Ask and Take Action Campaign

This is a lifestyle change, not a diet fad or some catchphrase weight loss program. By taking this handout you have shown commitment to your own well-being and taken the first integral step towards changing your life for the better...Congratulations!

This information is intended to be a simple diet and exercise guide to a healthy body weight armed to prevent disease. The key to maintaining a healthy weight is sustained motivation. Your goal should not be a singular weight but rather a focus on an overall healthy lifestyle you want to achieve. A reasonable weight loss goal for a healthy person is to lose 1 pound per week. A reasonable end goal can be to achieve a healthy BMI. The bottom line: set reasonable expectations.

If you have a chronic disease such as chronic kidney disease, diabetes mellitus or heart disease you should discuss your diet and exercise plan with your doctor first. Consider getting a referral to a nutritionist to discuss proper adjustments and/or therapy for appropriate physical activity.

DIET

Research has proven a proper diet alone is effective for weight loss. Research has also proven exercise regimens in addition to a proper diet are effective at maintaining weight loss as well as providing major medical benefits to your heart, lungs, etc.

If you have decided to take action, you should focus on developing meals and snacks that fit not only your lifestyle but also your taste preferences.

My #1 advice is to fill up on fresh or frozen vegetables. Then add lean proteins: fish, chicken, turkey, and nuts. Round out your meals with some fresh fruits and healthy grains.

Other diet tips: Drink lots of water. Avoid sugar, especially high fructose corn syrup. High fructose corn syrup is easily hidden in highly processed foods such as juice, soda, and cereal. Carbohydrates are not your enemy. They are an essential source of long-term energy storage. Just stay balanced. Avoid fast food unless you are truly in a hurry. Review the nutrition fact sheet and find a reasonable option like grilled chicken salad. Pay attention to portion sizes. Avoid eating near bedtime. Focus on frequent small meals. Keep healthy snacks in your desk or purse such as raw nuts or dried fruits. Anticipate hunger and beat it to the punch to avoid cravings. Get 6-8 hours of sleep per night to keep your metabolism and energy up.

It is ok to take breaks from these ideas. You are the only person watching your choices. No one is judging you or expecting you to abide by these suggestions.
**Exercise**

Once you have your diet manageable, start adjusting your exercise regimen. The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes a day, 5 days per week or a total of 150 minutes in a week of moderate-intensity exercise. Moderate-intensity means you are at a level where you are breathing hard, sweating, and finding it relatively difficult to hold a conversation. Try walking at your local school track or mall. Try water aerobics at your local gym or YMCA. Try dancing lessons, trampoline classes, or hula-hoop with friends. It doesn’t matter, just get moving!

Everyone has their own unique level of training and experience. Some people have never gone for a run in their life, others take part in races or other athletic events frequently. I don’t care what your level is today just start where you are comfortable and build up your confidence from there.

I expect 2 different levels of people considering a new regimen:

1. **Minimal organized activity:** Try to walk 10 minutes daily, after 2 weeks walk 20 minutes daily, after another 2 weeks walk 30 minutes daily, after 4-6 weeks add stairs, biking, or jogging. Places to walk: gym, school track or gymnasium, home, mall.

2. **Low activity:** Try to walk, jog, run, skip, roller-skate a mile every other day. Add some strength training or weight lifting to your routine 2 days a week. Increase your distance, time, and weight intensity as able.

If you have never tried an exercise regimen before, you should discuss this with your doctor first to find the best starting point. That may be walking for 10 minutes a day until you build up more stamina. It may be jogging a mile every other day. As your workouts get easier, start to lengthen your time or increase your intensity of exercise. Always push yourself a little further. Your body will adapt to a routine. You will begin to notice a decline in your weight or tone progress; this is when you change your routine and challenge your muscles and mind some more.

**Other exercise tips:** find a friend to do this with. It will keep you accountable and enthusiastic. Keep track by making a board or calendar. Give yourself gold stars each time you do a workout or just because. If you are intimidated by lifting weights, talk to friends or professionals for advice.

**My final recommendation:** Give your body enough time and enjoy every little accomplishment. Know that your effort to improve your life is awesome!

---

**Kimberly Fisher, DO, MBA**

**Online Resources:**
- [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/losing_weight/)
- [www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/index.html)
- [www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html)