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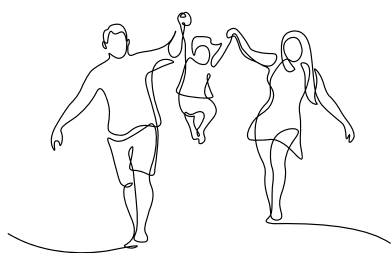
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How to Prevent Obesity

With a healthy lifestyle, obesity is preventable, and by doing so you also lower your risk of a host of other health issues such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, osteoarthritis, kidney disease, asthma, sleep apnea, and more.

Strategies that help prevent obesity are also those for treatment if you are already overweight or obese. Here are some key strategies.

This first one is often not associated with obesity — **getting adequate sleep**. Actually, a good night's sleep provides more health benefits than ever imagined. In addition to preventing heart disease, stroke, depression, and other health conditions, an adequate amount of high-quality sleep can also prevent weight gain and obesity.

What happens when you sleep? During sleep, your body is busy repairing and restoring itself. If you routinely do not get adequate sleep, then stress hormones and other inflammatory factors get involved. Your body will begin to react as if it were under chronic stress, releasing cortisol, a stress hormone. One of the unwanted side effects of the actions from cortisol is the tendency for weight gain, which can translate into obesity over time. Studies have also shown that lack of adequate sleep can also result in overeating.

The importance of sleep to our overall well-being cannot be overstated. The CDC recommends seven or more hours of sleep for adults over 18, and even more for younger people. Sleep hygiene includes behaviors that help promote good sleep. This article from the American Sleep Association might be helpful, <https://www.sleepassociation.org/about-sleep/sleep-hygiene-tips/>.

Reduce chronic stress as another strategy to prevent obesity. We just talked about how lack of sleep raises levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, and chronic stress has the same impact. When

you are under a lot of stress, the result is often poor dietary choices and you may have “carb cravings” which makes healthy eating more challenging.

Discover the best way for you to beat stress. Try a daily walk or a regular yoga class, meditate, listen to music, gather with friends — do things that bring you joy.

Other strategies include **getting regular exercise** and **following basic principles of healthy eating**.

Because of the prevalence of obesity, more and more research is being directed toward prevention. Obesity is now a global health epidemic, according to the World Health Organization, affecting more than 650 million people worldwide.

Being Active at Any Size

If you are overweight, physical activity may seem hard and cause you to get short of breath or tired quickly. While there are challenges to overcome, you can be active at any size and enjoy it! Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the benefits to your health far outweigh any risks. However, it is recommended that you consult a health professional before you start any type of exercise, especially if you get out of breath easily or have problems moving.

To help you stay motivated, choose physical activities that match your fitness ability. If you have been inactive, start slowly and gradually build up your activity level. Good activities to begin with are walking and water workouts.

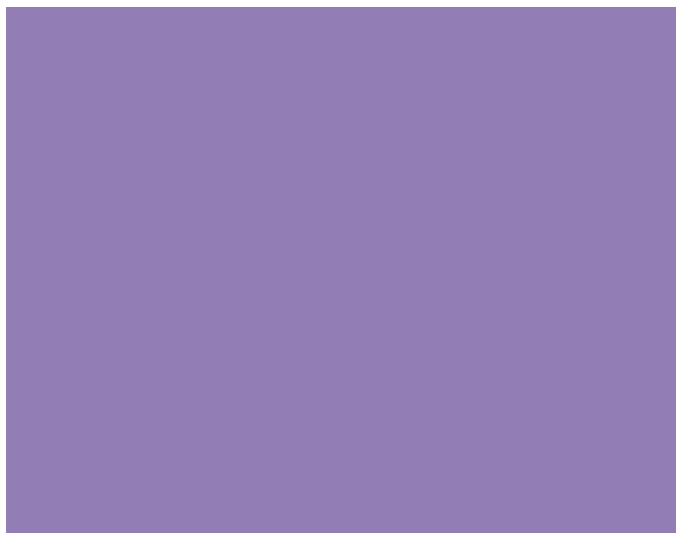
Water workouts are a good option if your feet, back, or joints hurt when you stand. Exercise performed in water allows you to be more flexible, reduces the chance for injury, helps prevent sore muscles, and it keeps you cool! If you don't know how to swim, you can still work out in the water. For safety, wear a foam belt or life jacket.

Walking is an activity that most people can do. If you are walking, and have a goal to lose weight, you will need to walk enough to burn calories and fat. A walking workout might be helpful and provide variety to avoid the same routine each day. Here's one you can try: https://www.verywellfit.com/walking-workout-schedule-for-weight-loss-3432704?utm_campaign=fitsl&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cn_nl&utm_content=23543819&utm_term=



Another way to boost fitness, and burn more calories, is to add intervals. These are short bursts of intense activity. Research shows that alternating these intense activity bursts with lighter activity can be better for your overall health than slow, sustained exercise. The key is starting at a level that is right for you and build from there. If you walk for exercise, start by adding a 30-second interval of brisk walking several times during your walk. For more information on adding intervals, check this newsletter from Walk Kansas 2018 at <https://www.walkkansas.org/doc/newsletter/2018/week4.pdf>.

Sticking with a plan and a regular physical activity routine can be challenging, but don't give up. Try to avoid “all or none” type thinking. Remember that any activity is better than none, so don't get discouraged if you fall short of the goal you set for physical activity as long as you are doing something.



Healthy Eating Principles

Healthy eating is a key strategy to prevent and reduce obesity. The overall goal is to make every bite count by choosing foods that are nutrient dense and not just empty calories. Start by getting approximately 2 cups of fruit and 3 cups of vegetables each day. Go for whole fruits and veggies, not juice, as the fiber content helps you feel full with fewer calories. Avoid highly processed foods, including boxed/bagged snack foods, which are a common source of empty calories. Studies also show that eating a highly processed diet resulted in more calories and weight gain.

Reduce the amount of sugar you eat and drink. Main sources of sugar include sugary beverages (sodas, energy, sports, and fruit drinks), pies/cakes/cookies, candy, and dairy desserts. Artificial sweeteners have also been linked to obesity and diabetes because they can interfere with the human body's ability to deal with natural sugar. Impairing this natural ability can lead to overeating and increased sugar and carbohydrate cravings.

Choose sources of healthy (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) fats to reduce obesity. Avocados, olive and canola oil, and tree nuts are all healthy fats. Perhaps the most harmful of all are trans fats, which raise your "bad" cholesterol and lower your "good" cholesterol. You'll find trans fats (look for "partially hydrogenated oil" on the ingredient list) in food products like shortening, stick margarine, baked goods, fried foods, refrigerated dough, and some snack foods like chips, crackers, and cookies. Check the Nutrition Facts label on foods as it is now a requirement to include the amount of trans fat if it is more than 0.5 g or more per serving.

Be careful with snacks and avoid snacking when you are just bored or stressed. The best snacks are ones that include some fiber and protein, as these will help you feel fuller for longer and keep your blood sugar from spiking too quickly. These roasted chickpeas make a great snack and a super salad topper!



Roasted Chickpeas

Makes 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 16-ounce can garbanzo beans/chickpeas
- 1 to 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- Other seasoning as desired

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. Pour chickpeas into a strainer in the sink and rinse under running water.
4. Pat chickpeas very dry with a clean dishtowel or paper towels. Remove any loose skins.
5. Transfer dried chickpeas to the baking sheet and toss them with olive oil, then sprinkle with sea salt.
6. Roast the chickpeas for 20 to 30 minutes. Stir the chickpeas or shake the pan every 10 minutes and roast longer if you want them to be more crispy. Chickpeas are done when golden and slightly darkened, dry and crispy on the outside and soft in the middle.
7. Remove pan from the oven and sprinkle the chickpeas with spices (if using) and stir to coat evenly.
8. Store roasted chickpeas in a loosely covered container at room temperature. They are best if used within two days.

Have fun with this recipe by adding spices and herbs! Try chili or curry powder, lemon zest, smoked paprika, rosemary, thyme, cumin, or other favorite spices and herbs.

Nutrition Information for 1 serving:

180 calories; 5 g fat (0 trans fat, 0.5 g saturated fat); 26 g carbohydrates; 8 g protein; 7 g fiber; 390 mg sodium

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