Your Weight

Rena Wills
YOUR WEIGHT

By Rena Wills, Extension Nutritionist

There is a difference in just being alive and in being alive! Eating the right food will help you to:
1. Feel better
2. Be more attractive
3. Live longer
4. Increase the number of useful years

The food you eat becomes you—your blood, muscles, bones, and teeth; your size, strength, energy, stamina and ability to succeed; your morale, happiness, personality and attitude toward life; it becomes every part of you. And food is becoming to you if your choice is good. It gives you poise, confidence and sparkle. The food you eat is your nutrition.

If you select foods which will make for the best possible nutrition for you, you will have energy and health in abundance. Anything less than the best permits tiring, lack of stamina, purpose and enthusiasm. You can become a drudge and a drag. You may be irritable, discontented, and subject to worry. The effects of poor nutrition may creep into your life so slowly that you do not realize what is happening to you.

Your weight helps indicate how healthy you are. Your body neither gains nor loses in weight when the food you eat balances the energy you spend. If your weight stays the same and your health is optimum, you are probably eating about the amount of food your body needs and uses.

Does It Matter If You Are Overweight?

Have a talk with yourself. Answer these questions honestly.
1. Do you bulge in the wrong places?
2. Or do you look smooth in your clothes?
3. Do you hate to bend over?
4. Or is it easy to tie your shoestrings and pick up things from the floor?
5. If you are overweight you are more likely to have:
   - heart disease
   - high blood pressure
   - diabetes
   - arthritis
   - complications after surgery
   - a shorter life

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Does It Matter If You Are Underweight?
Do you tire easily, feel listless?
Do little things get on your nerves?
Do you catch all the diseases that go around?

Overweight or Underweight?

First, find out how tall you are when you are wearing ordinary height heels. Then weigh yourself, dressed as you usually would for indoors. Check your height and weight on the tables on this page to see if it is the desirable weight. Your body build or frame will make a difference. Are your bones average size? Are they small, or are they large? Most people are classified as medium frame. Narrow shoulders, and a generally narrow body trunk, small wrists and hands, feet and ankles, indicate a small frame. Broad shoulders and hips, large chest capacity, big feet and hands indicate a large frame.

There is no sharp dividing line. If you are in doubt, classify yourself as medium frame.

There are some very simple tests to help you judge the amount of fat you are carry-

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**MEN—Age 25 and over**

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These tables are based on studies of hundreds of thousands of insured men and women. Courtesy of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.
ing. Pinch yourself. Take a good deep pinch of skin over your lower ribs, toward your side. If the skin fold between your thumb and finger is more than 1 inch you probably are too fat. If the skin fold is less than ½ inch, you probably need to gain weight.

Another test for overweight is done with a ruler. Lie flat on your back. Place the ruler on your abdomen with one end between the flare of your ribs. Does the ruler lie flat? Except for pregnancy or an abnormal condition such as tumor, one end of the ruler sticking in the air indicates too much fat.


Can You Stop Being Overweight?

Diet

If you check with your doctor first, and then frequently as you lose weight.

IF you choose a diet that supplies the essential nutrients your body needs.

IF you are willing to learn good eating habits and make them permanent.

Well planned meals for your family will fit your needs too. But watch the size of serving you take—and no seconds. Eat the lean portion of meat. Vary the vegetables and be sure to include green and yellow ones. Fruit, either raw or cooked, is good for dessert. Be sure to choose one citrus fruit during the day. Your family should not be made to feel that they are on a diet because you are. Give them larger servings of the foods you eat, more bread and butter, and another vegetable, fruit or salad. You might want to surprise them occasionally with their favorite desserts, too.

Eat breakfast. Getting too hungry makes it hard to keep from overeating at the next meal. Here is a common breakfast pattern which would be good for you to follow:

Citrus Fruit (½ grapefruit, 1 orange or ½ c. juice)

Egg (1 or 2 as desired)

Bread (1 slice) or Cereal (be careful about sugar)

Butter (1 pat)

Milk (1 glass)

Eat protein foods. Besides the eggs for breakfast, include meat, poultry, fish or cheese in your lunch or supper and your dinner meals. Drink 3 or 4 glasses of milk each day. It doesn’t have to be skim milk, but if it is, you can allow yourself more butter. One cup of skim milk and 1 medium pat of butter will be about the same as 1 cup of whole milk.

Do you have to count calories? No, but some people succeed in losing weight better if they count calories. You may want to try it to see if it works better for you. A calorie, you know, is the unit for measuring energy from food, just as the inch is the unit for
measuring length. Your diet supplies calories of energy for your life processes and your activities. When your body is supplied with more calories than it needs for immediate use, the extra energy units are stored in your body as fat. Body fat is used only when your food fails to supply the total energy needs of your body. Fats, proteins, sugars and starches supply calories. It would be a mistake to completely eliminate any of these foods from your diet. Each of them is necessary to your well-being. No one food is fattening.

You might try balancing your calorie intake and expenses as you would your finances. If you take in 2000 calories and spend 2000 calories, you will neither gain nor lose weight. If you “bank” 1500 calories and spend 2000 for very many days, you will use up some of your reserve deposit of fat. If you “bank” 2500 calories and use only 2000, you can expect to gain weight.

Choose your calories by the company they keep. Those in milk keep company with protein, calcium and riboflavin. Calories in meat keep company with protein, thiamine and important minerals. Sugar calories are “lone-wolves.” So are the calories in cooking fats, salad oils and alcohol. You can’t afford to use “lone-wolf” calories until after your other nutritional needs are supplied, and then use only enough to reach your calorie requirement.

**Stick to your diet.** When you think you have followed your diet long enough to have lost a couple pounds or more, your scales may even indicate a slight gain. Don’t be discouraged. Your body has to get rid of a lot of water, and it may be slow in doing it. You will be rewarded with a sudden drop in weight when this accumulated water is finally released.

**Appetite Depressing Drugs.** Never use them unless under very careful supervision of your doctor. These drugs sometimes cause an intense, almost unbearable nervous stimulation. The drugs which are not dangerous are not effective.

**Exercise.** Regular exercise helps to keep your general health good. If you are less active than you have been, then you should eat less or you will gain weight. Weight-reduc-
ing exercises may keep you from being so flabby, but they aren't too successful in taking off pounds. Instead, the more you exercise, the more appetite you are likely to have. And eating more food will put on more weight.

Do You Have Overweight Friends? If you do, get together and organize a club. Make a physical examination a requirement for joining. Meet once a week. Weigh yourselves and record your weights at each meeting. Plan meals together. If it is practical for you, eat together sometimes. Discuss your problems and encourage each other.

It helps to have a good leader for your club. Choose someone who is definitely interested in weight control. Try also to choose a leader who has the patience and ability to get all the members to talk about their problems and look for the solutions themselves. The meetings should be both interesting and educational.

Can You Stop Gaining Weight?

You need to understand why you accumulated the extra weight in the first place. Then be on your guard so that it doesn't happen again.

Was it because of poor eating habits? Habits last longer than life itself. They may be transmitted from one generation to the next. The longer they have been indulged in, the harder they are to change.

Stop and think—did you gulp your food down?
Did you eat only foods that you liked?
Did you eat until you felt stuffed?
Did you continue eating the usual amount of food, even though you knew you were less active?
Did you let your tastes become servings when you were cooking food?

Was it because of emotional tension? When you suffered from boredom, did you go get something to eat?
When you felt insecure, unhappy or frustrated, did you turn to food for satisfaction?
When you were worried or afraid or angry, did you grab something to eat to relieve the tension?

Was it because of a gland deficiency? It is possible but not probable. See your doctor. Even with a gland deficiency, you would not be overweight if you did not eat more food than your body needed. But you do need medical help.

Was it because of an inherited tendency? Your framework or body build may be inherited. But remember—you acquire the fat that is added to the framework.
Was it because of a middle-age spread? It is not unusual for adults to gain weight as they grow older, and by middle age the extra weight becomes quite obvious. This gain in weight is not necessary and not desirable. If you are less active physically, then you should eat less food.

Guard Against Control Fads

Diet fads that stress eating one food and exclude almost everything else are to be avoided like the plague. There is grave danger of developing serious nutritional deficiencies. Your body needs the same essential food elements regardless of the need to use up stored fat. Attempts to force your body to use up its stored fat faster than it is able to do so will make you extremely uncomfortable. An average weight loss of from 1 to 2 pounds a week is enough. Starvation diets are both dangerous and foolish. Unless you follow a sensible diet, you become too irritable and too weak, you become very depressed mentally, and your skin wrinkles unnecessarily.

Products advertised for quick reducing are a waste of money. They may also be very dangerous. There is no quick, easy, safe way to lose weight.

Massage helps to prevent flabbiness, and is a relaxing luxury for those who can afford it. It does not remove fat, but it tends to tighten the fat tissue.

Special baths for weight-reducing may cause a few pounds to vanish quite suddenly. The loss is water and salt, not fat. Drinking water soon restores the weight lost.

What To Do About Being Underweight

Eat More

If you select foods that supply the essential nutrients your body needs.

If you learn good eating habits and make them permanent.

If you check with your doctor and correct anything that is wrong.

Eat at regular intervals. It is merely a custom that most people eat three meals a day. Maybe you really should have five or six. By having smaller meals and having them more often, your shrunken stomach is not so apt to give you distress. But do have your meals and your snacks about the same time every day. Regularity teaches your stomach to demand food at the habitual times. And at each meal, be sure to eat just a little bit more food than you need to feel satisfied. It will help to stretch your stomach.

Eat plenty of protein foods. Protein helps you to build up muscle tissue as well as fat. A low protein diet will result in a soft, flabby fat.

Be willing to eat. A finicky appetite is expensive. You can't afford it. You need a variety of fruits and vegetables, meats and dairy products. In addition, you can have the fat-rich foods, the sweets and the starchy foods to help you put on weight. The limit to your rate of gain is your ability to digest
and absorb food. Increase fat-rich foods slowly if they cause you much distress. Butter, salad dressings, cream, nuts, cereals and sweets are foods that furnish a lot of calories in small volumes. Tuck them into your meals if it is hard for you to eat a larger quantity of food.

**Exercise.** When exercise improves your general health, it helps you gain weight. Exercise helps to stimulate your appetite and helps your body to utilize its food better.

Rest may be more important than exercise. Your body uses fewer calories when you are resting or sleeping. If you are very undernourished, you may use up more energy exercising than you can supply in your food. You may even become too tired to eat, and unable to digest the food if you do try to eat it.

**Improve Your Attitude Toward Food**

Check yourself with these questions.

Have you considered eating the least important thing you did?

Have you often been too busy to eat regular meals?

Have you often been too tired to eat?

Were you unable to eat when excited, worried or unhappy?

Were you afraid certain combinations of food would make you sick?

Have your meals been hurried and at irregular intervals?

Did you refuse to try new foods?

Did you eat only foods you like?

Was your food poorly prepared and carelessly served?

**Could It Be Impossible For You To Gain Weight?**

You should have a thorough physical examination to be sure that there is no infection or diseased condition which would interfere with your gaining weight. Also, you need to know if a gland disorder is causing you to be underweight. Poor nutrition may cause glandular imbalance, too. If you have a nervous temperament which wastes energy, you would expect it to be harder for you to supply enough extra calories to gain weight. But again, poor nutrition may be causing you to be nervous. It is a vicious circle. The same factors which make it hard for you to gain weight are made worse by being underweight and poorly nourished.

You can gain weight if you correct any physical condition which needs to be corrected, and if you improve your eating habits and your attitude toward food. A gain in weight occurs only when you eat more food than you use in energy. If your energy needs and your food intake are balanced, your weight remains the same. If you are losing weight, your food is not adequate to supply your energy needs, or, for some reason, your body is not able to use the food.