



**IRISH HEART  
FOUNDATION**  
Fighting Heart Disease & Stroke

# LOSE WEIGHT

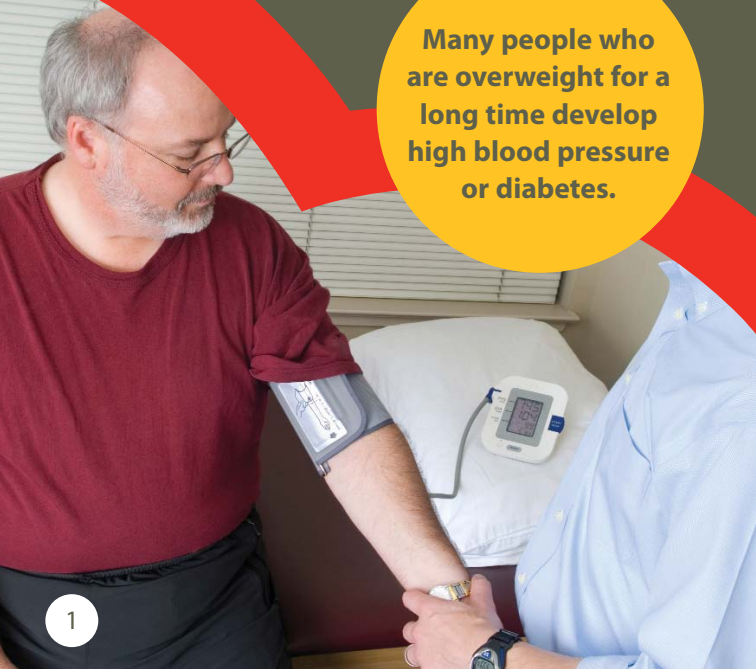
and reduce your risk  
of heart disease  
and stroke



# Weight loss, heart disease and stroke

Being overweight means that your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body. This extra pressure can cause wear and tear on your heart and blood-vessel system.

Many people who are overweight for a long time develop high blood pressure or diabetes.



**Many people who are overweight for a long time develop high blood pressure or diabetes, which are both risk factors for heart disease and stroke.**

In the last 10 years there has been an increase in the number of people who are overweight or very overweight (obese). Being overweight and obese damages our hearts, blood vessels and our joints, and is mainly the result of too many calories in our diet and too little activity.

If you are overweight or obese, you should check with your family doctor if you have other risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and smoking. Even losing a small amount of weight will improve your overall health and help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

You can get more information about other risk factors – see the back page for contact details.

If you are overweight, start now and use the tips in this leaflet to change your eating habits and get more physically active. Making small changes now will stop you from gaining extra weight over the next few years.

## Do you need to lose weight?

- Is your weight creeping up each year?
- Do you have less energy than you used to?
- Do you get breathless running for a bus?

Your answer is likely to be 'Yes', as more than half of Irish adults are overweight or very overweight (obese).

### **By losing some of your extra weight you will:**

- feel better
- look better
- lower your chances of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and high blood pressure and
- help to reduce or even stop your medication for angina, high blood pressure or raised cholesterol.

You may, of course, have your own reasons for wanting to lose weight.

If you have already had a heart attack, bypass surgery or an angioplasty, it's important that you follow the tips in this leaflet to lose weight. You should especially try to:

- choose oily fish (for example, sardines, salmon, mackerel or trout) twice a week;
- choose at least five or more portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

Making small changes now will stop you from gaining extra weight over the next few years.



## Are you always on a diet?

Forget about dieting. Instead, follow a weight loss plan for life. Make small gradual changes to the food you eat and get more active. Even losing a small amount of weight has health benefits. Start with changes that are easy to make and that you can keep up for life – this will help you to reach a healthier weight and then to stay at this weight.

Being a healthy weight isn't about being as thin as a model, in fact it is quite the opposite. Find the right weight for you by making sure it is within a healthy BMI range, eating healthily, regularly taking brisk walks and being generally active.

**Even losing a small amount of weight has health benefits.**



## Are you an apple or pear shape?

If you are overweight, it is where your body stores the extra fat that is the problem. If the extra fat is stored around your waist, this gives you an apple shape. This shape is linked with a higher risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and some cancers. If extra fat is stored around your hips this gives you a pear shape and this shape is less harmful to your health.

Use a measuring tape to measure your waist and then check the table on the next page to assess your risk of heart disease and stroke.

**No one weight is ideal, as there is a range of healthy weights for a particular height.**

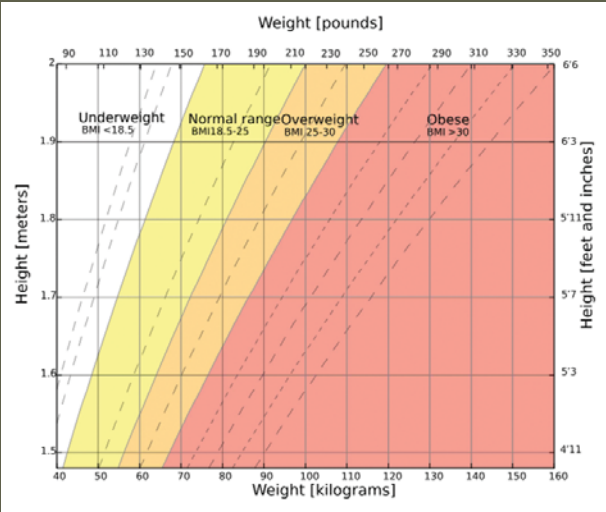
### Waist measurement table

	Women	Men
<b>Healthy waist measurement</b>	Less than 80 centimetres (32 inches)	Less than 94 centimetres (37 inches)
<b>Moderate risk</b>	Between 80 and 88 centimetres (32 and 35 inches)	Between 94 and 102 centimetres (37 and 40 inches)
<b>High risk</b>	More than 88 centimetres (35 inches)	More than 102 centimetres (40 inches)

### Check your body mass index.

Your body mass index (BMI) is an easy check to find out your weight range.

Draw a line across from your height and up from your weight. Where these two lines cross is your body mass index. No one weight is ideal, as there is a range of healthy weights for a particular height.



If you are in the 'overweight band' range, start to follow the tips in this leaflet. If you are in the 'obese' or 'very obese band' range, get help and advice from your family doctor or a dietitian. There is no quick way to lose weight. A steady loss of one kilogram (one to two pounds) a week is the safest and most effective way to lose weight and keep it off.

## Are you ready to lose weight?

There are two important things you need to do to lose weight successfully:

1. **Get motivated** to lose those extra pounds. Keeping a diary of the food you eat and the activities you do will help get you focused and keep you motivated.
2. **Plan and be prepared.** Planning ahead helps you feel more in control of your weight loss. Have plenty of healthy foods in your fridge, lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, low-fat snack foods like low-fat yoghurt and a light oil spray for cooking. Have your tracksuit and trainers ready for your walking or activity programme. This will make it easier for you to start your new eating and activity plan.





## Motivation

Motivation is most important when it comes to achieving a healthy weight. Motivation gets you started and keeps you going.

- Start by making a list of the reasons why you want to lose weight. Keep this list and look at it when your willpower is low.
- Next, keep a food and activity diary. Just write down what you eat for three days and when you do any exercise or physical activity. This will help you focus on what you're eating and what you need to change. People who keep food and activity diaries are more successful at losing weight than those who don't.
- Set realistic goals that you can reach over time - one kilogram (one to two pounds) per week. This way, you will be more likely to reach your target weight and stay there.
- Put your favourite photo of yourself on your fridge. This will make you think before you open the door – 'Do I really need this food?'
- Lose weight with a friend or with a recognised weight loss group – you are more likely to succeed.
- Relax. Try to manage your stress by taking time out to do some activity, something you enjoy. You are likely to eat and drink more when you are under stress.
- Picture yourself in your mind with some realistic weight-loss. Think about this image a few times a day. Seeing a mental picture of yourself with weight-loss can make you more confident that you can achieve your goal.

Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion size

Choose  
**very small**  
amounts

Fats, High  
Use sparingly  
Only have small



Choose any **2**



Choose any **3**



Choose  
any **5**



Choose  
any **6+**



Drink water regularly -  
at least 8 cups a day



## Fat/Sugar Snacks, Foods and Drinks

Choose fats high in monounsaturates or polyunsaturates. Limit fried foods to 1-2 times a week. Choose small amounts of high fat/sugar snacks and drinks and not too often.



## Meat, Fish, Eggs & Alternatives

Choose lean cuts of meats. Eat oily fish.



## Milk, Cheese & Yogurt

Choose low fat varieties.



## Fruit & Vegetables

Choose green leafy vegetables and citrus fruit frequently. Fruit juice only counts for one serving, each day.



## Bread, Cereals & Potatoes

Eat these foods at each meal – high fibre is best.



**FOLIC ACID** - An essential ingredient in making a baby. You can get folic acid from green leafy vegetables but if there is any possibility that you could become pregnant then you should be taking a folic acid tablet (400 micrograms per day).

## Successful tips for losing weight

- Look carefully at the size of your food portions, especially when you are eating out.
- Follow the Food Pyramid guidelines. Focus on what you can eat rather than on what you can't. Be strict and limit your food choices from the top shelf. For lunch and dinner, use a smaller dinner plate and fill it mostly with vegetables.
- Have three regular meals each day. Research shows that people who eat breakfast regularly are more likely to keep their weight down.
- Some people find that having two smaller courses rather than one large main meal makes them feel more satisfied. Try choosing fruit, vegetables or salad as a starter, or fruit to finish off your meal.
- Learn to recognise hunger. If you are not really hungry at meal times, just eat small portions.
- Each week, write out a shopping list of the healthy foods you need to help you lose weight. Bring this list with you every week when you're doing your family shopping. Try not to shop when you are hungry.

### Choose healthy low-fat ways of cooking

- Oven-bake, grill, boil, poach, stir-fry, steam or microwave food instead of frying it.
- Boil, steam, dry-roast or bake potatoes instead of having chips.
- Try a light cooking spray instead of cooking oil.
- Cut all visible fat off meat and take the skin off chicken.
- Drain fat off meat and sauces when they are cooked.
- Choose tomato-based sauces instead of creamy sauces for pasta and rice dishes.








### **Emergency supplies**

- Have low-fat ready meals in the freezer – home-made or bought.
- Have a good supply of raw vegetables and plenty of fruit.
- Home-made soup is a great comfort food, especially on cold days. Freeze it in microwave-proof cartons so they are easy to thaw out and reheat as needed.
- Get into the habit of carrying a bottle of water. It is important to drink at least eight cups of fluid each day. Water can also help you feel full up between meals.

## Alcohol

If you are serious about losing weight, you will be more successful if you cut out alcohol altogether until you reach your target weight. Alcohol is high in calories, can make you more hungry and can weaken your good intentions.

- Choose water or diet drinks every second drink. If you really need to have an alcoholic drink, try white wine spritzers or light beer instead of other drinks, and drink more slowly.
- Do not drink more than the recommended upper limits: 17 standard drinks (SD) a week for men and 11 standard drinks a week for women, spread out over the week with some alcohol-free days.

	standard drinks
 1 Pint =	2
 Half a pint =	1
 Bottle of wine (750ml) =	7
 1 small glass of wine (100ml) =	1
 Spirits - pub single measure =	1

One standard drink is 10g of alcohol  
= one half pint of beer, stout or lager  
= one small glass of wine  
= one pub measure of spirits (whiskey, vodka or gin).

## Support and reward

- Get support from your family and friends. They can help keep you motivated, become more active with you and help you limit the high-fat snack foods you eat.

- Reward yourself when you make positive progress. To check your progress, use a measuring tape or weighing scales (remember that scales vary and if you're retaining fluid for any reason they may not give you a true picture of your progress), or consider how your clothes fit. Weigh yourself once a week at the same time in similar clothes. Choose a non-food treat for your reward – a magazine, a DVD, a CD, a film, a football match, a new haircut or even a top or shirt when you have lost some weight.

## Be active to lose weight

Regular physical activity is as important as what you eat for losing weight and keeping your heart healthy. Being active helps burn calories, tone your muscles and control your appetite.

**To lose weight, you need to use up more energy (calories) than your body takes in from food and drink. The best way to lose weight is through a combination of:**

- Eating and drinking fewer calories, and using up more calories by being more active.
- You should gradually build up to 60 to 75 minutes of physical activity on 5 days a week.
- Your activity should be aerobic, which means getting the whole body moving - walking, cycling and swimming are excellent examples.
- Your activity should be at a moderate intensity, which
  - causes your heart to beat faster,
  - means you are slightly out of breath but still able to talk, and
  - brings a little sweat to your brow.

On any day, the amount of activity can be spread over 2 to 3 shorter sessions, for example 45 minutes walking and 15 minutes swimming or the total of 300 or more minutes can be spread over the whole week.

Walking is an excellent way to lose weight, especially if you have not been active for a while. You should aim to walk 3 to 5 kilometres ( $1\text{Km} = \frac{2}{3}\text{ mile}$ ) at a moderate pace on most days of the week. A three-kilometre walk should take 30 to 40 minutes to complete. Gradually increase the pace and duration and add in other activities such as swimming, cycling, dancing or football.

Vigorous intensity, such as jogging; running, swimming laps or cycling at more than 10 mph can also be effective in losing weight, provided you are fit and healthy enough. The advantage is that you need take only half the time to achieve the same results as moderate intensity. You can of course combine minutes of vigorous activity with minutes of moderate activity e.g. 30 minutes run or jog (vigorous) and 15 to 20 minutes gardening or brisk walking (moderate).

The amount of time and type of activity will work differently for each person in losing weight. As you get more active and fitter by increasing time or intensity, or both, you should achieve steady weight-loss and enjoy other health benefits such as increased energy or better sleep .

### **General guidelines**

- Choose an activity, sport or exercise routine that you enjoy and find a friend or family member to join you.
- If you have not been active, build more activity into your daily life, take the stairs, walk to the shop, walk the dog or do some gardening. This way, being more active will become a lifetime habit.
- If you are not sure about your fitness level or general health, or have a specific health problem, it is important to contact your family doctor before you start exercising.



## Daily menu plan

Regular meals stop you feeling hungry and ensure that you have a daily supply of essential nutrients. Try out the meal suggestions below.

### Breakfast

- One bowl of wholegrain cereal with chopped fruit and low-fat milk
- One slice of wholemeal bread or toast

### Mid morning

- Fruit or raw vegetables

### Lunch

- Plenty of cooked or raw vegetables
- 25 to 50 grams (one to two ounces) of lean meat, poultry, fish (preferably oily fish, such as sardines or salmon), eggs or low-fat cheese
- Two slices of wholemeal bread or a roll
- Low-fat yogurt or a glass of low-fat milk
- Fresh fruit

### Mid afternoon

- Fresh fruit or raw vegetables

### Main meal

- 75 to 100 grams (three to four ounces) of lean meat, poultry, fish (preferably oily), eggs, low-fat cheese or nine dessertspoons of peas or beans
- Plenty of vegetables
- One medium baked or boiled potato, or three dessertspoons of cooked pasta or rice
- Low-fat yogurt or a glass of low-fat milk
- Fresh, cooked or tinned fruit (in its own juice)

### Supper

- Fresh fruit

Have about 8 to 10 glasses (1.5 litres) of fluids a day, preferably water.



**If you feel hungry between meals, try drinking a glass of water first. If you are still hungry, choose fresh fruit or raw vegetables to snack on.**

## Please make a donation today

The Irish Heart Foundation is Ireland's only charity dedicated to the reduction of death and disability from heart disease and stroke. Over 90% of our funding comes from public and business donations. We depend on your goodwill and generosity to continue our work.

**If you found this booklet useful, please help our charity to continue to provide heart and stroke information by donating today.**

### You can make your donation today:

**By post:** Irish Heart Foundation  
c/o 4 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

**Online:** [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

**By phone:** 01 6685001

### Personal Details

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (required for direct debit) : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

### Credit card/Laser (one off donation)

Amount:

☐ €25 ☐ €50 ☐ €100 ☐ €250\* ☐ Other € \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number:

Laser Only

Exp Date:  /  Security Code\*\*:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

The Irish Heart Foundation is committed to best practice in fundraising and adheres to the **statement of guiding principles for fundraising** promoting transparency, honesty and accountability. Any personal information you provide will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

## Direct debit (monthly donation)

Amount: ☐ €10 ☐ €15 ☐ €18 ☐ €21\*

☐ Other € \_\_\_\_\_ per month

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Account No: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* If you are a PAYE tax payer, gifts of €250 in one year (€21 per month) could be worth up to an extra 70% to us at no extra cost to you.

\*\* Last 3 digits on the signature strip on the reverse of your card.

Do you need a postal receipt: ☐ Yes ☐ No  
(saves cost of postage)

I am happy to receive IHF communications by:

☐ Email ☐ Phone ☐ Post

I would like to volunteer to help the Irish Heart Foundation ☐

- This is a guarantee provided by your own Bank as a Member of the Direct Debit Scheme, in which Banks and Originators of Direct Debits participate.
- If you authorise payment by Direct Debit, then
  - Your Direct Debit Originator will notify you in advance of the amounts to be debited to your account
  - Your Bank will accept and pay such debits, provided that your account has sufficient available funds
- If it is established that an unauthorised Direct Debit was charged to your account, you are guaranteed an immediate refund by your Bank of the amount so charged where you notify your bank without undue delay on becoming aware of the unauthorised Direct Debit, and in any event no later than 13 months after the date of debiting of such Direct Debit to your account.
- You are entitled to request a refund of any Variable Direct Debit the amount of which exceeded what you could have reasonably expected, subject to you so requesting your Bank within a period of 8 weeks from the date of debiting of such Direct Debit to your account.
- You can instruct your Bank to refuse a Direct Debit payment by writing in good time to your Bank.
- You can cancel the Direct Debit Instruction by writing in good time to your Bank.



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[www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

[www.stroke.ie](http://www.stroke.ie)



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**Funding:**

The Irish Heart Foundation is the national charity fighting heart disease and stroke and relies on charitable donations for 90 per cent of its funding. We support, educate and train people to save lives, campaign for patients, promote positive health strategies, support research and provide vital public information. We need your support - through donations, as a volunteer or on our training courses.

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