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# Weight Management: Fact and Fiction

Knowing the truth about losing weight can help you separate what works from what doesn't. Don't be taken in by expensive weight-loss fads, such as pills, herbs, or special foods, that promise unbelievable results. There's no magic way to lose weight. If you have questions about weight loss, ask your healthcare provider.



*Fiction: "The faster I lose weight, the better."*

**Fact:** Rapid weight loss is usually because of loss of water or muscle mass. What you're trying to get rid of is extra fat. Aim to lose a 1/2 pound to 2 pounds a week. Then you're more likely to lose fat rather than water or muscle.

*Fiction: "I can't start exercising until I lose weight."*

**Fact:** The sooner you start exercising the better. Exercise helps burn more calories, tone your muscles, and keep your appetite in check. People who continue to exercise after they lose weight are more likely to keep the weight off.

*Fiction: "The fewer calories I eat, the better."*

**Fact:** This seems like it should be true, but it's not. When you eat too few calories, your body acts as if it's on a desert island. It thinks food is scarce, so it slows down how fast you burn calories (your **metabolism**) to save energy. By eating too few calories, you make it harder to lose weight.

*Fiction: "Once I lose weight, I can go back to living the way I did before."*

**Fact:** Going back to your old eating habits and giving up exercise is a sure way to regain any weight you've lost. The lifestyle changes that help you lose extra weight can also help

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keep it off. This is why you need to make realistic changes you can stick with.

*Fiction: “Low-fat and fat-free mean low-calorie.”*

Fact: All foods, even fat-free ones, have calories. Eat too many calories and you’ll gain weight. It’s OK to treat yourself to a fat-free cookie or 2. Just don’t eat the whole box! A dietitian will help you figure this out. Learn to read nutrition labels to see what you are really eating.