



Guidelines for Safe, Effective Weight Loss

Like millions of Americans, maybe you've decided it's time to shed some of those extra pounds. But the big question is how? The choices are seemingly endless, from solo dieting to joining a structured weight loss program to working one-on-one with a professional dietician. Whichever path you choose, your weight-loss strategy should be safe, effective, and right for you. Here are some guidelines to help you get started.

Getting started

While the weight-loss industry is largely unregulated, the Institute of Medicine has compiled the following guidelines to help dieters choose the right program:

- Choose a program that incorporates your individual needs
- Consult your healthcare professional before starting any program to make sure it is appropriate for you
- Carefully evaluate your health before and during weight loss
- Remember that any program that promises results without dieting or exercise won't work
- Appropriate exercise should be part of any weight loss plan

Which diet is right for me?

Weight loss today is not just a health issue, it's also a billion-dollar industry with hundreds of weight-loss plans on the market enticing us with promises of quick, easy results. You hear terms like "low-carb," "low-fat," "low-calorie," etc. How do you sort it all out?

- Begin by educating yourself on the basics of diet and weight loss. This will help steer you away from fads and false promises and toward a real solution based on sound, healthy principles.
- Be realistic. Know your body and know your limits. Some diets can be so restrictive that they set us up for failure. Some are so low in caloric intake that they're not healthy.
- A good diet should be healthy from the start and based on principles that you can follow for a lifetime.

Eating right

With all the diets and weight-loss plans out there, it's impossible to recommend one over another. However, some general rules of healthy eating apply. Here are a few general tips:

- Choose whole and natural foods over processed foods whenever possible.
- Eat mostly fruit, vegetables, and lean protein, including reduced-fat dairy products, tofu, fish, chicken, and lean cuts of beef and pork.
- Overall foods with good nutritional value are not only healthy, but can help you lose weight and live longer.
- Consume fewer calories than you burn and you should lose weight.

Make massage an enjoyable part of your wellness plan

Therapeutic massage is an effective and increasingly popular healthcare alternative. Along with a healthy diet, clean water, fresh air, and exercise, massage is an essential element in maintaining good health.

Massage can:

- Reduce blood pressure and stress
- Strengthen the immune system
- Increase circulation
- Alleviate pain
- Promote good posture and alignment
- Speed healing and rehabilitation
- Soothe and energize the body, mind, and spirit