

Diet and Weight Management

An important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle is eating right and watching your weight. People who are overweight are at greater risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. Poor diet can contribute to high cholesterol and a number of other health problems. Also, poor diet has been linked to symptoms of depression. [More](#)

Exercise is not only important for managing weight, it also has a number of other positive benefits for your physical and mental health. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System the majority of U.S. adults were not physically active on a regular basis in 2001. About 45% of adults reported that they engaged in moderate-intensity activities (e.g., walking, bicycling, gardening, vacuuming, or anything else that causes small increases in heart rate) for at least 30 minutes per day, at least five days per week, or they participated in at least 20 minutes of vigorous activity (e.g., running, aerobics, or heavy work) at least three days per week.¹

Am I Overweight?

Although the terms obesity and overweight are used interchangeably, they actually mean different things. People are considered obese when their Body Mass Index (BMI) is 30 or greater, whereas people are considered overweight when their BMI is between 25 and 30. [More](#)

According to the Center for Disease Control, during the past 20 years there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States. Of U.S. adults aged 20 years or older²:

- An estimated 30% are obese
- An estimated 65% are either overweight or obese (BMI of 25 or higher)

[Fitness 4 Life](#)

Designed for the military, here are tools to help you strengthen your body for a healthier, happier, longer life.

[Exercise and Fitness](#)

Learn tips to exercise, improve fitness, and cope with injury.

How is My Diet?

BMI is not the only thing to pay attention to. Even though your BMI may be in the normal range it is still important to maintain a balanced diet. For instance, you may suffer from high cholesterol, which in part may be due to a diet high in saturated fat. [More](#)

[Assess Your Diet: Do You Meet the New Dietary Standards](#)

Learn about your eating habits and what to do to improve them.

[Mind/Body Health: Obesity](#)

Get the facts about obesity and what to do about it.

[Health Eating: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Find answers to commonly asked questions about how to improve your eating habits.

[Readiness and General Nutrition Information](#)

Specifically designed for the military, this addresses information about diet and performance, as well as general information about nutrition.

[Diet and Nutrition](#)

Learn about the New Food Pyramid, tips for improving your diet, and more.

General Health Related Concerns

Keeping an eye on your overall health is important for taking care of yourself. Some health problems, such as high blood pressure or cholesterol can be signs that it is time to address weight and diet problems.

[Blood Pressure: Your Body's Warning Light](#)

Designed for military personnel, this handbook addresses the impact of high blood pressure on your health and tips for reducing both.

[Staying Healthy](#)

Military OneSource offers a number of tools for health, safety, and self-care.

[Mind/Body Health: Heart Disease](#)

Learn about the impact of stress and other psychological factors on the heart and what to do about it.

[Smallstep.gov](#)

Four steps to a healthier you.

Getting Started

Many people are aware that it is necessary to target their fitness and diet, but they have difficulty getting started. Making any type of behavioral change can be hard for a number of reasons:

- Exercise and preparing healthy food is time consuming
- People who are thin may be less motivated to eat healthy
- If you have been sedentary for awhile, getting back into an exercise routine can be hard (e.g., you are likely to be sore, feel more fatigued, have less strength, etc.)
- It takes awhile to notice results when trying to lose weight in a healthy way (i.e., not following crash-course diets)
- Maintaining diet and exercise regimen requires discipline

It also may be important to follow-up with your primary care doctor before making major changes to your diet or exercise regimen. This is particularly true if you are pregnant or have health-related problems that could be adversely impacted.

Don't Go Overboard

Although eating healthy and managing your weight are important ingredients to staying healthy, there is more to life than obsessing about these issues. Thinner is not always better. There is such a thing as having too low of a BMI: 18.5 or lower is considered underweight. Preoccupation with your body can lead to problems. For instance, people may develop [Eating Disorders](#) or [Body Dysmorphic Disorder](#)

Good self care is about maintaining a healthy balance in your life. Seek out and paying attention to the positives such as your strengths, your fortunes, loved ones, and your successes.

¹Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2003). Prevalence of Physical Activity, Including Lifestyle Activities Among Adults -- United States, 2000—2001. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 52, 32, 764-769.

²Flegal, K.M., Carroll, M.D., Ogden, C. L., Johnson. C. L. (2002). Prevalence and trends in obesity among US adults, 1999-2000. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 288, 1723-1727.