

Know Your Risk Factors

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY



About 145 million American adults are overweight. Of these, over 74 million are considered obese. Women who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke, even if they are young or have no family history of heart disease.

Obesity is unhealthy because excess weight puts more strain on your heart. It can raise blood pressure and blood cholesterol and can lead to diabetes. Losing weight is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of heart problems and other diseases.

HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT

To lose weight, first prepare yourself by setting goals, thinking ahead to potential roadblocks and deciding how to deal with problems. It's never wise to follow fad diets, starve yourself or try to lose weight too fast. Remember, you didn't become overweight overnight. It's important to make changes over the long term and not get discouraged by setbacks. Start by changing your eating habits.

- **Eat slowly**, take smaller portions and avoid "seconds."
- **Choose a variety of healthy foods** like fruit, vegetables, cereals, pasta, dried peas and beans, low-fat or fat-free dairy products, lean meat, fish and skinless poultry.
- **Cook foods in ways that help remove fat**, like baking, boiling, broiling, grilling, roasting or stewing.
- **Read food labels** and avoid foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat, *trans* fat and calories. Avoid pastries, candy bars, pies and cakes.
- **Drink lots of water.** Limit alcohol and other high-calorie drinks
- **Choose less often foods like egg yolks**, fatty meats, chicken with skin, butter and cream.
- **Substitute** fat-free or low-fat milk for whole milk.



GAIL, 53
FALLS CHURCH, VA
FAMILY HISTORY OF HEART DISEASE

GoRedForWomen.org

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HOW TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Keeping extra weight off can be as challenging as losing it. Many things will tempt you to go back to your old habits. It takes commitment to stick to your new, healthy lifestyle. Yet when you do, you may notice that you have greater self-control with food, feel stronger, have better eating habits and fewer mood swings, and are in better overall shape!

- **Remember that eating smart doesn't mean "dieting."** It means eating some foods in smaller amounts and eating high-calorie and high-fat foods less often.
- **Always keep low-calorie and low-fat foods around.** Use a shopping list, and don't shop when you're hungry.
- **Plan all your meals.** When you're going to a party or out to eat, decide ahead of time what you can do to make it easier to eat right.
- **At a buffet table, choose wisely.** At a friend's house, control your portions.
- **When you're hungry between meals,** drink a glass of water or eat a small piece of fruit, and stay out of the kitchen.
- **When you really crave a high-calorie food,** eat a small amount and forget about it, instead of resisting until you give in and gorge. If you don't trust yourself with just a little, don't eat any at all.
- **Stay active!** Don't give up on your physical activity plan.
- **Find an exercise partner** or class to help you stay interested.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS KEY

Physical activity is as important as diet in helping you lose weight! And it's good for your heart, lungs, bones and muscles. Regular physical activity helps lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure and other health problems. Ask your doctor or health professional for a physical activity plan that's right for you.

Sign up for Go Red BetterU, the American Heart Association's free 12-week program that can help you transform your health with small, simple choices such as changing eating habits, getting regular exercise and managing cholesterol and blood pressure. Go Red BetterU is not about fad diets and new exercise trends, but rather a program that focuses on skills and information that help today's busy women lead their own lives, only better. To find out more, visit GoRedForWomen.org/BetterU.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learn your risk for heart attack and stroke by taking the Go Red Heart CheckUp at GoRedForwomen.org. To learn more facts about heart disease and how to reduce your risk, visit GoRedForWomen.org/hearthealthtools.

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