

The 5 Keys to Successful Weight Management

As an obesity medicine specialist my primary goal is to help my patients improve their health, improve their quality of life, and prevent future weight-related complications. Weight management is a vital component to achieving these goals.

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People tend to overly focus on weight loss and neglect to develop and maintain the habits that will enable them to successfully manage their weight and health in the long term. Perhaps you have fallen into this trap as well.

The reality is that weight management is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires you to make a solid commitment to your health and to developing the habits that will help you to manage your weight and health for the rest of your life.

When it comes to successful weight management, there are no magic formulas or instant solutions. Don't believe anyone who tells you that it's simple, as nothing could be further from the truth.

Weight management is one of the most challenging endeavors you can embark upon in life.

This e-book provides you with guidance on where to focus. It doesn't offer magic formulas or instant solutions, but it does provide you with important keys to achieving your weight and health goals now and in the future.



1

Focus on Health, Not Weight

Successful weight management is about so much more than the number on the scale—it's about improving health and quality of life, both now and in the future. Those who focus more on *health gain* and less on *pounds lost* are more successful in the long run.


Why is this?

When your goal is *health gain*, you will put your energy into forming habits that will not only assist you in reducing your weight in the present but that will help you maintain your weight reduction in the future. It will shift you from short-term *diet thinking* to long-term *health and lifestyle thinking*. Without solid healthy lifestyle habits, it will be more difficult to lose weight and you will be far more likely to regain the weight that you worked so hard to lose.

While it's true that the scale provides some information about the effectiveness of the changes you are making, it only tells part of the story. If all you look at is the number on the scale, you're likely to miss seeing all your *health gains* such as increased energy, less pain, better sleep, and improvement of other health issues.

People with a higher body weight are at risk for weight-related health conditions that can significantly impair health. Many have already developed some of these conditions and are experiencing the effects in their daily lives. When they connect their lifestyle choices to their health concerns such as knee pain, shortness of breath, or gastric reflux, they are more likely to make choices that are aligned with their health and weight goals.

Many have the expectation that weight loss should be quick and dramatic and that anything less is failure. It is not uncommon for folks to start a new eating or physical activity plan, lose a few pounds, and abandon it after a short period of time because "it isn't working." Without a focus on health and an understanding of the process, they give up just as they are beginning to see the benefits.



The body has an innate ability to maintain a stable physiologic state despite variations in the internal and external environment, even those that are extreme.

Because of this, the odds of being successful increase significantly when you stay the course and give your body time to adjust to the changes you have made. Metabolic function doesn't reset overnight. For many, it takes weeks to months of consistent changes for the processes that regulate fat storage to shift to a more favorable state.

That's why it's so important to focus on the *health gains* that often occur much sooner than the *pounds lost*. When your focus is on health, it will be far easier to weather the ups and downs of the scale without falling into despair.

Key 1: Focus on Health, Not Weight

2

Eat Whole Foods & Minimize Ultra-processed Foods

When people get serious about losing weight and keeping it off, their first question is, “What should I eat?” As they seek answers by reading what experts, gurus, and dietary guidelines recommend, they discover that it’s not an easy question to answer.

After following the conventional advice of counting and reducing calories, many have not found it to be a successful strategy in the long term.

The reason that it hasn’t been effective, is that eating for weight loss is not about calorie balance, it is about food quality. Choosing foods based solely on calories does not account for the hormonal impact of specific foods. Ultimately, the quality of calories is more important than the quantity in terms of health and weight management, making calorie counting a waste of time.

That’s why I advise my patients to eat whole foods, which contain the macronutrients that turn off hunger, induce satiety, reduce inflammation, and promote fat burning AND to minimize ultra-processed foods, which keep hunger signals alive, rarely lead to satiety, induce inflammation, and promote fat storage.


What are whole foods?

Whole foods are those that are consumed in their natural state, or as close to it as possible. Examples are vegetables, fruit, nuts, olives, eggs, fish, meat, poultry, and dairy products. The protein, fat, and fiber found in these foods not only improve metabolic function by regulating blood sugar and insulin levels, they keep mood, mental clarity, and energy levels steady.

Consumption of these foods signals the body to turn off hunger hormones and release the satiety hormones that make it easier to stop eating once a reasonable portion has been consumed. They also reduce cravings, making it easier to avoid foods that are less healthful or are downright harmful.

What are ultra-processed foods?

Ultra-processed foods are made from highly processed ingredients such as starches, refined sugar, salt, artificial colors, flavors, stabilizers, and harmful fats. They are



industrial formulations that lack important nutrients including protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Not only are they harmful to health, they displace whole foods in our diets, leaving us without adequate nutrition.

Examples are sweetened drinks, energy drinks, chips, sweetened breakfast cereals, candy, pastries, granola bars, and ice cream, among many others. These foods are designed by food scientists to induce maximum pleasure and keep you eating them, often in large portions. Far too often people think that they are weak-willed or lack self-control because they can't stop eating these foods, when in fact, the food has been engineered to achieve this very effect.

An additional downside is that ultra-processed foods stimulate the release of insulin, which signals the body to store fat. High levels of insulin also increase inflammation throughout the body, may stimulate more hunger, and contribute to an increased risk of serious conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer.

All of this is problematic for those who are trying to manage their weight and health.

Unfortunately, society is full of ultra-processed foods, making it challenging to avoid or resist them. When I recommend minimizing ultra-processed foods to my patients, some tell me that they want to eat like a “normal” person. Many were raised with ultra-processed foods as a staple in their diets, making it even more challenging to shift their thinking. My response is that while consumption of these foods is common, it is anything but “normal” given that they are designed by food engineers and mass produced in factories. There is no question that it is difficult to change your patterns, but I promise you that it is worth it.

The bottom line is that people lose weight when they eat whole foods and minimize ultra-processed foods. Not only do they improve their current and future health, they feel better. They have more energy, focus, and mental clarity, and less hunger, cravings, fatigue, and brain fog.

Key 2: Eat Whole Foods & Minimize Ultra-processed Foods



3

Move Your Body Every Day

Physical activity is one of the keys to successful weight management. It contributes to weight loss and is vital to maintaining that loss.

In addition to the weight management benefits, physical activity is an important component of health. Our bodies were designed to move and are their healthiest when they move regularly. There is no medication, surgery, or practice that can deliver such powerful health benefits as those we get from physical activity!

Movement improves cardiovascular health, metabolic health, musculoskeletal health, mental health, cognitive health, body composition, blood sugar regulation, blood pressure regulation, and much more. These benefits positively impact current and future health.

Study after study shows that we live longer and healthier when we move our bodies on a regular basis. The earlier in life we start, the better.

Research shows that even if we don't make physical activity a habit until later in life, it still confers numerous benefits, making it important to get started, regardless of our age.

Despite these known benefits, many find it difficult to incorporate physical activity into their routines. With all the demands on us, it can be overwhelming to consider adding something else to our daily schedule.

That's why I recommend that you start with a small goal and build from there. If you expect too much from yourself in the beginning, you set yourself up for failure. Something as simple as a 10-minute walk three times per week can make a positive difference in your health. But most importantly, it helps you establish a habit, one that you can build on with time. If that sounds like too much for you, start smaller. Start by parking further away or marching in place while you brush your teeth. The best strategy is to start small and build on your success.

In addition to building a physical activity routine, it's important to move throughout the day as much as possible. Most of us have professions that require us to sit for large portions of the day. And when we consider all of our modern conveniences—remote controls, phones, laptops, appliances—and the ways that they can accomplish tasks that used to require us to move, it's no wonder that it's challenging to be physically active.

That's why it's important to be deliberate and intentional about moving throughout the day. Find ways to be less efficient by performing tasks that require you to get out of your seat. Even small movements such as using a printer in another room or taking the laundry from the laundry room to the closet one item at a time can make a positive difference in your health and energy. Doing small things will build momentum that will keep you moving.

Key 3: Move Your Body Every Day

4

Get Enough Sleep

Sleep has a profound impact on our health and well-being. When we are deprived of sleep, we pay a high price in terms of health and our ability to successfully manage our weight.

In our 24-7 world, it can be challenging to make sleep a priority. With the constant access to entertainment, news, and connection that technology confers, it can be difficult to pull ourselves away from our screens and simply go to bed. Technology also provides some of us with the ability to work as late as we choose, making it tempting to stay up into the wee hours of the night to complete projects. As a result, chronic sleep deprivation is the norm in our society, rather than the exception.

Just because you can get by with less sleep, doesn't mean you should. We all know the difference in how we feel the day after a good sleep than how we feel after a bad one. After a good sleep, we are better able to focus, be productive, regulate our emotions, and enjoy others, whereas a poor, shortened sleep can leave us struggling to focus, less productive, short-tempered, and feeling blue.

Chronic sleep deprivation is a risk factor for disease, poor health, and obesity. It increases cortisol, which is a beneficial hormone in healthy amounts, but when levels are high, it contributes to fat storage, metabolic dysfunction, and inflammation. Sleep deprivation also negatively impacts blood sugar regulation. Those with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes may see an increase in their blood sugar readings after a period as short as 3-4 days of inadequate sleep.

Sleep provides the body and brain the time needed for cell repair and detoxification, as well as the production of new cells.

Without adequate time for these processes, cells may not function optimally, which can lead to health issues. Additionally, sleep deprivation contributes to impaired driving and increases the rate of motor vehicle accidents as much as substance use.

Adequate sleep will not only improve your health, it will make it easier for you to establish and maintain healthy habits.

Without the energy, focus, and positivity that adequate sleep generates, it will be difficult to be consistent with healthy eating, physical activity, and maintaining a commitment to your weight and health.

When you make getting adequate sleep a priority, you will reap numerous health benefits, and it will be easier to successfully manage your weight.

Key 4: Get Enough Sleep





5

Be Consistent

One of the most important things you can do when you embark on a plan to lose weight and improve your health is to be consistent. If you implement a weight reduction plan but are inconsistent with it, it is unlikely that you will achieve the results you desire.

Consistency is the key to successful weight management. It requires the same frame of mind that you use to save money.

When you consistently put money in your savings account—and leave it there—it adds up. But if you withdraw some of your money, even in small amounts, you will not reach your savings goal. Despite a regular habit of saving money, you will not accumulate the savings you would have if you had not made withdrawals.

One of the most common reasons that people aren't consistent is that it is difficult! Remaining consistent with lifestyle behaviors such as healthy eating, physical activity, stress reduction, and adequate sleep requires significant effort. These activities require daily planning, preparation, and attention, which are challenging at the best of times. When stress hits or your routine is altered, it's easy to get out of the rhythm and revert to old habits.

Another challenge is that it is difficult to resist the urge to give yourself a reward at the end of the day or week for having successfully met the challenges, including staying focused on eating and physical activity. While it's true that you deserve a reward for having made it through the day, eating something off plan isn't a true reward if it derails your progress in reducing weight and improving health.

Inconsistency may take the form of allowing yourself to indulge in something in the evening after staying on plan throughout the day or giving yourself a day or evening off your eating or physical activity plan each week. While the changes that you've made have a positive impact on your health, the indulgences may cancel out your efforts in terms of weight loss and maintaining your weight loss.

If you choose to have an indulgence, don't let it lead you off your path. Enjoy it and jump right back into your healthy eating routine. If you aren't intentional, one indulgence will lead to more indulgences.

No penalties are issued if you have a treat and resume your healthy eating in the same day / week / month.

The idea that you've blown it and that the day / week / month is already ruined so you might as well wait for a new day / week / month to get back on track is simply not true.

Another stumbling block is the idea that you can exercise your way out of indulgences.

If you believe that if you exercise more, you can eat more, you will find that your weight doesn't budge, or worse, you will gain weight. It is easy to overestimate the amount of energy expended and underestimate the energy that's been consumed. In the end, you can't outsmart biology.

When you are consistent, you reinforce the habits you need to successfully manage your weight in the long-term.

Consistency allows your brain to form the neural pathways that will make your new behaviors the norm, rather than the exception.

The brain loves consistency and rewards you with neurochemicals that reinforce your habits. Pay attention to how good it feels when you are consistent.

Key 5: Be Consistent

Explore more of my articles at www.im-wm.com

Sign up for my newsletter to receive more support and insights that will guide you on your weight loss journey.



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As a weight management specialist, I have seen thousands of patients suffer because they've been told that weight loss is simple and that it's their fault that they are struggling.

The truth is, it's not your fault.

Join me online or schedule an appointment, and I'll guide you to the healthy life you desire.