

# Chapter 5 DASH Your Way to Weight Loss

The DASH diet makes it easy to lose weight. A healthy diet, one that is based on fruits, vegetables, and other key DASH foods, will help you have satisfying meals, without overeating. And new research shows that including calcium-rich dairy foods in your diet can have special benefits for weight loss. So, DASH provides the perfect foundation for a weight loss plan.

Losing weight is recommended as one of the key lifestyle changes to help manage high blood pressure. Even greater advantages can be expected when weight loss is combined with the DASH diet plan. In this chapter, you will learn how to identify your healthy weight, calculate the calories you need to reach that goal, and learn specific weight loss strategies.

Research has shown that foods in the DASH diet can support weight loss. With a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, you can fill up without overdoing calories. Lean meat, fish and poultry provide satiating protein with fewer calories than higher fat meats. For example, 8 ounces of boiled shrimp has the same calories as 3 ounces of corned beef, while providing more satisfaction. Low-fat dairy foods have much fewer calories than the higher fat versions they replace. And research suggests that diets rich in dairy calcium promote weight loss,

especially with reducing extra fat around your waist.

Being overweight is a primary risk factor for developing high blood pressure. For children and teens, extra weight is even riskier. Parents with high blood pressure, who adopt the DASH diet, help their kids significantly by providing the right foods and avoiding calorie-laden meals. Children learn eating patterns by observing their parents. As a parent, you can model healthy behavior, and help your kids avoid a lifetime regimen of blood pressure medication. Knowing that your actions are important for the whole family can provide strong motivation to follow through on your own diet and lifestyle changes.

## **What is a healthy weight?**

There are many ways to evaluate whether your weight is healthy for you. The Metropolitan Life Weight Tables were used for many years to identify healthy weights. Recently BMI (body mass index, which show the relation of weight to height) has become an important tool for assessing healthy weight. Body fat percentage is another indicator of fitness (or fatness). And some health professionals believe that a healthy weight is the weight at which you do not have health issues, or at least none related to your weight.

In 1998, the National Institutes of Health issued new guidelines for healthy weight, based on BMI. They were developed to provide information on the

ratio of weight to height that was associated with lower risk of disease. BMI is based on a formula of weight in kilograms divided by height in meters, squared. The following table lets you find your BMI (without a calculator) and shows you where your weight falls in terms of health risks. It is important to realize that not everyone who is in the elevated risk category is truly at higher risk for disease. The BMI tables reflect generalized risk for large numbers of people, but not for each individual. For example, a sedentary person who is at a healthy weight might have higher risk for disease than someone who is overweight, but physically fit. And a football player would look overweight by the BMI tables, although he is probably not overfat.

A BMI of less than 19 is considered to be underweight, 19 - 25 is a healthy weight, 26 - 30 is overweight, 31 - 39 is obese, and BMI greater than 40 is considered to be very obese.

Fitness (or fatness) can be measured by looking at body fat percentage. Body fat percentage can be evaluated in several ways. In a research setting (and some physician offices), body fat can be measured by DEXA (dual emission X-ray analysis) which can be done on the same equipment that is used for performing bone mineral density scans. This is considered to be the best procedure. Inexpensive bio-electrical impedance analysis (BIA) devices



for home use can provide useful information and are available in tools such as a hand-held device that is gripped like a steering wheel, or some home scales. Underwater weighing is another way to measure body fat and is performed at some health clubs. Healthy body fat percentages are shown in the table below. The average American man has a 24.5% body fat percentage, and the average woman has 33% body fat.

| <b>Suggested percent body fat standards for adults.</b> |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
|   | Men   | Women |
| Lean  | <8    | <15   |
| Optimal health  | 8-15  | 15-22 |
| Slightly overweight                                     | 16-20 | 23-26 |
| Fat   | 21-24 | 27-32 |
| Obese or overfat  | 25+   | 32+   |

Waist size is another way healthy weight indicator. Waist circumference is used to evaluate whether you might be at increased risk for certain diseases. You may be familiar with the concept of apple versus pear physiques. People who carry most of their extra fat in their waist (apple-shaped) are at higher risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer, compared to people who carry extra weight in their hips (pear-shaped). If

waist circumference is larger than 35 inches for women or 40 inches for men, it is probably a good idea to lose weight and increase physical activity.

Another concept of a healthy weight holds that it is possible to be healthy and yet be heavier than normal. If you have high blood pressure and you are overweight, then this would not apply to you. You will most likely benefit from some weight reduction. As with everything, we need to use our judgement when deciding on a healthy weight for any specific person.

### **Deciding on your healthy weight goal**

You can decide what your target weight will be. It will probably be somewhere in the healthy BMI zone. If you have a long way to go, you might set a short term goal to lose about 10% of your total weight. Many research studies have shown that people can significantly improve their health if they lose 7 to 10% of their weight.

Your starting weight \_\_\_\_\_

Starting date \_\_\_\_\_

Your target weight \_\_\_\_\_

Date expected to reach \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have selected a target weight, you need to decide how much you can safely lose each week. Typically, nutrition professionals think that women can lose about 1- 2 pounds per week and men can lose 2 - 4 pounds per week (perhaps more at the beginning, for people who have more to lose). Your goal is to lose fat and maintain muscle. If you lose weight too fast, you may lose muscle and slow down your metabolism. The DASH diet plan which has plenty of low fat protein foods, calcium-rich dairy, high fiber fruits, vegetables, and whole grains will support healthy weight loss.

### **What are your calorie needs?**

To lose 1 pound per week, you will need to reduce your calorie intake by 500 calories per day. In order to evaluate your diet plan, you need to estimate your daily calorie needs. We have many sophisticated formulas that will estimate your calorie needs. There are even machines that can directly evaluate your metabolic rate. For most people, it is practical to estimate needs based on the following guidelines.

| <b>Estimating calorie needs for weight maintenance.</b> |                                       |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Activity level</b>                                   | <b>Calories per pound body weight</b> | <b>Calories per kilogram body weight</b> |
| Sedentary   | 13.5                                  | 30                                       |
| Moderate  | 16                                    | 35                                       |
| Heavy   | 18                                    | 40                                       |