

Small changes

big
benefits



**Lose weight
and keep it off**

Small changes - big benefits

Being overweight - a major problem for Northern Ireland

Did you know that:

- Almost 6 out of 10 adults in Northern Ireland weigh too much.
- Being overweight increases the risk of health problems, including heart disease, some cancers, diabetes and raised blood pressure.
- Being overweight also aggravates other problems, like arthritis, joint pain, breathing difficulties and snoring.
- Even a small weight loss of approximately 1-1½ stones (5-10kg) can help to reduce many of these problems.
- Research shows that the best way to lose weight - and to keep it off - is to do it gradually by making small, long-term changes to what you eat and being more active every day.

So how can I lose weight?

Look at the chart opposite to see if you need to lose weight. If you decide you do, then start by taking a look at what you eat - you don't need any special foods, drinks or diets. A good way to really know what you are doing is to keep a food diary - write down everything you eat and drink for two days. Do you eat regularly or do you tend to skip meals and then eat a lot later to make up for it?

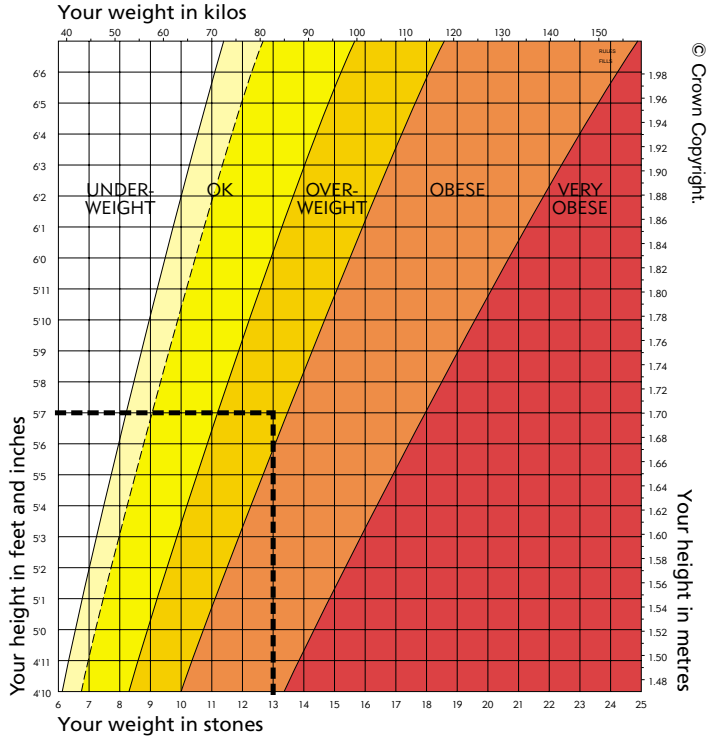
Now compare what you've recorded with *The Balance of Good Health* (far right). This diagram shows the types of foods recommended for health and the proportions we should have. Have you recorded foods from all five food groups? How do the amounts compare with the proportions on the plate?

Most of us in Northern Ireland eat too few foods from the fruit and vegetables food group and too many from the foods containing fat and foods containing sugar group.

Check out your weight





To find out if you could benefit from losing a few pounds (or kilograms), check your height and weight against the chart.

The dotted line shows that a person who is 5' 7 tall and weighs 13 stones is overweight.



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How did you score?

-  Underweight - you may need to put on weight by eating more.
-  OK - you are a healthy weight and you should aim to stay that way.
-  Overweight - you need make sure that your weight does not continue to rise and to try to lose some weight if you can.
-  Obese or very obese - your health is at risk and you need to lose weight.

Many people find that they gradually gain weight without realising it over a number of months or even years. Others may find they are likely to gain weight at a particular time, for example after they have stopped smoking or after having children. Losing weight has very important health benefits, but even stopping further weight gain will be helpful.

The Balance of Good Health

Fruit and vegetables

Bread, other cereals and potatoes



Meat, fish and alternatives

Foods containing fat
Foods and drinks containing sugar

Milk and milk products

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Fruit and vegetables - eat at least five portions a day. This includes fresh, frozen, dried, canned and juiced varieties. Don't add butter, margarine or creamy sauces to cooked vegetables or use mayonnaise or salad cream on salads.

Bread, other cereals and potatoes - eat at least one serving of foods from this group at every meal, but don't fry them or add butter, margarine or creamy sauces. The higher fibre versions (eg wholemeal or wheaten bread, brown rice or pasta, wholegrain breakfast cereals) are more satisfying so they'll help stop you feeling hungry.

Meat, fish and alternatives - eat two servings a day, choosing from poultry, fish and lean red meats. Try to use cooking methods which don't add extra fat, eg grilling, stewing, dry roasting, casseroles, or microwaving. Avoid fatty meats and try to eat fewer processed meat products, like sausages, sausage rolls and burgers.

Milk and milk products - have two or three servings of these foods every day. Choose lower fat versions of these foods, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, low fat yogurts and lower fat cheeses, such as Edam, cottage cheese and reduced fat cheddar.

Foods containing fat and foods containing sugar - try to eat these foods less often and in smaller amounts. Use butter, margarine or low fat spreads sparingly on bread and don't add them to cooked vegetables or potatoes. Avoid fried food. Have hot drinks without sugar or use an artificial sweetener if necessary.

Setting targets



Once you have identified some things you need to change, choose just two or three to begin with. Set yourself a few realistic targets you think you will be able to keep going, for example:

- eat an extra portion of fruit or vegetables every day;
- change to wholemeal bread instead of white;
- cut out sugar in hot drinks;
- change to oven chips and limit them to once a week.



Now think about how you can be more active every day. This doesn't have to involve going to the gym. Some suggestions:

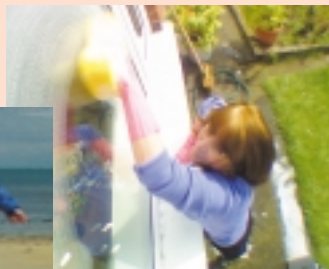
- put more energy into the things you do each day;
- go for a walk either in your lunch break or when the kids are at school;
- get off the bus one stop early and walk the rest;
- avoid lifts and escalators and use the stairs.

Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity most days. You don't have to do it all in one go - three 10 minute sessions are just as good.

Keep going!

Once you've set your targets, then keep going! It's what you do most days that really matters, so if you eat too much or don't exercise on any one day, it doesn't matter too much. Just accept it and get back to your new way of eating and being more active.

Weigh yourself once a fortnight on the same scales and keep a record of your progress. Aim to lose between 1-2 pounds each week, that's approximately 0.5-1kg. It doesn't sound like very much, but within two months you could have lost as much as 1 stone.



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- Short-term or quick-fix diets are not a good idea - you need to make changes you can keep to long-term.
- Eat regularly - aim to have three meals each day.
- Eat meals slowly and enjoy them.
- Plan your meals in advance and don't shop for food when you are hungry. Make a list and stick to it - you'll save money and avoid impulse ready-to-eat purchases that are often high in fat and sugar.
- Watch out for hidden and unnecessary fats - grill foods instead of frying, and if you do fry, try to use less oil or use a spray oil.
- Find odd jobs to do between meals to avoid nibbling, or go for a walk.
- Alcohol is high in calories, so try to drink less - or opt for water, fruit juice or sugar-free soft drinks.
- Be as active as possible, as often as you can - aim for at least 30 minutes most days. Walking, swimming and cycling are all good, and you can also try to build more activity into your daily routine.
- It can be more fun to exercise with a partner or friend.
- Remember you probably put the extra weight on over several months or even years, so don't expect it to come off overnight!



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