

Body Weight, Dieting, and Body Image

Purpose

To learn about the effects of dieting, as well as achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight and body image

Intended Audience

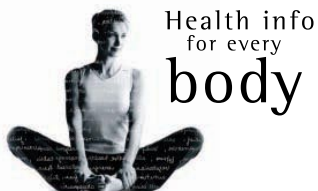
All employees

Suggested Activities

- Use the *Healthy Images* PowerPoint presentation for an education session with employees (See the attached CD).
- Place table tents on tables in kitchens, break rooms, worksite cafeterias, boardrooms, photocopier rooms, and other key areas.
- Hand out and/or post fact sheets by elevators, on bulletin boards, in stairwells, and in other key areas.
- Hand out or make available *Healthy Ways, Healthy Weight* booklets.
- Arrange educational sessions on the topic to be led by a dietitian.
- Provide information on body weight, dieting, and body image on the intranet and/or in newsletters.
- Refer employees to www.heartandstroke.ca to find reliable information and interactive tools by clicking on Healthy Weight, Healthy You.
- Refer employees to this website http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.iKlQLcMWjtE/b.3876195/k.87BF/Healthy_Waists.htm to watch a video on how to take a waist measurement properly.

Materials

- Diversity Checklist
- PowerPoint presentation: *Healthy Images: A Positive Way to Look at Yourself* (See the attached CD.)
- Table tents
(See the attached CD and inserts at the back of this binder.)
- *Healthy Ways, Healthy Weight* (Dairy Farmers of Canada)
(See sleeve inserts at the back of this binder. The booklet may be downloaded from <http://www.gov.ns.ca/psc/healthyworkplace/healthywayshealthyweight>. Additional printed copies may be ordered from www.dairygoodness.ca/en/consumers/resources/Prov_E/requestformaterials.htm or by calling 1-800-465-COWS. Allow two to four weeks for delivery.)
- Fact sheet: *Frequently Asked Questions at the Healthy Eating Centre* (Dietitians of Canada) (See p. 137)
- Article: “*Healthy Images—A Positive Way to Look at Yourself*” (Dietitians of Canada) (See p. 139)
- *Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults: Quick Reference Tool for Professionals* (Health Canada) (See p. 141)
- Fact sheet: *How Can I Achieve a Healthy Weight?* (Public Health Agency of Canada) (See p. 143)
- Fact sheet: *What Is Body Image?* (Public Health Agency of Canada) (See p. 145)
- How to Access a Dietitian in Nova Scotia
(See Additional Resources, p. 244)
- Intranet/newsletter messages
(See Communication Materials, p. 205)
- *Healthy Eating in the Workplace Action Plan Worksheet*
(See Additional Resources, p. 221)
- *Healthy Eating in the Workplace Participant Evaluation Form*
(See Additional Resources, p. 225)



www.canadian-health-network.ca

www.reseau-canadien-sante.ca

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Frequently Asked Question at the Healthy Eating Centre

How to Lose Weight Without Going on a Diet

How many diets have you been on?

According to Statistics Canada two-thirds of Canadians are overweight. And the never-ending supply of new diet books and programs is proof that we are on a quest to find the perfect diet that will help us melt away those extra pounds.

Diets only offer temporary solutions:

- They don't change our long-term eating patterns, so when we stop dieting, we usually gain all the weight back, and sometimes more.
- Diets promote rapid weight loss, but when we lose weight too quickly we lose muscle as well as fat, which is counterproductive since muscle burns more calories than fat.
- When we severely restrict calories we put our bodies into "survival mode" and burn less calories doing the same activities. When we try to return to normal eating patterns, we gain weight because of our reduced metabolism.
- Diets create an unhealthy relationship with food, which can lead to deprivation, binge eating, and ultimately weight gain.

The truth is we live in an obesogenic culture. This means that our lifestyle and environment promote weight gain. There is constant pressure to eat too much, and to eat too much of the wrong foods.

To achieve real weight loss we need long-term healthy eating patterns that we enjoy and that satisfy our hunger. And to maintain weight loss, we need to lose weight slowly — about one to two pounds a week. No more diets!

Use the following checklist as your daily guide to help you achieve your weight goals:

- ☑ **Eat Less.** It's no secret that if you eat more calories than you burn you will gain weight. We eat 30% more if the plate is bigger. Get in the habit of ordering the small size, sharing your appetizers and desserts, and bringing half your restaurant serving home for another meal.
- ☑ **Listen to your hunger.** Stop eating when you're full... you can always have more tomorrow, because you're not on a diet!
- ☑ **Eat healthy, nourishing foods.** Minimize processed and junk foods, and choose foods in season when you can.
- ☑ **Load up on fruits and vegetables.** Start your meal with a salad, load up your main course with veggies, and finish your meal with a little fruit.

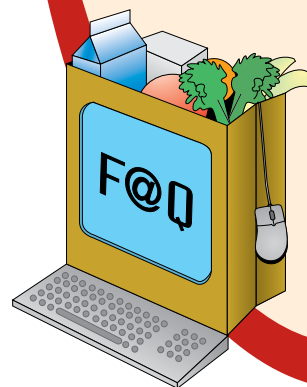
A word about physical activity

Eating well is the cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. But being active is another important part of the equation. You don't need structured time at the gym if that doesn't suit you. You can walk, run, roller-blade, dance, swim, play tennis, walk the stairs, take a yoga or pilates class... just get moving and burn some calories. You'll feel great!

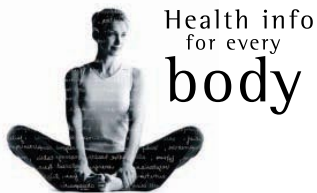
What is your healthy weight?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a formula that takes into account your height and weight and tells you whether your weight is putting your health at risk.

To use a quick and easy on-line BMI calculator visit Eatracker (www.eatracker.ca). This interactive tool not only calculates your BMI, it also helps you track your daily food and activity choices and gives you personalized feedback.



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Les diététistes du Canada



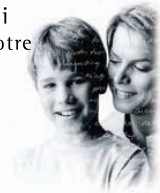
Health info
for every
body

www.canadian-health-network.ca

www.reseau-canadien-sante.ca

Des infos qui
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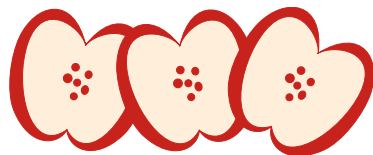


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Le Réseau canadien de la santé, présenté par l'Agence de santé publique du Canada et des organismes de santé réputés du pays.

- ☑ **Choose whole grain carbohydrate foods.** Whole grain breads, barley, brown rice, oatmeal, and high fibre cereals are delicious and offer substantial health benefits.
- ☑ **Choose lower fat.** Fat has twice as many calories as protein or carbohydrate, so it makes sense to keep your fat intake moderate if you're trying to lose weight. Choose lower fat dairy products, leaner cuts of meat and poultry, and use a light hand when adding salad dressings or cooking oils.
- ☑ **Structure your days.** Eat about every 4 hours. This will keep your metabolism up, support stable blood sugar levels and keep you from being hungry and overeating at the next meal.
- ☑ **Eat some protein at each meal to control your hunger and optimize your weight loss.** Protein foods include animal sources like meat, fish, poultry and dairy products, and vegetarian sources like nuts and seeds, peanut butter, legumes, tofu and soy beverage.

Love everything you eat. You don't have to eat foods you don't like to lose weight. It's your day-to-day patterns that will determine your weight, not small indulgences.

Created for the Canadian Health Network by Susan Fyshe (Ontario), member of Dietitians of Canada.



Resources for Consumers

Association pour la santé publique du Québec (ASPQ)

Losing weight... or be yourself? (www.aspq.org/view_publication.php?id=21)

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada (HSFC)

Healthy weight, healthy you (ww2.heartlandstroke.ca/healthyweight)

Resources for Health Professionals

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)

Improving the health of Canadians: promoting healthy weights
(secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/products/healthyweights06_e.pdf)

Association pour la santé publique du Québec (ASPQ)

Losing weight, for better not worse
(www.aspq.org/view_publications.php?id=25)

Weight Wisdom

- **Weight loss doesn't happen in a straight line.** Some days or weeks will be better than others. Keep your eye on your long-term goals.
- **The scale can deceive you.** Time of day, salt intake, even time of the month for women all affect the number on the scale. Don't weigh yourself more than once a week.
- **Plateaus.** They do happen. If your weight loss stalls try upping your exercise, and be patient. You'll pass through it.
- **Friendly sabotaging.** Sometimes friends and family can be less than supportive. Stay focused on your own goals, and remember that we all have our own issues around food.
- **Emotional eating.** We sometimes use food to fill the gap when we're bored, lonely, or depressed. Try to recognize when you're eating emotionally, and work on finding substitutes, like going for a walk or visiting a friend.
- **Socializing.** Try to follow healthy eating patterns when you're a dinner guest, at a party or wedding, or on vacation. These are on-going events in our lives and we need to enjoy them to the fullest while staying focused on our weight goals.



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Resource Centre

Healthy Images - A Positive way to look at yourself

Resource Information

Name of Resource

Healthy Images - A Positive way to look at yourself

Year Created

1997

Description

- Do you weigh your self-esteem on the bathroom scales?
- Do you "feel fat" some days?
- Do you compare your body to other people's?

If you answered YES to these questions you are not alone, many people, especially women, are dissatisfied with their bodies.

Body image is the mental picture you have of your body plus the feelings and judgements you have about this picture. This picture is often very inaccurate and has little to do with how you actually look or how other People see you. With positive thoughts and lifestyle choices you can change your body image and how others respond to you.

Ten Steps For Building a Positive Body Image**1) ACCEPT YOURSELF**

Feeling good about yourself starts with accepting who you are and how you look. After all, healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes. For some people, it may mean giving up the fantasy that being slimmer would lead to a happier life.

Focus on your good qualities and pass over any negatives. Feel what it's like to love your body unconditionally. Treat your body with a bubble bath, a massage, or a manicure.

2) STEP OFF THE DIET ROLLER COASTER Ñ FOR GOOD!

Dieting brings temporary weight loss, but 1/3 to 2/3 of the weight is usually gained back in the first year. Almost all the weight is gained back within five years and sometimes much more.

The cycle of losing and gaining can be harmful to your health and it can lead to frustration, anger and an even poorer body image. So, stop dieting. Instead, eat well and enjoy being active.

3) ENJOY EATING WELL

Eat for energy and for pleasure. Follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Choose more grains, pasta, legumes, fruits and vegetables. Choose lower-fat dairy products, leaner meats and foods prepared with little or no fat and see how good they taste.

Ask yourself if you are eating because of hunger or for some other reason. Learn to trust your body to tell you when to eat and when to stop.

Don't worry about having a chocolate once in a while. The trick is to only "indulge" once in a while! Think of balancing what you eat over the day or the week and remember that moderation is the key.

4) ENJOY BEING ACTIVE

How about a noon-time walk, a family hike or a swim with friends? Physical activity lets

you enjoy the outdoors and helps you deal with stress while making you feel more energetic. All this helps you feel good about yourself.

5) CREATE A MENTAL SPA

Right now, go ahead: breathe deeply and relax. Think of a place where you feel peaceful, relaxed and contented. Doesn't it feel good to slow down and let go of your responsibilities for a while? Experience the magic when you quiet your mind and let yourself enjoy the stillness.

6) MAKE YOUR IMAGINATION WORK FOR YOU

Everyone has 5000 thoughts every hour! And you can choose thoughts that encourage you, or ones that drag you down. Use your imagination to practice attitudes you want in your life. Act as if you like your body and feel what that's like.

7) LOOK YOUR BEST ALWAYS

How you keep yourself shows how you feel about yourself. Wear clothes that fit and give away the ones you never wear. For fun, try a new hair style, tie on a scarf or indulge in a new pair of earrings. And remember to smile. It gives you and everyone you meet a real boost.

8) GET SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Ask for help when you need it. Organize a group of friends or find a buddy and help each other meet your goal to be the best you can be. Think of ways to create lots of fun and laughter for each other.

9) BE THANKFUL

To take your mind off negative thoughts, make a list of 10 things that give you pleasure and keep this where you can see it. Make another list of the beautiful aspects of yourself Ñ all the things your friends have complimented you on. This helps you realize how beautiful you really are.

10) EXPRESS YOUR CREATIVE SELF

Do things for fun -- instead of competing or trying to be perfect! Have fun expressing your personality through crafts, sewing, cooking, decorating, gardening or anything else that helps you feel happy. Know that you are unique and express it!

SUMMARY -- ONE POSITIVE STEP AT A TIME

Developing a positive body image is a gradual process. Relax, take your time, and congratulate yourself every step along the way as you learn to accept your body. And remember ... enjoy eating well, being active and feeling good about yourself.

The following registered dietitians contributed to the preparation of this factsheet:

Author: Lois Ferguson

Editor: Lesley Scharf

Reviewers:

Silvana Luciani

Beverly Musten

Leslie Beck



Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults - Quick Reference Tool for Professionals -

Highlights

- The Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults uses the body mass index and waist circumference as indicators of health risk.
- This classification system is aligned with the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations widely adopted internationally.
- This classification system is derived from population data. When used with individuals, weight classification is only one component of a more comprehensive health assessment needed to clarify health risk.

- The classification system is not intended for use with:

- those under 18 years of age, and
- pregnant and lactating women.

Special consideration is also needed when using the classification system. It may underestimate or overestimate health risks in specific groups such as: young adults who have not reached full growth, adults who naturally have a very lean body build, highly muscular adults, adults over 65 years of age, and certain ethnic and racial groups. More information is provided in the full report available online (www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition).

Body Mass Index (BMI)

- The BMI (weight (kg)/height (m)²) is not a direct measure of body fat but it is the most widely investigated and most useful indicator, to date, of health risk associated with under and overweight.

Classification	BMI Category (kg/m ²)	Risk of developing health problems
Underweight	< 18.5	Increased
Normal Weight	18.5 – 24.9	Least
Overweight	25.0 – 29.9	Increased
Obese		
Class I	30.0 – 34.9	High
Class II	35.0 – 39.9	Very high
Class III	≥ 40.0	Extremely high

Note: For persons 65 years and older the 'normal' range may begin slightly above BMI 18.5 and extend into the 'overweight' range.

Adapted from: WHO (2000) *Obesity: Preventing and Managing the Global Epidemic: Report of a WHO Consultation on Obesity*.

Some health problems associated with body weight

Overweight and obesity	Underweight*
Type 2 diabetes	Undernutrition
Dyslipidemia	Osteoporosis
Hypertension	Infertility
Coronary heart disease	Impaired immunocompetence
Gallbladder disease	
Obstructive sleep apnea	
Certain cancers	

*May indicate an eating disorder or other underlying illness.

Waist Circumference (WC)

- WC is an indicator of health risk associated with excess abdominal fat.

To determine WC, the measurer should stand beside the individual. WC is measured at the part of the torso located midway between the lowest rib and the iliac crest (top of pelvic bone). The tape should fit without compressing any underlying soft tissues.

WC Cut-off Points	Risk of developing health problems*
Men ≥ 102 cm (40 in.)	Increased
Women ≥ 88 cm (35 in.)	

*Risk for type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, hypertension.

Adapted from: WHO (2000) *Obesity: Preventing and Managing the Global Epidemic: Report of a WHO Consultation on Obesity*.

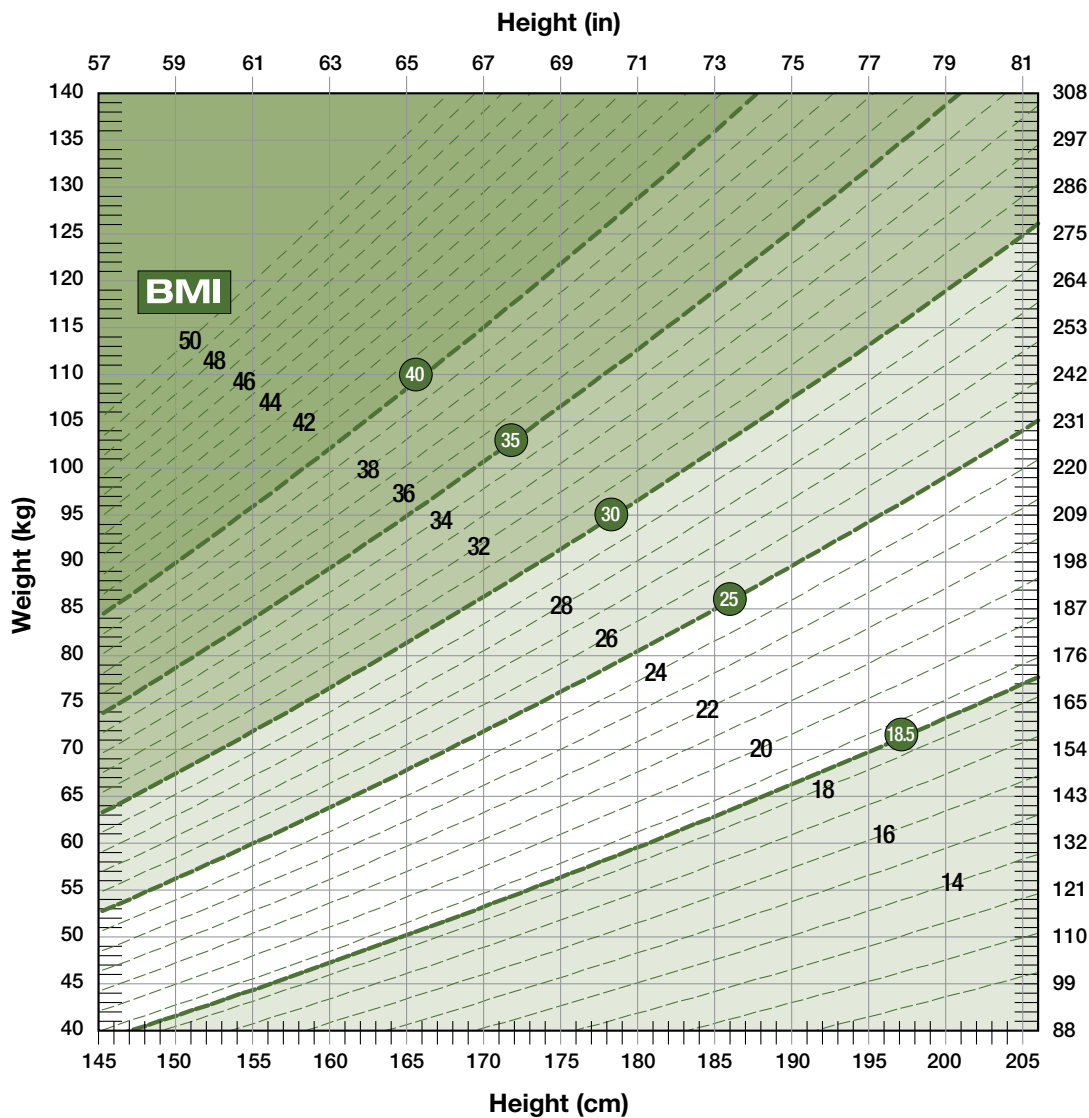
Health risk classification using both BMI and WC

- WC measurement can be used for individuals with a BMI in the 18.5-34.9 range. For BMIs ≥ 35.0, WC measurement does not provide additional information regarding level of risk.

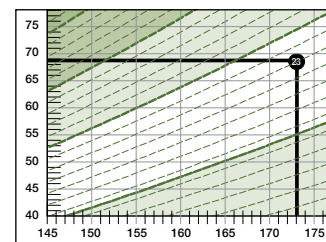
		BMI		
		NORMAL	OVERWEIGHT	OBESE Class 1
WC	< 102 cm (Males) < 88 cm (Females)	Least Risk	Increased Risk	High Risk
	≥ 102 cm (Males) ≥ 88 cm (Females)	Increased Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk

Adapted from: National Institutes of Health (1998) *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: The Evidence Report*.

- Body Mass Index (BMI) Nomogram -



For a quick determination of BMI (kg/m^2), use a straight-edge to help locate the point on the chart where height (in or cm) and weight (lb or kg) intersect. **Read the number on the dashed line closest to this point.** For example, an individual who weighs 69 kg and is 173 cm tall has a BMI of approximately 23.



Refer to the table below to identify the level of health risk associated with a particular BMI.

BMI Formula

BMI can also be calculated using this formula

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight in kilograms}}{(\text{height in metres})^2}$$

Note: 1 inch = 2.54 centimetres and 1 pound = 0.45 kilograms

BMI	Risk of developing health problems
< 18.5	Increased
18.5 – 24.9	Least
25.0 – 29.9	Increased
30.0 – 34.9	High
35.0 – 39.9	Very high
≥ 40.0	Extremely high

Note: For persons 65 years and older the 'normal' range may begin slightly above BMI 18.5 and extend into the 'overweight' range.

Adapted from: WHO (2000) Obesity: Preventing and Managing the Global Epidemic: Report of a WHO Consultation on Obesity.

To clarify risk for each individual, other factors such as lifestyle habits, fitness level, and presence or absence of other health risk conditions also need to be considered.

The full report "Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults", and other resources are available online at:

www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition



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How can I achieve a healthy weight?

Being truly ready to commit to achieving a healthy weight means making a commitment to healthy living – that is, to healthy eating, regular enjoyable activity, and doing things that make you feel good about yourself. Remember that a healthy body comes in many shapes and sizes, and many factors play a role in achieving a healthy weight.

Dieting is not the solution

You may think that dieting is the solution. However, before you decide to start on a popular diet, ask yourself these questions:

- Will you still be able to enjoy eating, one of life's greatest pleasures?
- Can you follow the diet you've chosen for a lifetime?
- Will you keep your weight off?

The answers to these questions are most likely "no". However, by choosing healthy living the answers become "yes".

Once you are ready to make a commitment to healthy living to achieve a healthy weight, consider the following:

- [Are you truly overweight?](#)
- How much weight would you like to lose?
- Have you set realistic weight goals?
- Are you ready to make lifestyle changes?

Your doctor or a Registered Dietitian can help you determine a healthy weight for yourself and the strategies to attain your goal.

Many factors affect your body size

Being active requires and consumes energy. Achieving a healthy weight requires a balance between the food we consume and the amount of energy we burn. People who choose to only eat less and less to maintain their weight could jeopardize their health from undernourishment or vitamin deficiency, which may prevent them from doing the activities they love. So strike a balance between the food you like and the activities you enjoy. Fitness professionals can offer tips and advice on how you can be more active.

Healthy eating and active living are not the only factors that affect your body size. You also need to consider:

- your age;
- your sex;
- your genetics;
- your culture;
- where you live;
- what you do for a living; and
- childcare and household responsibilities.

Tips for healthy weight

1. Eat well by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating (for more information see the [Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion \(ONPP\)](#)).
2. Accumulate 30-60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily. You can include [a combination of activities](#) to build muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility. For example, at school, home or work - take the stairs, walk to work or home, shovel snow, garden or consider joining a recreational sport or activity you enjoy like baseball, yoga or dancing. Don't just watch your kids play - get involved!. If finances are an issue, remember walking counts as an activity and it doesn't cost anything - choose a parking stall further away from the mall/grocery store or get off the bus a few stops early and walk the rest of the way.
3. Try listing what you would like to change (e.g. skipping meals, emotional or stressful overeating or inactive lifestyle) and then find ways, with or without help from family, friends, or a healthcare professional, to overcome these habits.
4. Decide what you do well and what you enjoy; then do these things often to help you to feel good about yourself. Then try other activities or do a little more.
5. Have a realistic body image (for more information see the FAQ "[Why don't I like the size and shape of my body?](#)").

Resources for Consumers:

[Getting there... how healthy eating and active living help one woman achieve her goal](#)

[Lifestyle steps for a healthier you!](#)

Provides advice for people who are concerned about their weight. Discusses foods, exercise, diets, and how to assess a healthy weight.

[Healthy measures](#)

Promotes steps that women from ages 25 to 45 can take to improve their health based on a three-pronged approach of healthy eating, physical activity, and self-esteem. Includes a self-assessment quiz, tips, affirmations, and a progress monitoring chart for consumers and a toolkit for health professionals.

[Dietitians of Canada](#)

This highly interactive web site will help you assess your food choices, activity patterns and body weight. It provides you with personalized feedback to help you achieve your healthy eating and active living goals and answers your nutrition questions. You'll also be able to search for a registered dietitian in your community.

To consult with a Registered Dietitian:

- Check your Yellow Pages listing for "Dietitians"
- Ask your family doctor to refer you to a Registered Dietitian
- Click on "Find a Nutrition Professional" at the Dietitians of Canada Website at <http://www.dietitians.ca>.
- Call 1-888-901-7776 to find a consulting dietitian near you.

Resources for Health Intermediaries

[Vitality approach](#)

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This FAQ was created for the Canadian Health Network by members of Dietitians of Canada.
January 2005



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What is body image?

Body image is the mental picture you have of your body, along with your feelings, thoughts, and judgments about your body. This picture is also how you think others see you.

Your body image is more than just how you feel about the shape and size of your body. It's about how you see and feel about all aspects of your body - your hair, skin colour, teeth, even the shape of your eyes. Body image is also related to how you feel about how your body works, which may be important for many women, including women living with disabilities.

What influences our body image?

We are all exposed to both positive and negative influences that affect the way we think about our bodies. These influences can include:

- **Society** – In today's North American society, the young, slim, white woman is widely held as the ideal of female beauty. We live in a society where we are taught to judge ourselves and others by appearance. The underlying message that is sent to women is that they need to conform to the beauty ideal. Otherwise, they may not be considered healthy, competent, desirable and confident. The ideal of feminine beauty is not a set, universal ideal. It has changed throughout [history](#) and varies amongst different cultures.
- **Media** – **The** popular media – magazines, advertising, movies, television – has a very strong effect on society's standards of what is or isn't desirable. There are many different ethnicities and body types, but the media rarely reflects that. Many advertisers rely on idealized images of beauty to sell their products.
- **Friends, family and romantic partners** – Body image may be influenced by the beliefs and comments about appearance that we hear from the people in our lives. Since body image develops in childhood, the messages you receive from family and friends at this time have a particularly strong impact.
- **Life experiences** – **It's** common for your body image to change throughout your life. The physical changes associated with different stages or experiences in your life, such as puberty, pregnancy, perimenopause and menopause, can influence how you see and feel about your body. An experience of physical or sexual assault may also affect your body image.

What does it mean to have a poor body image?

If you have a negative or poor body image, it means you don't like your body, or aspects of it. It's very common for women and girls in Canada to dislike some aspect of their bodies to some degree. Some women choose to try to improve their body image by changing how they look, while others don't feel like they need to or want to.

Poor body image is often linked to:

- Low self-esteem – the way you feel about your body can be tied to the way you see and value yourself as a person, and how much confidence and respect you have for yourself.
- Attempts to change certain aspects of your body in ways that may carry health risks (such as breast implants, liposuction, tanning, skin bleaching, etc.)
- Unhealthy weight loss strategies, such as constant dieting. Some women and girls risk their health even more by choosing to [smoke](#) to try to control their weight.

- Eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive eating. Eating disorders may be the end results of attempts to manage poor self esteem and body image. If you think you have an eating disorder, or are concerned about someone you care about, it's important to get [help](#). Eating disorders have severe health risks and they need special medical care.

Your body image doesn't have to be set for life. Changing a negative body image to a positive one can be a slow and difficult thing to do, but you do have the power to create a [healthy body image for yourself](#).

Additional resources

[About Face](#)

[Body image and the media](#) – [Canadian Women's Health Network](#)

[Eating disorders and body image](#) - [BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information](#)

[Healthy body image: what is body image?](#) – [Peel Public Health](#)

[How can I have a healthy body image?](#) - [Canadian Health Network](#)

[How can I help my friend who has an eating disorder?](#) - [Canadian Health Network](#)

[National Eating Disorder Information Centre](#)

Last Modified Date: July 2007

Adapted by womenshealthmatters.ca at Women's College Hospital for the Canadian Health Network from an FAQ originally created by the Canadian Women's Health Network.