



The Expanding Waistline

Who is to Blame?

According to the CDC, obesity is now the #1 health threat in the United States.

The epidemic now affects more than 60 percent of Americans.

Restaurant industry experts said that consumers have a personal responsibility for the foods they select to eat while dining out. They also said most menus now offer healthier alternatives than in the past.

On the other hand, health-care professionals said they are focused on the growing size of portions at restaurants and on the food items offered.

Each of these is a potentially contributing factor to the obesity epidemic.

But when all is said and done a healthful lifestyle, which includes regular physical activity with an eating pattern chosen for variety, balance and moderation makes all the difference for maintaining healthy weight.

It's All in Your Mind

Losing weight and keeping it off means developing a plan that is easy to follow, enjoyable and adaptable to your lifestyle.

Before you pick a weight-loss plan, make sure you are ready to change your eating and exercise habits.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you willing to make regular physical activity a part of your routine?
- Are you committed to making small gradual changes in your eating plan?
- Do you have a realistic weight-loss goal in mind?
- Can you control your food choices and meal preparation methods?
- Are you losing weight to improve your health and feel better?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, congratulations. You are ready to adopt a weight-loss plan that you can comfortably follow and maintain for a lifetime.

Emotional Eater?

For many people, food is more than just nutrition. Eating is something to do when you're bored, tired, anxious or when dealing with emotions. Often these behaviors can lead to overeating.

If you eat because of emotions, you may want to start keeping a food record of what you eat, when you eat and why you eat. Recognizing what triggers your eating can often make it easier to make changes.

To help break the habit of turning to food when emotions begin to take over, find other things to do, such as walking around the block, taking a bike ride or playing with the dog.

Find a balance between eating and your emotions and still enjoy your comfort foods.

Are you really hungry?

We often eat when we're not hungry because many of us can't recognize when our bodies need food. Eating every time you feel hungry can result in overeating. Ask yourself these questions before your next meal.

- Am I hungry? (If you're not sure, wait 20 minutes and ask again.)
- When was the last time I ate? (If it's less than three hours, it may not be real hunger.)
- Could a small snack tide me over until the next meal? (Try and have ready-to-eat fruit or vegetables on hand.)

If you can't recognize when you're hungry, make a schedule – eat small meals every three to four hours until you learn what hunger feels like. If you overeat at a meal, get back on track at the next one.

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