LOWER THE RISK
from weight loss products

Healthy eating and physical activity are the best ways to lose weight. If you choose to take a weight loss product, consider the following tips to help minimize your risk:

- Always discuss your plans to take a weight loss product with your health care provider.
- Don't buy a product online from a source that doesn't give a telephone number or that gives you a prescription after an online questionnaire.
- Be skeptical about unrealistic claims.
- Look for an 8 digit Drug Identification Number (DIN),a Natural Product Number (NPN), or a Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM). Only products approved for sale by Health Canada have these.
- Contact your health care provider if you have any adverse reactions after taking a weight loss product.

MAKE IT HAPPEN ...AT YOUR WORKPLACE

Here are some suggestions to help you reach and keep a healthy weight at work.

- See if your worksite offers a healthy weight loss program or will cover some of the cost of a healthy weight loss program.
- Start a walking group on your breaks. Even 10 minutes of activity at a time counts.
- Bring your lunch from home. Homemade lunches are usually lower in fat and calories and higher in fibre, vegetables, and fruit compared to eating out.
- Choose healthier snacks from the vending machine like pretzels, baked chips, dried fruit, and granola bars instead of regular chips or chocolate bars.
- Take the stairs whenever you can.
- Ask for healthier options when ordering food at the cafeteria or a restaurant. Look for things that aren't fried, in creamy dressings or sauces, and aren't huge portions.
- Keep a refillable water bottle handy for when you're thirsty instead of buying a pop.
- Walk or bike to work. Start with one day a week and add more from there.

"If you don't take time for your body, where are you going to live?"

~Anonymous

Answers (from front page): 1-F • 2-T • 3-F • 4-T • 5-T • 6-F • 7-T • 8-F • 9-F • 10-F

Key Sources:

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SMART STEPS TO LIVE LONGER

weighing in on weight loss...

These days, it's not hard to find someone who's struggling to reach and keep a healthy body weight. With two out of every three Canadian adults considered overweight or obese, experts say the problem is now an epidemic, costing the healthcare system $8.2 billion a year in direct costs (e.g., treatment). There are even greater costs when time off work and quality of life are considered.

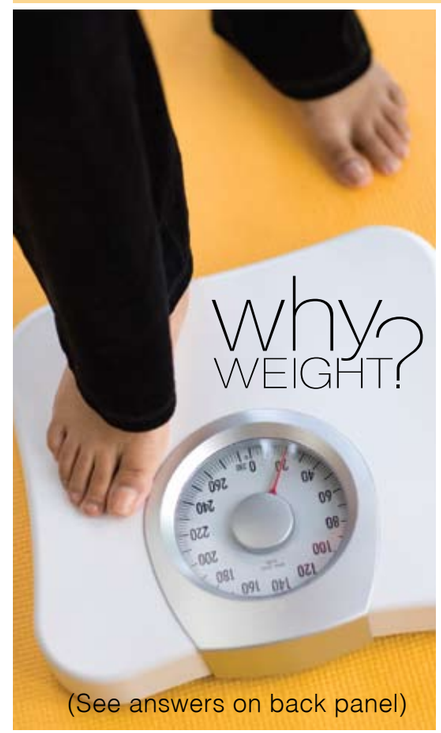
Most of us know the health risks of being overweight. In fact, many of us are faced with chronic diseases related to being overweight. These include heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma, arthritis, and some cancers. The trouble is it's far easier to gain weight than it is to take it off. However, a 5 to 10% weight loss (4.5 to 9 kg for a 90 kg person or 10 to 20lb. for a 200 lb. person) can result in positive health changes, although this is still hard for most of us.

Even if we do lose weight, most people regain at least 75% of their lost weight within five years of losing it! The problem with dieting and regaining weight over and over again (yo-yo dieting) is that it can slow down your metabolism. This makes it harder and harder to lose weight each time you try.

Many people look to weight loss products and supplements to help them lose weight. Besides not being effective, many of these products can be dangerous. Some are not regulated by the government and have not undergone approved government safety testing. Some of these products have caused serious heart problems, bowel problems, reacted with other medications, contain dangerous heavy metals, and have even resulted in death.

While there are many products and services claiming to help people lose weight or keep it off, few of these can actually deliver what they say. The same is true of the huge variety of weight loss programs and books that are available. With a 58 billion dollar weight loss industry in North America, focused on getting your money, how are you supposed to choose the right product or program for you?

It's important to be an educated shopper and to be a bit skeptical of weight loss products and services and their claims. This issue of Smart Steps to Live Longer will help you see through some of the glitz to tell whether a product or service could really help you lose weight in the long run or whether it will help keep you in the all too familiar weight gain weight loss cycle.



(See answers on back panel)

TRUE or FALSE

01. It's healthy to lose 4.5 kg (10 lb.) in a week. **T or F**
02. A healthy weight loss program follows Canada's Food Guide. **T or F**
03. Very high protein diets have enough fibre in them to meet people's daily needs. **T or F**
04. Losing just 5 to 10% of your body weight can improve your health. **T or F**
05. The best way to tell if a weight loss product is safe is to look for a DIN, DIN-HM, or an NPN. **T or F**
06. It's okay if a diet doesn't include all four food groups as long as it recommends taking a multivitamin. **T or F**
07 Losing weight should include both healthy eating and physical activity. **T or F**
08. Fat and protein have the same number of calories per gram. **T or F**
09. People who are successful at losing weight don't keep track of what they eat or their activity. **T or F**
10. You need to join a gym to lose weight and keep it off. **T or F**

Why is it IMPORTANT to find a healthy weight loss program?

Finding a healthy weight loss program can be difficult, but it's well worth the effort. Many weight loss programs and products will not help you lose weight in the long run. They may lead to quick weight loss, but this weight, plus some, often comes back. Some products and programs can even be harmful to your health.

Some weight loss diets or programs overly restrict calories and certain foods. To meet minimum energy needs, women need at least 1200 calories a day. Men need at least 1500 calories. Eating fewer than this can make you feel tired, lose muscle, can slow your metabolism down, making weight loss very hard.

Our bodies also need food from all four food groups in Canada's Food Guide to get all of the nutrients needed to stay healthy and prevent chronic diseases.

In high protein diets, vegetables, fruit, grains, and some milk products are avoided. People following these diets do not get enough fibre and vitamins like calcium, folate, vitamin C, vitamin D, and beta-carotene. This sort of diet can lead to fatigue, low blood pressure, nausea, and heart disease because of the high saturated fat content.

Ephedra, also called Ma Huang, has been included in some weight loss products. Health Canada has recalled products containing Ephedra used for weight loss because they have been linked to raised blood pressure, heart palpitations, inability to sleep, irritability, and headaches. Worse side-effects occur when Ephedra is taken with caffeine.

There are more ingredients in weight loss products that may cause unhealthy side effects, however it's impossible to list them all. The best advice is to look on the label for an 8 digit DIN, NPN, or DIN-HM and to check with Health Canada's website for the most up-to-date information on advisories and recalls. For more information see the back page.

What's a HEALTHY weight loss program?

If you can answer YES to these questions, then your weight loss program is likely a healthy one.

Y	N	
☐	☐	Does it recommend you talk with your health care provider first?
☐	☐	Is a registered dietitian (RD) involved?
☐	☐	Does it use Body Mass Index (BMI) to set weight goals?
☐	☐	Is the recommended weight loss 0.5 to 1 kg (1 to 2 lb.) a week?
☐	☐	Does it monitor your body circumferences (waist, hip, arms etc.)?
☐	☐	Is it based on foods from all four food groups in Canada's Food Guide?
☐	☐	Does it provide at least 1200 calories for women and 1500 calories for men?
☐	☐	Does it allow for your own eating style and nutrition needs?
☐	☐	Does it encourage regular physical activity?
☐	☐	Is it free from required products, supplements, or foods?

How can I LOSE WEIGHT in a healthy way?

GET STARTED...

Losing weight is about energy (calorie) balance. If you eat more calories than you use, you'll gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than you use, you'll lose weight. It seems simple, but in reality it can be much harder than that.

The National Weight Control Registry (1997), a large group of people who successfully lost weight and kept it off, found that 89% of people changed both what they ate and their physical activity to lose weight.

The first step in losing weight is to set realistic goals. This should be about 0.5 to 1 kg (1 to 2 lb.) a week. You can do this by getting rid of 500 to1000 calories a day by eating less calories or burning more calories with activity.

Any goals for changes in your eating or activity habits should be realistic. You should be able to keep up these habits for the long run, not just for the next couple of weeks.

For example, losing 10 kg (20 lb.) in the next month isn't a realistic goal, but 2 kg (4.5 lb.) would be. Also, it's probably not realistic to workout for two hours a day if you're not already active. However, adding in a daily 30 minute walk might be.

CALORIES IN

Canada's Food Guide is a good tool to help you lose weight. It clearly tells you how much food to eat from the four food groups to meet your nutrition needs and to help prevent chronic disease. It's important to eat from each food group to get the variety of nutrients you need.

People in the National Weight Control Registry, said the most common ways they changed their eating habits to lose weight were to limit certain foods (usually high fat), limit portion sizes, and count calories.

You can do all of these by following Canada's Food Guide. Use the Food Guide Servings as a guide for counting your servings for the day. Often we eat more food than we realize. Measuring out your food a few times can tell you how much you're eating.

Choosing lower fat and lower calorie options from the Food Guide is another way to cut calories. Fat has more than twice the calories of protein or carbohydrate. People who eat more fat usually eat more calories.

Look for foods without added fat or sugar. Added fat or sugar just provides extra calories without any nutrition. Choose vegetables and fruit, whole grains, low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt, and lean meats more often. Trimming fat and skin from meat can also lower the fat. Limit creamy salad dressings and sauces, fried foods, cookies, cakes, and pastries.

What you drink can also add to your daily calories. The trouble with beverages is that our bodies don't notice the calories in them as well as they do from food. For example, you won't feel as full after drinking 200 calories as you would after eating the same amount of calories. The best thing to do is drink water most often, keep juice to a small amount, and limit pop, energy drinks, alcohol, and coffee with cream and sugar.

CALORIES OUT

To burn more calories, you need to move more. The good news is that you don't need to join a gym to lose weight. In the National Weight Control Registry, 92% of people said they exercised at home and only 31% did so with a group. The most popular activities were walking and aerobics for women, and competitive sports and weight lifting for men.

The important thing is to pick activities you like to do and do them most days of the week.

STAYING ON TRACK

Losing weight is a lifetime commitment. You should be able to continue the changes you make for the long term. Surround yourself with people who support you in making these changes and involve your family. Some people find it helpful to join a weight loss group or support program either in person or online.

The other key is to monitor what you eat and your activity. People who are successful at losing weight keep track of these things daily and regularly weigh themselves to track their progress. If they get off track, they quickly get back on track.

RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

HEALTH CANADA
Find the latest information on drug and health products as well as recalls and advisories.
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/advisories-avis/index.html

HEALTH CANADA
Find current information on natural health products.
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/prodnatur/index.html

DIETITIANS OF CANADA
Track your activity and eating with EATracker or analyze recipes with the Recipe Analyzer. You can also visit their Virtual Grocery Store.
www.dietitians.ca/eatwell

CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE
Lots of information on healthy eating, portion sizes, and meal planning.
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION
Credible information on losing weight in a healthy way.
www.heartandstroke.ca/healthyweight

SPARK PEOPLE
A free, interactive site where you can talk to others trying to lose weight and get credible information on weight loss.
www.sparkpeople.com