

# The Fastest Way to Lose Weight the Natural Way

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 34% of American adults are obese. So, it's no secret that weight loss programs and diets that offer quick fixes have become multi-million dollar industries. People want to lose weight and they want to lose it now. Unfortunately, most sound weight loss programs take time to produce permanent weight loss. Combining diet and [exercise](#) is the best place to start.

## Reducing Weight by Reducing Calories

Losing weight is not as complicated as some would have you believe. No matter how you interpret it, gaining weight (more specifically gaining fat) is the result of taking in more calories than you need. The average adult needs between 1800 to 2400 calories a day - more for men and fewer for women. But, there are also a number of other factors that enter into the equation. People with high metabolic rates and those who choose active lifestyles burn more calories than those who sit at a desk all day. Of course, diet also plays a role in whether or not you gain or lose weight.

In order to lose one pound of fat, you must burn (or not consume) 3500 calories. According to the American [College](#) of Sports Medicine (ACSM) guidelines, a reasonable weight loss goal is one to two pounds per week. That means, you'll need to expend or restrict 3500 to 7000 calories a week. If you divide 3500 calories by 7 days in a week, you'd need to lose 500 calories a day in order to meet the conservative goal or 1 pound per week. Double that to lose two pounds per week.

The most effective way to lose weight is by combining caloric restriction with exercise. In the example of two pounds per week, you'd need to cut back 1,000 calories a day while expending an additional 1,000 calories through exercise. Not impossible but a challenge.

## Learning How to Eat Right

To lose two pounds a week, requires that you eat 1,000 fewer calories per day than you eat now. Depending on your size, sex and current eating habits, that may be a challenging goal. Begin by looking at your current eating habits. The United States Department of Agriculture revamped their original food pyramid in 1992 to more accurately reflect healthy eating plans. Following the food pyramid is a great place to start. The food pyramid classifies all [foods](#) into six categories: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat & beans and oils. Look for ways to start eliminating unnecessary calories. Swap ground beef for low-fat turkey or seafood. Substitute highly processed white bread with whole grain bread. Skip the high calorie dressing on salads and leave off the butter and sour cream from baked potatoes. At breakfast, try eating low-fat cereals with non-fat or skim milk. There are dozens of ways to cut back on calories throughout the day. Start with the easiest decisions and work your way up to the more difficult. It's also a good idea to eat smaller meals frequently throughout the day as opposed to eating fewer, larger meals.

## The Skinny on Exercise

Getting regular exercise has two benefits. You not only expend calories while you exercise but you continue to burn more calories throughout the rest of the day.

Different activities burn different amounts of calories. The ACSM recommends that you choose activities that use large muscle groups that you can sustain for 20 to 30 minutes a day at your prescribed heart rate. Large muscle groups are those use in running, swimming, cycling and hiking. Your doctor or an exercise

specialist can help you to estimate your prescribed heart rate.

## Modifying Your Lifestyle

Most of us didn't gain our extra weight overnight. It took months and years to accumulate the extra fat. After age 25, our metabolisms decline by around 10% per year. That means that by middle age, you're battling significant reductions in your resting metabolism - reductions that translate into fewer calories burned per day and more accumulated fat. The trick is to find ways to keep your metabolism high, like it was when you were in your 20s.

## Resources

- [USDA Food Pyramid](#)
- [Weight Control Information Network](#)
- [Caloric Expenditure by Activity](#)