Weight Loss Tips for Teens

Losing weight is difficult for people of any age. During adolescence, weight loss must be a balancing act between the nutritional needs of your growing body and maintaining a healthy weight. It is important you keep this in mind as you lose weight. The following tips will help you lose weight or grow into your current weight by maintaining your current weight and staying healthy.

Try to:

1. Cut down on calories.
2. Choose healthy foods instead of junk foods.
3. Decrease the amount and portion size of food you eat.
4. Limit your fat intake (fat contains the most calories).
5. Be more active.

Drink and eat low-fat dairy products.

Drink fat-free (skim) or 1% milk instead of whole or 2% milk. If you don’t drink milk, you will need to get calcium from other sources. (See "Healthy Bones During Teen Years" TEEN CARD). Having enough calcium in your diet has been shown to help maintain a healthy weight.

Limit sugary drinks.

Limit drinks with sugar and calories, such as soda pop, Kool-Aid®, Gatorade®, Fruitopia®, flavored waters, and other sweetened beverages. These drinks can add 500-1000 calories a day to your diet. Water is the best fluid to drink between meals. The following drinks do not contain calories or sugar and are also good choices if you are thirsty between meals: unsweetened tea (hot or cold); mineral water or club soda; sugar-free drinks (containing NutraSweet®/Equal®/Splenda®/sucralose) like Crystal Light®, diet soda pop, or sugar-free Kool-Aid®.

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in calories, rich in nutrients, and should be included in each meal. They will help you feel fuller and provide the nutrients your growing body needs. Try to include one fruit or vegetable at every meal and snack to get a total of at least 5 servings every day. Pick a wide variety of colors.

Eat a variety of foods.

Make sure you eat a wide variety of foods. You should include foods from each food group every day. These groups include:

1. Breads and whole-grains
2. Fruits and vegetables
3. Low-fat milk and dairy products
4. Proteins (meats, peanut butter, nuts, eggs, beans)
5. Limited amounts of fats and oils
Limit high-fat/high-sugar foods.

Decrease the amount of fat you eat by limiting fried foods, sausage, bacon, high-fat luncheon meats, chips, pastries, and fast foods. Decrease the amount of butter, margarine, mayonnaise, and salad dressing you add to your food. Use herbs and spices to flavor your foods instead.

Try not to skip meals.

When you skip a meal, you usually become hungrier at the next meal and over-eat the rest of the day. Skipping breakfast or lunch may also cause you to have difficulty paying attention in school. If your schedule is hectic, be sure to have healthy snacks available so you don't skip a meal or over-eat.

Avoid quick weight loss diets.

Many of these diets are low in the nutrition that teens need to be healthy. Weight loss aids such as over-the-counter weight loss medications or herbal products are expensive and can be harmful to your health. They also make it harder to keep the weight off. Check with your doctor before trying any quick weight loss product or fad diet.

Eat healthy snacks.

Choose low-calorie, healthy foods for snacks, like fresh fruits and vegetables, non-sugared cereal, whole grains, whole grain crackers, popcorn, low-fat cheese, or baked chips. Be sure to watch your portion size. Avoid grazing or snacking all day.

Increase your activity.

Start exercising 5-10 minutes a day. Gradually increase your exercise time until you are exercising 4-6 times a week for at least 30 minutes. This will make losing weight easier. Be as active as you can. Examples of exercise include walking, cycling, roller blading, jogging, dancing, and swimming – anything that keeps you moving. Getting involved in a school sport can be a fun way to get exercise. Limit the amount of time you watch television and movies, and play computer and video games – no more than 2 hours a day total. The best exercise is one you like – be creative.

All of these suggestions can help you develop a healthy lifestyle. If you are having a weight problem now, chances are you will have problems with your weight again. Use these healthy tips to change your diet for life.