

Answers to Your Weight Questions

By the American Institute for Cancer Research

Q: How often should I weigh myself when trying to lose weight?

A: Your body's water balance naturally fluctuates up and down and changes your weight. Most experts say that if you want to check your progress on the scale, weigh yourself once a week. Even once a month is fine. Tracking your progress through specific behavior changes, like eating more vegetables and fruits, may be a better idea. After all, you have control over your behavior, not weight itself. You can also watch your progress by measuring your waist size, since fat around your waist seems to pose the greatest risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Or simply note changes in how your clothes fit.

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Q: How can I lose weight at low cost?

A: Popular diets that require special products to lose weight are unnecessary. Instead of spending more money, cut back on expensive foods that lack nutritional benefits. For instance, omit soft drinks and artificially sweetened waters. Drink plain water or homemade iced tea instead. Cook smaller amounts for yourself at home. When eating out, order smaller servings and choose menu items wisely. If oversized portions are served, put aside the excess to take home in a doggy bag. To boost your vegetable and fruit consumptions without breaking the budget, select in-season produce and opt for frozen produce when its less expensive.

Q: Can more calcium help me lose weight?

A: Getting enough calcium may help people reach and keep a healthy weight. One study among adults found that each 300 milligrams (mg) increase in daily calcium consumption was linked to a six-pound lower weight. Other research shows that among people who reduce their calorie consumption to lose weight, those who continue to eat 1,000 mg of calcium lose more weight than those consuming the more typical 600 mg. It is important to note that these observed weight-loss benefits come from getting 1,000 to 1,500 mg of calcium a day, which coincides with the recommended 1,000 mg of calcium for adults through age 50 and 1,200 mg for older adults. Three servings of dairy products or calcium-fortified foods provide these amounts.

Q: Is it true that all my weight loss expenses are now tax-deductible?

A: No. Only some expenses are deductible, and you must meet certain criteria. Your physician will need to verify that your Body Mass Index (BMI) is 30 or more. People who are less overweight, but have weight-related health problems, like heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, are also eligible for the deduction. If you plan to claim a deduction, be sure to hold onto all your weight loss receipts. Note, however, that deductible expenses relate only to individual or group weight loss programs. See the IRS website (www.irs.gov) for more details.

*A healthy lifestyle can help you lose weight and keep it off. To get started, order the free brochure *A Healthy Weight for Life* from the American Institute for Cancer Research. The number to call is 1-800-843-8114, ext. 110.*