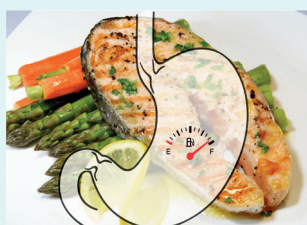


Weight Loss - What I Need to Know

Traditional weight loss advice is often unhelpful, as it doesn't provide all the information, help or support people need to make lasting changes. Weight management is explored in detail on X-PERT Programmes and in our handbooks, but we have included some top tips here to help you make changes that can work for YOU.

Focus on quality - If you base your meals on good quality foods (and avoid ultra-processed ones) this will help to reduce hunger. This makes it easier for you to manage your weight, and is better for your general health too.

As a general rule of thumb, foods with more than five ingredients tend to be highly processed. This is especially true if some of those ingredients are not things you would recognise as being foods in their own right!



Build meals around protein - Although it is important to be mindful of portion sizes, it is also important that you are satisfied by what you eat. Otherwise, it is likely you will crave more food before your next meal. This often leads to snacking, and increases the risk of choosing less healthy options. Protein is very filling, so aim to build your meals around 1 to 2 portions of it.

Pick an approach that seems right for you - Everyone has an opinion about what the "best" diet looks like, but there is a wide range of options that can be healthy. It is essential that the approach you pick is based on your own goals, needs and preferences, and fits in with your lifestyle. If your new way of eating includes things you enjoy it will be easier to cut out some of the less healthy foods and drinks that might have been part of your old diet.

Stick with it - In the short-term, change can be hard. You have probably built up habits over a long period of time, so changing these might seem like a challenge. It can take your body, and mind, some time to adapt. But if you stick with your new approach then it will become easier.



Consider your tolerance for carbs - Different people can have different amounts of carbohydrate before it starts to affect their health. If you have carbs above your own tolerance level it will be more difficult to manage your weight, blood glucose levels and general health. You may therefore need to experiment to find what works for you.

Be mindful of added calories - Although we recommend focusing on the quality of the food you eat, rather than just counting calories, it is still important to think about how much extra energy (calories) you add to your diet. Some things can be easy to have too much of, usually because they add lots of calories without helping to make you feel full. Examples include sugary foods and drinks, adding lots of butter, milk or cream to foods or drinks, or snacking on things like nuts or cheese without being mindful of portion sizes.



Beware of alcohol - Having too much alcohol can very quickly add a lot of extra calories, whilst not helping to fill you up. Alcohol can also affect your decision making, and not in a good way! This makes it more likely you will choose unhealthy foods, or reach for a snack you don't need.

Try to eat less often - As well as what we eat, how often we eat can have a big impact on weight management. As a basic rule, we suggest trying to eat no more than three meals per day, and to avoid snacking (unless there is a medical reason to do so). Some people go even further than this and practice some form of intermittent fasting, by eating less on certain days or only eating during a set window each day for example. Eating less often helps to reduce the total amount you eat and helps your body use its fat stores for energy.

Consider if you could be eating for the wrong reasons - Weight management would be easier if we only ate when our body actually needed energy and/or nutrients. But in the modern world there are lots of other things that can trigger hunger, or cause us to eat when we aren't really hungry at all. Examples include boredom, emotions (positive or negative), stress, or even because we haven't had enough sleep. It is important to try to identify and deal with anything that might be driving us to eat more than we need.



You can't outrun a bad diet - Being active is great for diabetes management and general health, but on its own it is not an effective way to lose weight. If you are wanting to lose weight it is best to focus on your diet first, as what you eat usually has the biggest impact on your weight.

Look for support - Making lifestyle changes can be difficult, and there may be barriers in your way. Having a good support network can help to make this easier, and help to keep you on track during the times you might be tempted to stray. It can therefore be helpful to seek support from friends or family, and/or from other people on a similar journey (by attending a group programme for example; or by engaging with the free X-PERT Forum, accessible at www.xperthealth.org.uk/forums).

Make sure you are doing it for the right reasons - There are lots of potential benefits to making lifestyle changes, but motivation is key. Taking some time to think about how achieving your goals will make a difference to your life can provide that extra boost, and help to keep you going when you are struggling. A personal motivation (e.g., "I want to be able to play with my children/grandchildren") is more likely to do this than something too general (e.g., "I want to be healthier"), or something that has been decided by someone else for you (e.g., being told to lose weight by your doctor).

This topic is explored further on X-PERT programmes and in X-PERT Handbooks.
For more information, visit www.xperthealth.org.uk.