/features/good-nutrition-starts-early.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/nccphp/dnpao/features/nutrition-month/)
https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/features/good-nutrition-starts-early.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/nccphp/dnpao/features/nutrition-month/
- [Sleep and Chronic Disease:](https://www.cdc.gov/cdi/indicator-definitions/sleep.html)
<https://www.cdc.gov/cdi/indicator-definitions/sleep.html>
- [Chemicals, Pesticides, and Toxin Topics:](https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/chemicals-pesticides-and-toxics-topics)
<https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/chemicals-pesticides-and-toxics-topics>
- [Greener Living:](https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living)
<https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/greener-living>
- [Disparities in exposure to chemicals with links to weight gain:](https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2022/10/disparities-exposure-chemicals-links-weight-gain)
<https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2022/10/disparities-exposure-chemicals-links-weight-gain>
- [Chemical Fact Sheet:](https://www.cdc.gov/chemical-emergencies/chemical-fact-sheets/)
<https://www.cdc.gov/chemical-emergencies/chemical-fact-sheets/>

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Body Mass Index (BMI). 2024 Jan. 24. https://www.cdc.gov/bmi/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html.
2. Persellin, K. Environmental Working Group. *Disparities in exposure to chemicals with links to weight gain*. 2022 Oct. 7. <https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2022/10/disparities-exposure-chemicals-links-weight-gain>
3. Environmental Protection Agency. *Chemicals, Pesticides and Toxic Topics*. 2023 Dec. 14. <https://www.epa.gov/environmental-topics/chemicals-pesticides-and-toxics-topics>.