

When people make statements about wanting to get healthier, they often start by saying they want to lose weight. However, losing weight does not necessarily equal health. People can lose weight by following unhealthy and even dangerous routines like a very restrictive diet. Weight gain and weight loss is more complicated than calories in and calories out and can be influenced by factors outside your control like stress, hormonal changes, side effects of medication, and genetics.

What about Body Mass Index (BMI)?

You also may have heard about BMI before and that a healthy range was between 18 and 25. BMI is a calculation that considers your weight in relation to your height.

The tool is quick and easy to calculate, but there are problems with this measurement.

1. The measurement cannot tell the difference between the weight coming from fat and muscle.
2. The range was developed only looking at white European males, so it does not consider body composition differences between genders and races.
3. BMI is an even less accurate measure of health in these life stages: during pregnancy, people with a lot of muscle, and people over 65.

What if your primary care provider brings up your weight?

First, consider if you are comfortable talking about your weight. You are allowed to set boundaries with healthcare providers, so if you do not want to discuss your weight ask them to talk about other health parameters, like blood pressure or your HbA1c.

Let's talk about how to lead a healthier lifestyle beyond losing weight:

1. Increase fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet
2. Choose water as your primary beverage choice
3. Increase physical activity to 30 minutes 5 times a week.
4. Choose more whole fiber-rich foods instead of processed foods when possible



BEYOND the Scale

There also ways to show that you are leading a healthier lifestyle without considering weight like:

1. You are sleeping better
2. You are feeling like you have more energy
3. You are feeling stronger and everyday tasks are getting easier
4. Your blood work results have improved
5. Your blood pressure has improved

Thinking about different times in your life you felt your healthiest, what were some ways you noticed leading a healthy lifestyle was working for you? What were some habits that made you feel that way?

Example:

Habit: Talking my dog on a walk in the morning.

Result: I felt less stressed and more energized starting the day.

Habit:

Result:

Habit:

Result:

Habit:

Result:

Habit:

Result:



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