

# Working towards a healthy weight

A patient's guide

### Working towards a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can be daunting. The aim of this leaflet is to help make your weight loss journey a bit easier.

If you are living with obesity or being overweight, losing just 5-10% of your body weight has many health benefits. It can improve quality of life and reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Losing inches from your waist also helps to lower your risk.

Popular 'fad diets' promise quick and easy weight loss. They are often overly restrictive, lack essential nutrients and are hard to stick to in the long run. Instead, aim for a balanced approach. Keep it simple. Make small, long-term changes to create healthy new eating habits combined with increasing physical activity can really help.

### Losing weight. Are you ready?

Do you feel ready to start your weight loss journey? If you're not sure, the questions below will help you to decide. If now is not the right time for you, you can still use this leaflet when you do feel ready.

#### Why do I want to lose weight?

Think about why losing weight matters to you. Is it to feel more energised and healthier or something else?

- 1.....
- 2.....

Reflect on your reasons for and against losing weight right now. This can help to stay focused on your goals.

#### Are there any advantages to staying as I am?

- 1.....
- 2.....

#### What are the disadvantages to staying as I am?

- 1.....
- 2.....

Is losing weight a top priority for me now? Mark on the scale below how important is losing weight to you right now?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Not at all important</b>			<b>Somewhat</b>				<b>Extremely important</b>			

How confident are you in making changes to lose weight? Mark on the scale below to rate your confidence in following this plan.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all confident			Somewhat				Extremely confident			

If now is not the right time for you, you can still use this leaflet when you do feel ready.

### Top tips to maintain a healthy weight

Losing weight successfully can be challenging. By planning ahead you'll have solutions ready to help you stay on track. Think about potential challenges, including those that you have faced before when making lifestyle changes. How can you overcome them and stay motivated? Here has some common challenges to weight loss and ideas to help overcome them.

Challenges	Solutions
Feeling overwhelmed by different approaches to losing weight	There are lots of ways to lose weight, but no single approach works for everyone. The secret is to discover an approach that you enjoy, is safe and effective and works with your lifestyle in the long term.
No time to prepare healthy meals	Try to make a weekly meal plan and shopping list or batch cook meals and freeze portions. If you choose ready meals, check the front of pack traffic light labels. Those with more greens and ambers are usually the healthier options. Reading the food labels can help you become aware of hidden ingredients. Avoid shopping when hungry.
Food cravings	Stock up on healthy satisfying foods like fruit, nuts or wholegrain snacks and sugar free drinks. Aim to have regular balanced meals and only include snacks if you are hungry. Enjoy the occasional treat but be mindful of foods that are high in fat and sugar and try to balance them with healthier options. Stay hydrated, this can help with feeling full.
Limited access to healthy food or affordable ingredients	Plan around what's in season or on special offer. Bulk buying can also save money. Frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables can be cheaper. Tinned fish is cheaper than fresh and doesn't need cooking. Plant proteins are generally the cheapest way to get protein. If you want to include meat, use less by adding beans add vegetables.

Using food as a coping mechanism for stress, boredom or emotions	Identify emotional triggers and find alternative strategies to reduce feelings of stress like exercise or meditation or talking to a friend. Practice mindful eating. Eat slowly, avoid distractions such as eating in front of the TV. This allows you to really enjoy the meal and recognise the signals of feeling full.
Social gatherings or eating out makes it hard to stick to your plan	One day off won't derail your progress. A good way to think about things is the 80:20 approach. Choosing a healthier lifestyle 80% of the time and allowing yourself more flexibility for the remaining 20%. Check menus and choose healthier options before you go out.
Lack of support or feeling isolated	Making these changes with someone else or with support of those close to you is important to help you keep going. Take time to consider who may be the best people to support you and how you can access this help, for example family, friends, work colleagues in person or via group chats if family and friends are not close by.
Falling back into old habits	Making lifestyle changes is not plain sailing. Be flexible in your approach to difficult days. Revisit your goals and reflect on why things went wrong, adjust your plan if needed and keep moving forward.
Difficulty getting enough physical active because of a busy lifestyle or health concerns	Start with small, manageable exercises and gradually build up your activity. This can include moving more through the day, taking a short walk, using the stairs or sitting less. This will help build muscle and is important to help keep weight off in the longer term. It also brings lots of other benefits for both physical and mental health.
Lack of sleep, leading to low energy and cravings	Follow a consistent bedtime routine, take time to relax, limit screentime and create a restful environment before bed. Good sleep will make it easier to stay motivated and make healthier choices.
Feeling unmotivated	Be kind to yourself. Stay positive and focus on what you can achieve rather than dwelling on setbacks. Celebrate your successes, big and small. Acknowledging your achievements can give you a boost and keep you motivated. Remember one bad day doesn't have to lead to a bad week, month or year.

## Setting a goal and action plan

Start by thinking about what you would like to achieve over the longer term.

Your first thought may be a target amount of weight to lose but it could also be a non-scale victory. Your long-term goal could be sleeping better, walk further before getting breathless, reduce waist size or need a smaller belt hole, shirt collar or dress size.

Make your goal specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART for short) to help.

For example, A weight loss of 5-10% weight over three to six months or aiming to lose one to two pounds (0.5-1kg) per week is a realistic target.

**My long-term goal:**

## How to reach your long-term goal

It helps to break your long-term goal down into smaller more manageable chunks and include clear steps you need to take. Choose two or three small changes to start with. Try to make them as achievable and realistic as possible. You can add more changes later or build on the ones you've already established.

You can use a notebook, diary, health tracking app, or any other method to track how you feel, what worked well, and possible next steps. If you start with one style of recording and find you don't like it, don't worry. It is about finding what method works for you. Here are some examples:

**Goal 1:** I will aim to eat more fruit and vegetables and do this by eating a portion of fruit with breakfast and two portions of vegetables with dinner every day for the next two weeks. I will measure this by writing it down.

**Goal 2:** On Mondays, I will write down a plan for healthy evening meals and snacks for the rest of the week.

**Goal 3:** I will aim to reduce red meat to no more than three times a week. For the next two weeks I will have one meat free day a week, replace half the meat with beans in my favourite recipes and have fish instead of meat twice a week. I will measure this by keeping a food diary.

## My weekly tracker

By putting a plan in place and noting down your progress, you'll be able to see the positive changes you're making. Try using this tracker for at least two weeks because it can take some time to change habits.

Evidence shows people who weigh themselves once or twice a week lose more weight. Only do this if you are happy to. If not, there are many other ways to measure progress that can be motivating. Here are some examples: notice how your clothes feel, track your waist and hip measurements, take progress photos, improvements in energy, mood and sleep and journaling how you feel.

### My goals

Goal #1

Goal #2

Goal #3

### My weight kgs/lbs:

My waist measurement cm/in:

BMI kg/m<sup>2</sup>:

## My progress

**Achieving my goals will mean:**

**Did you achieve the goals you set yourself this week?**

**What went well? What was challenging and what can I do differently next week?**

Celebrate your progress and keep going. Whether it's a week of a new habit or improved lipid levels congratulate yourself. Build a list of non-food related rewards that you can use to treat yourself – a trip to the cinema, a magazine, a new book or audiobook, a facial or a massage, catching up with a friend, a craft project, art supplies or hobby gear, a fun puzzle, a day trip.

**If I reach my goals, my reward will be:**

## Food and drink diary

Recording what, when and why can help you understand a lot about your activity and eating patterns and will make be easier for you to spot where you can make small changes. In the future it will also allow you to look back and recognise how much you have achieved.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Snacks and drinks
<b>Example of how to record your diary</b>	2 Weetabix, semi-skimmed milk and 1 small banana	400g tin of lentil soup, 1 large wholemeal roll 150g yoghurt 30g of walnuts	3 small potatoes, 1 grilled chicken breast, broccoli and peas	11:00 apple and crisps (25g) 15:00 biscuit 3 cups of tea and 1 large skinny latte
<b>Monday</b>				
<b>Tuesday</b>				
<b>Wednesday</b>				
<b>Thursday</b>				
<b>Friday</b>				
<b>Saturday</b>				
<b>Sunday</b>				

## Weekly meal planner

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Snacks and drinks
<b>Example of how to record your diary</b>	2 slices of wholegrain toast with spread and peanut butter and fruit salad	Baked potato with tuna and salad malt loaf	Homemade chilli and boiled rice  mixed green salad  yoghurt	11:00: apple 15:00: 2 oatcakes with cottage cheese and cucumber 3 cups of tea and one litre of water
<b>Monday</b>				
<b>Tuesday</b>				
<b>Wednesday</b>				
<b>Thursday</b>				
<b>Friday</b>				
<b>Saturday</b>				
<b>Sunday</b>				



<b>For further information</b>		
<b>NHS Weight Loss Plan</b>	Download the free NHS weight loss 12-week plan to help you start healthier eating habits, be more active, and start losing weight, Signposting to other free and paid weight loss plans	nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight
<b>Healthy You</b>	For self-referral for weight management, NHS health checks, stop smoking and falls prevention	healthyyou.or.uk 0330050093 eh-healthyyou@nhs.net
<b>British Dietetic Association</b>	Food fact sheets on weight management and much more	bda.uk.com
<b>British Heart Foundation</b>	Information on managing cholesterol, weight and heart health and a recipe finder	bhf.org.uk
<b>Heart UK</b>	Information on managing cholesterol, weight and heart health and a recipe finder	heartuk.org.uk
<b>NHS Healthier Families</b>	Previously Change4Life. Lots of information to help you and your family eat better and move more	nhs.uk/healthier-families
<b>Diabetes UK</b>	A variety of information available including learning zone, meal plans and local support groups	diabetes.org.uk

If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please discuss with your dietitian.

If you have been advised to have thickened fluids or a modified diet by a speech and language therapist, please continue to follow this advice.

### **Useful Contact Numbers:**

Royal Papworth Hospital dietitians: 01223 639372

Royal Papworth Hospital cardiac rehab team: 01223 638429

Royal Papworth Hospital cardiac support helpline: 01223 638100

# Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners



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## Alternative versions of this leaflet

Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

View a digital version of this leaflet by scanning the QR code.



## Become a member

As a member of Royal Papworth Hospital Foundation Trust, you could have your say on how the organisation is run, now and in the future. You will receive regular information and news from Royal Papworth and get invited to exclusive events. Membership allows you to vote for your representatives on the Council of Governors, talk to your Council of Governor representatives and stand as a governor.

Scan the QR code or head to [royalpapworth.nhs.uk/our-hospital/how-we-are-run/foundation-trust-members](http://royalpapworth.nhs.uk/our-hospital/how-we-are-run/foundation-trust-members) to find out more.



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