Let’s Get Started Losing Weight

Losing weight takes more than just desire. It takes commitment, goals and a well-thought-out plan. Let’s get started!

Step 1: Set goals

Making the decision to lose weight, change your lifestyle, and become healthier is a big step to take. Start simple by making a goal for yourself. Many people think it is helpful to put it in writing and sign the written goals. This contract with yourself can include things like:

- How much weight you want to lose.
- The date you’d like to lose the weight by.
- A diet plan to establish healthy eating habits.
- A plan for getting regular exercise.

It might be helpful to include your reason for quitting in your contract. One reason may be that you have a family history of heart disease or stroke. Your reason could be as simple as wanting to feel better in your clothes. Post your contract and reasons so they can be a daily reminder of why you are making a change.

Step 2: Look at where you are

Take time to talk with your health care provider. They can evaluate your weight, height and health risks. Ask for a follow-up visit to monitor your changes.

Keep a food diary, write down everything you eat. By doing this you will become more aware of what and when you are eating. This helps you to be aware and can help you avoid mindless eating.

Next, take a look at your lifestyle. Look for things that might be stumbling blocks in your weight loss effort. Think through ways to help prevent these pitfalls.

Step 3: Set realistic goals

Set some short-term goals and reward your hard work as you go. If your long-term goal is to lose 35 pounds and to get your high blood pressure under control, some short term goals could be set regarding eating and physical activities. These might include starting to eat breakfast, taking a 15 minute walk after a meal, or having a salad or vegetable with supper.
Focus on two or three goals at a time. Good and effective goals are specific, realistic and forgiving (less than perfect). For example, “exercise more” is not a specific goal. But if you say, “I will walk 15 minutes, 3 days a week for the first two weeks,” you are setting a clear and realistic goal. Setting a goal of losing 20 pounds in 2 weeks can leave you defeated.

Remember, little changes every day can lead to big results sooner or later. By achieving your short-term goals every day, you will feel good about your progress and be more inspired and motivated to keep going.

Setbacks can happen when you get away from your goals for whatever reason. When they happen, get back on track as soon as you can. Also take the time to think about what you can do if a similar setback happens.

Remember what works for one person may not be right for you. Try different activities – walking, riding a bike, or swimming – to see what will work for you. It is easier to stick with them if you enjoy them.

**Step 4: Identify resources for information and support**

Find a family member or friend who will support you in losing weight. Making changes can feel easier when you have other people you can talk to and support you.

**Step 5: “Check in” with yourself to see your progress**

Revisit the goals you set and evaluate how you are doing regularly. If you set a goal to walk every morning but are having trouble fitting this in before work, see if you can do better by walking at lunch or right after work. Look at what parts of your plan are working well and change what is not working well.

If you are reaching your goals then it is time to review your goals and set new goals to help you continue with success.

Reward yourself for your successes! When you are meeting your goals, be proud of your success. Use non-food rewards, such as a relaxing bath, watch a favorite movie, or go to the park for an hour. Rewards help keep you on the right path to better health.

**Sources:**

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