

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

The Edge of Obesity: When That Extra Weight Is Unhealthy

Even though you've noticed your clothing sizes go up and that you tire more easily going up stairs, admitting that your extra weight has become a real health risk can be hard to do. And doing something about it can be even harder. If this is how you feel, you are not alone: Approximately 37.9%.percent of American adults age 20 and over suffer from obesity and are vulnerable to risk factors such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and some cancers. Psychosocial problems, functional limitations and disabilities are also associated with obesity.

Whether you've struggled with extra weight from childhood, university, or middle-age, making an unhealthy lifestyle healthy can seem like a daunting task. But living a more health-conscious, physically active lifestyle can help you reap physical and emotional rewards and give you a new lease on your life and health. If you feel like your health has taken a backseat to other priorities, read on to discover how to regain control and take charge of weight gain that has gone from unflattering to unhealthy.

Be informed. There are many factors that contribute to obesity and weight problems including diet, genetics, metabolism, environment or psychological issues (among others). Visit your doctor to see what may be affecting your weight and what can be done about it.

Seek support. It can be hard to make a lifestyle change when you feel like you're in the battle alone. Joining a support group or sharing your experiences with a friend or partner can be an important source of encouragement. There are also many online forums or groups where you can get connected with other people on the same journey. Find out what works for you and stay connected. You may even find you become a source of inspiration for someone else.

Focus on fitness, not thinness. Television would have you believe that a size two is the norm. We all know that this isn't the case, but years of having these ideals pushed in our direction can take their toll. Our culture worships a tiny waistline and if we don't size down, we feel like we don't measure up. But happiness is not found in a pair of skinny jeans. Realizing this can be a huge paradigm shift for some. Your goal should be to get healthier, not to achieve a waif-like physique. Focus on the positive side-effects of exercise such as strength, endurance and flexibility. Love the body you are in. Treat it well and see what it can do for you.

Find what works for you. Not a runner? That's okay Intimidated by gyms? You're not alone. Sweating it out on the treadmill or grunting in the free weight section of your local fitness club aren't the only ways to get the exercise you need. If you prefer the great outdoors, go for long walks or hikes. If you enjoyed sports but it's been a while since you've played, join a leisure team. You'll make new friends, have fun and get exercise at the same time. You can also try your local yoga studio if you're looking for some stress relief. Finding activities you enjoy will not only add a new dimension of fun to your life, it will also help ensure you stick with it.

Don't fear food. Food is your friend. Food will give you the fuel you need to exercise and get you through your day without feeling sluggish. Eating regularly is a key component to a healthy metabolism. You wouldn't let your car's engine run out of gas, so don't do it to yourself. You need to keep the fires burning by having regular meals and snacks and making wise choices when making those selections. Instead of fearing carbohydrates, make smart selections. Stay away from white bread, choosing 100 per cent whole wheat instead. Look for foods that are high in fiber and protein and low in saturated fats.

Don’t let other people dictate how you eat or make you feel guilty. If you want to have a treat, just be mindful of your portion size and frequency. Making healthier decisions when it comes to food will help you feel good about what you put into your body. Your body will thank you.

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Discovering that your weight has reached an unhealthy level can be an upsetting realization. But taking control of the situation—by enlisting the help of your physician, family and support group—and choosing to do something about it is a step in the right direction. By staying informed, seeking support and making positive exercise and diet choices, you’ll lower your risk for the harmful side-effects that go hand-in-hand with excess weight, and put yourself on track to a healthier lifestyle.