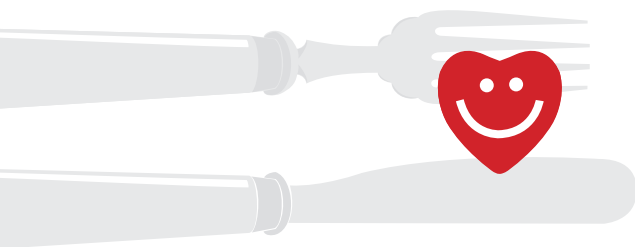




*Are you ready to*  
**lose  
weight?**



are you ready to lose weight?



IRISH  
HEART  
FOUNDATION



Féiliméanacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

## Weight loss and heart disease

Being overweight means that your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body. This extra pressure can cause wear and tear on your heart and blood-vessel system. Many people who are overweight for a long time develop high blood pressure or diabetes, which are both risk factors for heart disease. In the last 10 years there has been an increase in the number of people who are overweight or obese. Obesity damages our hearts and our joints, and is mainly the result of too many calories in our diet and too little activity. So, if you are overweight, taking action now will help prevent you becoming obese.

If you are overweight or obese, you should check with your family doctor if you have other risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and smoking. Even losing a small amount of weight will improve your overall health and help reduce your risk of heart disease.

You can get more information about other risk factors from us or your local HSE Office – see the back page for contact details.

If you have already had a heart attack, bypass surgery or an angioplasty, it's important that you follow the tips in this leaflet to lose weight. You should especially try to:

- choose oily fish (for example, sardines, salmon, mackerel or trout) twice a week;
- choose at least five or more portions of fruit and vegetables every day; and
- choose rapeseed or olive oil if you use oil or oil-based dressings.

## Are you ready to lose weight?



- ♥ Is your weight creeping up each year?
- ♥ Do you have less energy than you used to?
- ♥ Do you get breathless running for a bus?

Your answer is likely to be 'Yes' as more than half of Irish adults are overweight or very overweight (obese).

By losing some of your extra weight you will:

- ♥ feel better;
- ♥ look better;
- ♥ lower your chances of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure; and
- ♥ help to reduce or even stop your medication for angina, high blood pressure or raised cholesterol.

You may, of course, have your own reasons for wanting to lose weight.

If you are overweight, **start now** and use the tips in this leaflet to change your eating habits and get more physically active. Even making small changes now will stop you from gaining extra weight over the next few years.



## Are you always on a diet?

Forget about dieting. Instead, follow a weight loss plan for life. Make small gradual changes to the food you eat and get more active.

Even losing a small amount of weight has health benefits. Start with changes that are easy to make and that you can keep up for life – this will help you to reach a healthier weight and then to stay at this healthier weight.

Being a healthy weight isn't about being as thin as a model, in fact it is quite the opposite. You can be a stone overweight but if you eat healthily, regularly take brisk walks and are generally active, it could be a healthy weight for you.

## Are you an apple or pear shape?

If you are overweight, it is where your body stores the extra fat that can affect your risk of suffering from heart disease.

If the extra fat is stored around your waist, this gives you an **apple** shape. This shape is linked with a higher risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some cancers. If extra fat is stored around your hips this gives you a **pear** shape and this shape is less harmful to your health.

Use a measuring tape to measure your waist and then check the table on the next page to assess your risk.

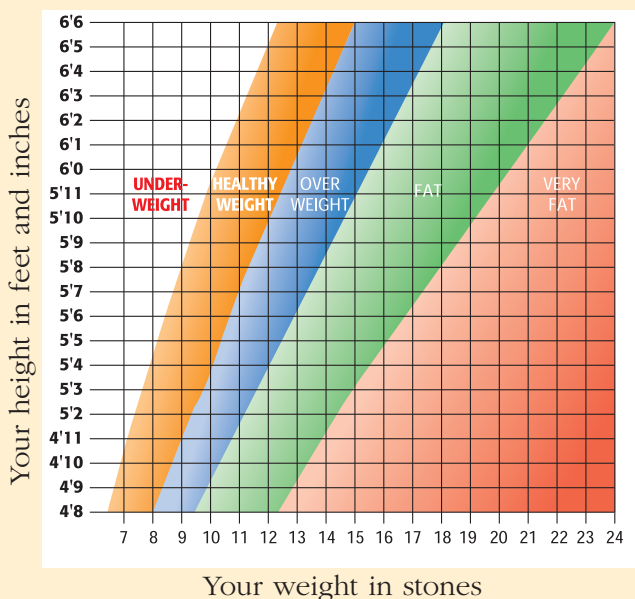
## Waist measurement table

|                           | Women  | Men   |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Healthy waist measurement | Less than 80 centimetres (32 inches)             | Less than 94 centimetres (37 inches)              |
| Moderate risk             | Between 80 and 88 centimetres (32 and 35 inches) | Between 94 and 102 centimetres (37 and 40 inches) |
| High risk                 | More than 88 centimetres (35 inches)             | More than 102 centimetres (40 inches)             |

### Check your body mass index.

Your body mass index (BMI) is an easy check to find out your weight band.

Draw a line across from your height and up from your weight. Where these two lines cross is your body mass index. No one weight is ideal, as there is a range of healthy weights for a particular height.



If you are in the 'overweight band', start to follow the tips in this leaflet. If you are in the 'fat' or 'very fat' band, get help from your family doctor or dietitian. There is no quick way to lose weight. A steady loss of one kilogram (one to two pounds) a week is the safest and most effective way to lose weight and keep it off.

## **Are you ready to lose weight?**

There are two important things you need to do to lose weight successfully:

- 1.** Get motivated to lose those extra pounds. Keeping a diary of the food you eat and the activities you do will help get you focused and keep you motivated.
- 2.** Be prepared. Planning ahead helps you feel more in control of your weight loss. Have plenty of healthy foods in your fridge, lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, low-fat snack foods like low-fat yoghurt and a light oil spray for cooking. Have your tracksuit and trainers ready for your walking or exercise programme. This will make it easier for you to start your new eating and activity plan.

### **Motivation!**

Motivation is most important when it comes to achieving a healthy weight. Motivation gets you started and keeps you going.

- ♥ Start by making a list of the reasons why you want to lose weight. Keep this list and look at it when your willpower is low.

- ♥ Next, keep a food and activity diary. Just write down what you eat for three days and when you do any activity. This will help you focus on what you're eating and what you need to change. People who keep food and activity diaries are more successful at losing weight than those who don't.
- ♥ Set realistic goals that you can reach over time - one kilogram (one to two pounds) per week. This way, you will be more likely to reach your target weight and stay there.
- ♥ Put your favourite photo of yourself on your fridge. This will make you think before you open the door – 'Do I really need this food'.
- ♥ Lose weight with a friend or with a recognised weight loss group – you are more likely to succeed.
- ♥ Relax! Try to manage your stress by taking time out to do some activity. You are likely to eat and drink more when you are under stress.



- ♥ Picture yourself in your mind when you've lost some weight. Think about this image three to four times a day. Seeing a mental picture of yourself thinner can make you more confident that you can achieve your goal.

## Successful tips for losing weight

- ♥ Look carefully at the size of your food portions, especially when you are eating out.



**Top shelf.**  
**Very small amounts.**

**Meat, poultry, fish (especially oily fish), eggs and nuts. Choose any 2.**  
Choose 3 servings during pregnancy.

**Milk, cheese and yoghurt. Choose any 3.**  
Teenagers and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers need 5 portions.

**Fruit and vegetables. Choose any 5 or more.**

**Bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice. Choose any 6 or more.**

- ♥ Follow the Food Pyramid guidelines. Focus on what you can eat rather than on what you can't. Be strict and limit your food choices from the top shelf. For lunch and dinner, use a smaller dinner plate and fill it mostly with vegetables.

Choose sunflower, olive or rapeseed oil and spreads made from these. Use only very little oil in cooking. Eat cakes, chocolate, biscuits, puddings and savoury snacks occasionally, not every day.

Choose two medium servings a day, in other words, 100 grams (four ounces) of lean meat or poultry; 150 grams (six ounces) of fish or two eggs. Eat oily fish, for example sardines, mackerel, trout or salmon, twice a week.

Choose three servings each day. One third of a pint of low-fat milk; 30 grams (one ounce) of cheese - choose lower-fat cheeses like Edam, Blarney or light cheddar and one average-sized pot of low-fat yoghurt.

Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, at least five or more portions every day. Fruit and vegetables contain vitamins A, C and E, which are important for heart health.

Have six or more servings choosing from bread (one slice); cereals (one bowl); potatoes (one medium sized); pasta or rice (three dessertspoons) daily. Choose wholegrain and high-fibre options often.

- ♥ Have three regular meals each day. Research shows that people who eat breakfast regularly are more likely to keep their weight down.

Some people find that having two smaller courses rather than one large main meal makes them feel more satisfied. Try choosing fruit, vegetables or salad as a starter, or fruit to finish off your meal.



- ♥ Learn to recognise hunger. If you are not really hungry at meal times, just eat small portions.
- ♥ Each week, write out a shopping list of the healthy foods you need to help you lose weight. Bring this list with you every week when you're doing your family shopping. Try not to shop when you are hungry.

**Swap foods that are high in fat for healthier choices. You should choose the following:**

- Low-fat spread instead of butter or margarine;
- Low-fat milk instead of full-fat milk;
- Lower-fat cheeses like Blarney or Edam, or light cheddar instead of cheddar or cream cheeses;
- Lean meat, chicken (no skin) or fish instead of beef-burgers, sausages and streaky bacon rashers;
- Low-fat salad dressings instead of mayonnaise and high-fat dressings;
- Yoghurt or low-fat fromage frais instead of cream;
- Fruit instead of biscuits and cake;
- Small amounts of boiled hard sweets (not too often) instead of chocolate.

## Choose healthy low-fat ways of cooking

Oven-bake, grill, boil, poach, stir-fry or microwave food instead of frying it.

Boil, steam, dry-roast or bake potatoes instead of having chips.

Try a light cooking spray instead of cooking oil.

Cut all visible fat off meat and take the skin off chicken.

Drain fat off meat and sauces when they are cooked.

Choose tomato-based sauces instead of creamy sauces for pasta and rice dishes.



## Emergency supplies

Have low-fat ready meals in the freezer – home-made or bought.

Have a good supply of raw vegetables and plenty of fruit.

Home-made soup is a great comfort food, especially on cold days. Freeze it in microwave-proof cartons so they are easy to thaw out and reheat as needed.

Get into the habit of carrying a bottle of water. It is important to drink at least eight cups of fluid each day. Water can also help you feel full up between meals.

## Alcohol

If you are serious about losing weight, you will be more successful if you cut out alcohol altogether until you reach your target weight. Alcohol is high in calories and can also make you more hungry.

- ♥ Choose water or diet drinks every second drink. If you really need to have an alcoholic drink, try white wine spritzers or light beer instead of other drinks, and try to drink more slowly.
- ♥ Do not drink more than the recommended upper limits: 21 standard drinks a week for men and 14 standard drinks a week for women, spread out over the week.  
One standard drink  
= one half pint of beer, stout or lager  
= one small glass of wine  
= one glass of spirits (whiskey, vodka or gin).



## Support and reward

- ♥ Get support from your family and friends. They can help you keep motivated, become more active with you and help you limit the high-fat snack foods you eat.
- ♥ Reward yourself when you make positive progress. To check your progress, use a measuring tape or weighing scales (remember that scales vary and if you're retaining fluid for any reason they may not give you a true picture of your progress), or consider how your clothes fit. Weigh yourself once a week at the same time in similar clothes. Choose a non-food treat for your reward – a magazine, a DVD, a CD, a film, a football match, a new haircut or even a top or shirt when you have lost some weight.

## Be active to lose weight

Regular physical activity is as important as what you eat for losing weight and keeping your heart healthy. Being active helps burn calories, tone your muscles and control your appetite.

To lose weight, you need to use up more energy (calories) than your body takes in from food and drink. The best way to lose weight is through a combination of:

- eating and drinking fewer calories; and
- using up more calories by being more active.

Any activity is better than no physical activity at all, so you could start off by being a little more active in your day-to-day routine. Just do more routine activities such as cleaning the house, the car or gardening. For better results aim to do some activity on most days of the week. The activity can vary from routine activities to leisure activities such as walking, dancing or sport.

To lose weight gradually build up over a number of weeks to 60 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity each day. You can spread your 60 minutes of activity over two to three shorter sessions, for example 45 minutes walking and 15 minutes gardening.



Moderate intensity:

- causes your heart to beat faster;
- means you are slightly out of breath but still able to talk; and
- brings a little sweat to your brow.

Walking is an excellent way to lose weight, especially if you have not been active for a while. You should aim to walk three to five kilometres (1.8 miles/2.5 km) at a moderate pace on most days of the week.

A three-kilometre walk should take 30 to 40 minutes to complete. Gradually increase the pace and duration and add in other activities such as swimming, cycling, dancing or football.

### **General guidelines**

- ♥ Choose an activity that you enjoy and find a friend or family member to join you.
- ♥ If you have not been active, build more activity into your daily life, take the stairs, walk to the shop, walk the dog or do some gardening. This way, being more active will become a lifetime habit.
- ♥ If you are not sure about your fitness level or general health, or have a specific health problem, it is important to contact your family doctor before you start exercising.

For advice and support on getting more active, contact your local HSE Office or look for our leaflet 'Get active for a happy heart' (see the back page for contact details).



## Daily menu plan

Regular meals stop you feeling hungry and ensure that you have a daily supply of essential nutrients. Try out the meal suggestions below.

### Breakfast

- One bowl of wholegrain cereal with chopped fruit and low-fat milk
- One slice of wholemeal bread or toast
- Tea or coffee

### Mid morning

- Fruit or raw vegetables
- Tea, coffee or water

### Lunch

- Plenty of cooked or raw vegetables
- 25 to 50 grams (one to two ounces) of lean meat, poultry, sardines, salmon, eggs or low-fat cheese.
- Two slices of wholemeal bread or a roll
- Low-fat yogurt or a glass of low-fat milk
- Fresh fruit
- Tea, coffee or water

### Mid afternoon

- Fresh fruit or raw vegetables
- Tea or water

### Main meal

- 75 to 100 grams (three to four ounces) of lean meat, poultry, fish (preferably oily), eggs, low-fat cheese or nine dessertspoons of peas or beans
- Plenty of vegetables
- One medium baked or boiled potato, or three dessertspoons of pasta or rice
- Low-fat yogurt or a glass of low-fat milk
- Fresh, cooked or tinned fruit (in its own juice)
- Water

### Supper

- Tea or water
- Fresh fruit

If you feel hungry between meals, choose fresh fruit or raw vegetables to snack on.

Local contact:

For more information, contact:

**your local HSE Office or  
The Irish Heart Foundation,**

4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Phone: 01 6685001

Email: [info@irishheart.ie](mailto:info@irishheart.ie)

Website: [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

Helpline: 1890 432 787

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