

Your Weight Management Questions Answered by the American Institute for Cancer Research

Question: Can I eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruits a day without gaining weight?

Answer: Absolutely. The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends that you eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruits every day for optimal cancer protection and overall good health. By eating five or more servings, you can cut back on higher-calorie, higher-fat foods and still feel full. These high-nutrient plant foods provide many of the vitamins and minerals your body needs. They also contain natural plant chemicals that help prevent the cancer process from starting and keep blood vessels in good shape.

The best advice for weight loss is to limit portions of all foods, fill up on low-calorie vegetables and fruits instead of high-fat or high-calorie foods and exercise regularly.

Along with regular physical activity, appropriate portion sizes and a mainly plant-based diet, eating five or more servings of vegetables and fruits forms a sound health strategy.

Question: How long do I have to walk to burn off the calories in treats?

Answer: The answer depends on how much you weigh, how fast you walk and what sort of treats you choose. For example, cookies often contain 60 to 120 calories each, while sweet desserts may contain from 200 to 300 calories. Some rich types contain more. At a moderate three miles per hour, someone weighing 180 pounds might walk about 15 minutes to burn the calories in each cookie, or at least 40 to 60 minutes for other sweet desserts. Since a heavier body requires more energy to move than a lighter one, someone who weighs 150 pounds would need to walk about 20 minutes per cookie or 45 to 75 minutes for a typical dessert.

Question: Is it easier to lose weight with five or six “mini-meals” spread throughout the day?

Answer: Some diet books and magazine articles claim that a “mini-meal” style of eating speeds up metabolism and makes weight loss easier. No clear evidence supports this idea. For some people, eating more often may help control hunger that can lead to overeating. For others, mini-meals turn into occasions to grab food quickly, like high-fat snack foods and cheese. Experiment until you find an eating pattern that gives you energy throughout the day, helps you avoid overeating and makes healthy food choices easy.

Question: Is there any proof that a low-carbohydrate diet is best for losing weight?

Answer: None at all. Research shows quite clearly that what makes people lose weight is consuming fewer calories than they burn. Low-carbohydrate diets can cause a temporary water loss that reduces body weight, but it's body fat that really matters.

The best advice for weight loss is to limit portions of all foods, fill up on low-calorie vegetables and fruits instead of high-fat or high-calorie foods and exercise regularly. The mostly plant-based diet recommended by AICR meets these criteria. And it's an eating style to continue even after you've lost weight. It will improve your overall health and lower your risk of cancer and other chronic diseases.

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