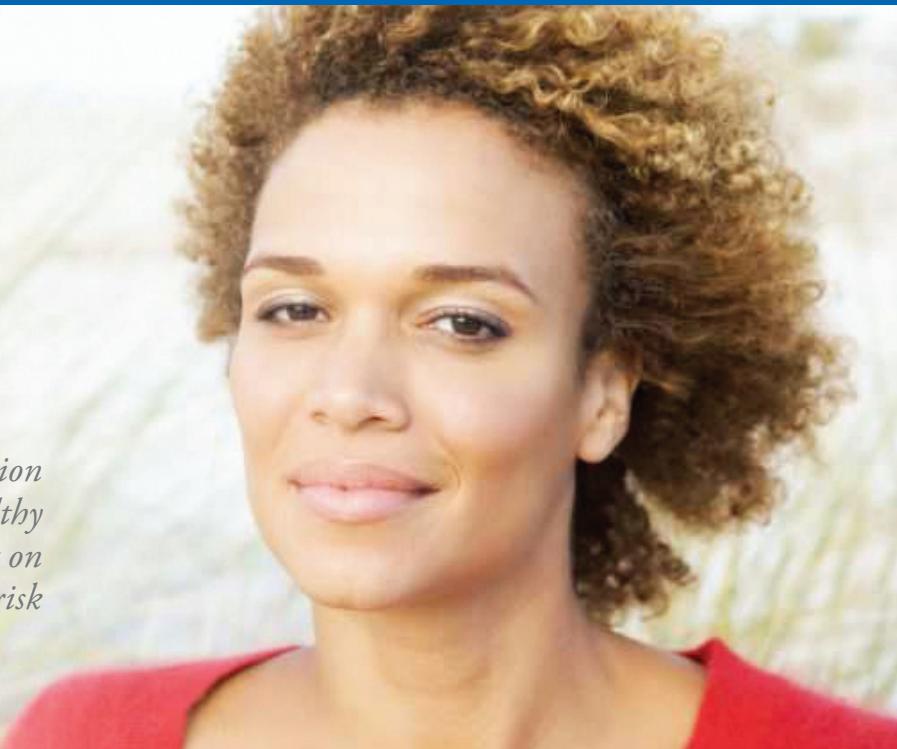


Your Nutrition Connection

This publication provides information about achieving and staying at a healthy body weight and health, focusing on breast cancer risk



Your Healthy Body Weight and Breast Cancer Risk

What is a “healthy body weight”?

Your “healthy body weight” is within a weight range (based on your sex, age, and height) that is linked to the lowest risks of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Many factors affect your body weight, such as your ancestry, culture, your job, your health, where you live, your income and access to food and physical activities, and the choices you make (such as foods and exercise). This means that your healthy body weight may be different than your friend’s, even if she is your age and height.

Is there a link between body weight and breast cancer risk?

Since breast cancer risk is hormone related, the factors that affect it differ before and after a woman experiences menopause. Menopause is the process through which women stop menstruating. The process, which may take a few months, usually occurs during a woman's early 50's. The most recent and complete review of the research concerning body weight and breast cancer risk concluded that:

Before menopause:

- *Higher levels of body fat probably decrease breast cancer risk*—Scientists do not know why higher levels of body fat may protect against breast cancer before menopause. This does not mean that premenopausal women should increase their body weight to reduce their risk—breast cancer is far more likely to occur after menopause, and there is strong evidence that higher body weight increases breast cancer risk after menopause. It makes sense for women to maintain healthy body weights before and after menopause.

After menopause:

- *Higher levels of body fat are strongly linked to higher breast cancer risk*—Research on overall body fat and breast cancer risk reports a link between higher body weight and higher breast

cancer risk after menopause. This is not true before menopause.

- *Higher levels of abdominal fat probably increase breast cancer risk*—Research shows that there is likely a link between higher levels of fat around the abdomen (stomach, belly) and increased breast cancer risk after menopause.
- *Weight gain as an adult probably increases breast cancer risk*—There is likely a link between higher amounts of weight gained during adulthood and increased breast cancer risk after menopause. Since weight gained as an adult is typically fat, not muscle, adult weight gain increases total body fat. As already mentioned, higher total body fat is strongly linked to increased breast cancer risk after menopause.

What does this mean?

Achieving and keeping a healthy body weight will support your health before and after menopause.

Is my body weight healthy?

The best way to find out whether losing (or gaining) weight could improve your health and lower your breast cancer risk is to talk with your dietitian or doctor. He or she will help you find the weight range that is healthiest for you. For more information, check out the Your Nutrition Connection on How to Assess Your Body Weight available from the clinic or online at ync.sunnybrook.ca.

Do diets work?

Research shows that most diets do not lead to *long term* weight loss. Most people lose weight while they are counting calories or limiting their food intake and then gain the weight (and more) back when they stop dieting. There are two reasons for this:

1. While dieting, your body adapts to lower calorie intake by using fewer calories for fuel. When you stop dieting and start eating normally again, your body still needs fewer calories and excess calories are stored as fat. You will gain weight faster and easier than before the diet.

2. Most “weight loss diets” are designed to be followed for a few weeks or months, not for the rest of your life. Some diets require you to buy pills, meals, or other products that help you lose weight. Other diets involve eating patterns that are not healthy if continued for a long period of time (e.g., avoiding complete food groups, low carbohydrate, high protein diets). Many diets do not help you make healthier food choices and change your eating and physical activity habits for good.



Is it possible to lose weight and keep it off?

Yes. Research shows that people who lose weight and keep it off use 4 main strategies, they:

1. Enjoy foods that are low in fat and high in fibre
2. Enjoy daily physical activities
3. Weigh themselves regularly
4. Use food and activity logs to help them stay on track

What about diet books, weight loss programs, and diet foods?

Lots of books, programs, foods, pills, and other products are marketed to help people lose weight. To decide if

any of these products are right for you, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it promise fast and easy weight loss? *This is not a long term solution.*
- Does it sound too good to be true? *It probably is.*
- Is the product a “miracle” or a “secret”? *Healthy eating and physical activity are not secrets.*
- Do you have to buy special foods, pills, or products? *You can eat regular foods and lose weight.*
- Is there a dietitian or doctor associated with the product? *Look for credible experts.*



- Is physical activity part of the plan? *Enjoyable, regular physical activity will help you reach your healthy weight.*
- Is the eating plan or product something that you can use for the rest of your life? *If not, you may regain any weight you lose when you stop dieting or using the product.*

How can you reach and keep your healthy body weight?

Health Canada and Dietitians of Canada urge you to achieve and stay at a healthy body weight by thinking about healthy eating and regular physical activity as parts of your everyday life. This approach involves making small changes to your eating and activity habits over time.

1) Eat healthy foods

- Use Canada's Food Guide to guide you in selecting a low fat, high fibre diet that meets your body's nutrient needs.
- Eat lots of vegetables, fruits, and legumes.
- Eat whole grains, breads, and cereals.
- Eat some protein (fish, chicken, lean meat, legumes, nut butters) at every meal.
- Replace high fat foods with low or no fat foods.
- Read food labels to compare fat and fibre content of foods.

2) Eat regularly

- Eat small amounts of food, 3 to 4 times a day.
- Hungry in the afternoon? Plan healthy snacks (carrots, cereal, yogurt, a hardboiled egg).

3) Enjoy all foods in moderation

- Eat smaller portions. Check Canada's Food Guide for ideal portion sizes.
- Fill your plate 2/3 (or more) with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans and 1/3 (or less) with animal protein.
- Measure portions using measuring cups, spoons or weight scales to see what healthy portion sizes look like.
- Reject the “good foods” versus “bad foods” idea. ALL foods can fit within a healthy diet. Do you love chocolate? You can still enjoy chocolate as part of your healthy diet—just buy and eat smaller portions, less often.

4) Listen to your body

- Stop eating while you still feel comfortable (no longer hungry yet not too full).
- When you feel hungry, eat healthy foods that you enjoy.
- Be mindful about what and when you eat—try not to overeat or starve yourself.

5) Set reasonable goals

- See weight loss as a long term goal. Instead of focusing on your overall goal to lose 20 pounds, set small goals to lose 1 to 2 pounds each week (at most) for 3 months.
- Focus on *long term* positive changes (dropping a dress size) rather than short term setbacks (eating that extra piece of pizza at a party).
- Make small, lasting changes to your eating and exercise habits.
- Celebrate your successes!

6) Keep track of your success

- Keep a diary to record your food choices and help you stay on track.
- Plan meals a week ahead.
- Keep a physical activity diary to help you track your success and set new goals.
- Are your clothes feeling looser? That's a great sign, keep up the good work!
- Weigh yourself weekly (not daily) using the same scale and at the same time of day.

7) Enjoy regular physical activities

- What activities do you enjoy? Walking, bike riding, gardening? Regular physical activity will burn more calories and help you build muscle while losing fat.

- Regular activity is a great way to relieve stress, help you cope with anxiety, strengthen your bones, improve your sleep, lower chronic disease risk, and have fun with friends and family.
- Get a pedometer and hit the sidewalk! Pedometers are available at many department and sporting goods stores and can be borrowed at some libraries. To learn more about how to use a pedometer and how to set your personalized goals, go to <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/faq/q12-eng.html>.
- Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity each day—Canada's Physical Activity Guide provides lots of ideas on how you can add more activity to your life. See http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_e.html.



Create Your Personalized Action Plan



1) Your personalized Canada's Food Guide

- Canada's Food Guide can be customized to show your personal serving recommendations and your favourite foods! You can print it in English, French, Arabic, Chinese (traditional or simplified), Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil or Urdu.

Here's how to create your personal food guide:

- Go to <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>
- Click on "Create My Food Guide"
- Click on "Start building my food guide"
- Enter your sex and age to see your daily serving recommendations for each food group
- Next, select from a wide variety of foods in each group to create a customized food guide showing your favourite foods
- Then, pick your favourite activities
- When you're done, use the drop down menu to select any of the languages listed above.
- To print or save your personalized food guide, click on "View PDF"

2) Keep track of what you eat

- Keep track of what you're eating using the handy "My Food Guide Servings Tracker" available at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/myguide-monguide/index-eng.php>. Click on "My Food Guide Servings Tracker" on the left side of the page then select your sex and age group to get your personalized tracking sheet.

3) Get a move on!

- There are lots of resources to help you add more physical activity in your daily routine. Before you start any new activities, complete the Physical Activity Readiness survey available at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/questionnaire.html> and talk to your doctor.
- No matter what your age, there's a Physical Activity Guide just for you! Find your guide at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_e.html
- Check out the Your Nutrition Connection on Physical Activity for more information.



Where can you go for help and support?

- A registered dietitian can help you decide on your healthy body weight range and offer strategies to help you reach your goal.
- EatRight Ontario website (<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/Doorway.aspx>) offers two ways for you to contact a registered dietitian for advice on healthy weight loss. You can email (anytime) or call toll free (1-877-510-5102).

Helpful resources

- Canada's Food Guide can help you select healthy foods. To get your copy call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 or download it from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_e.html.
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide will help you find and get started doing activities you enjoy. To get your copy call Health Connection at 1.800.361.5653 or download it from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_e.html.
- Portion size guide for different foods http://www.aicr.org/site/PageServer?pagename=elements_serving_size.
- WebMD® Portion Size Guide gives great examples of reasonable portion sizes. Download it at <http://www.webmd.com/diet/printable/portion-control-size-guide>.
- EATracker lets you track your daily food and activity and show you how you stack up based on Canada's Food Guide and Canada's Physical Activity Guide. Go to http://www.dietitians.ca/public/content/eat_well_live_well/english/eatracker/index.asp.
- The Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire helps people between the ages of 15 and 65 years decide if they should talk to their doctor before starting any new activities. To take the survey, go to <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/questionnaire.html>.
- A pedometer can be a great tool for increasing your activity level. To find out more about how to use a pedometer and how to set your personal stepping goal – see <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/faq/q12-eng.html>.
- Other Your Nutrition Connection brochures available at ync.sunnybrook.ca: How to Assess Your Body Weight; Dietary Fat and Breast Cancer Risk; Fibre and Breast Cancer Risk; and Physical Activity and Breast Cancer Risk

*To contact a Registered Dietitian, call the Patient & Family Support Program
Odette Cancer Centre, at 416-480-4623*

This publication was made possible in part due to generous donations made to the Rita Centorame Breast Cancer Prevention Fund through Sunnybrook Foundation.



Your Nutrition Connection is produced by the Partners in Nutrition Education and Research at the Odette Cancer Centre and the School of Nutrition at Ryerson University.