

# Medical Nutrition Therapy for Weight Loss



## What is medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?

Medical nutrition therapy is a type of treatment for people who are overweight. Many people find medical nutrition therapy helpful for weight loss. It's also for people with certain health conditions. During treatment, you will work with a registered dietitian. They will help to make a nutrition plan just for you.

A registered dietitian is a type of healthcare provider. They have special training in nutrition. This qualifies them to give counseling on nutrition.

Your dietitian will look closely at your eating habits. They will help you set new nutrition goals. You will meet with your dietitian several times. They will track your progress at each visit. They can help you set realistic weight loss goals. Most people should aim to lose about 1 to 1.5 pounds per week.

Your dietitian will tell you how many calories to eat per day to lose weight steadily and safely. They can help you plan a healthy, nutritious diet. This can help you make positive lifestyle changes that last.

## Why might I need medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?

Many people know that they need to lose weight, but they aren't sure how to do it. A dietitian can work with you to address your issues. Many people find this helpful.

You may not know that you need to not eat certain foods and eat more of others. Or maybe you eat the right foods, but your portion sizes are too big. Medical nutrition therapy can help you make lasting changes.

If you weigh too much, it's important that you lose weight. This is even more important if you are obese. Weighing too much raises your risk of many health problems. These include:

- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Sleep apnea
- Liver disease
- Infertility
- Lung diseases, such as asthma
- Certain cancers
- Mental health problems

Medical nutrition therapy can also help people with other health issues. This includes:

- People with eating disorders
- People who have had weight loss (bariatric) surgery
- People with cancer or diabetes

## What are the risks of medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?

If you follow your dietitian's advice, this type of therapy doesn't have risks. Your dietitian will work with you to make sure you don't lose too much weight too fast. Losing weight too fast may have risks.

If you have any concerns, talk with your healthcare provider. If you're pregnant or have serious health issues, it may not be safe for you to lose weight.

## **How do I get ready for medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?**

Ask your dietitian how to prepare for your first visit. You may need to keep a food journal for a few days before you first meet. Write down all of the food you eat during that time. Be honest and write down everything. This will help you. Your dietitian can then set realistic goals for you.

## **What happens during medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?**

Your first appointment will likely last about 1 hour. You may need several follow-up visits. These are to keep track of your progress. Follow-up visits may be shorter.

First, your dietitian will look at your current diet. This normally involves keeping a food diary for several days. Your dietitian will use this information to study your diet. They will look at where you need to make changes. Your dietitian's advice will follow the latest nutrition science.

Your dietitian will teach you how to make better food choices. They will work with you to help you achieve realistic weight loss goals. You may get handouts or other educational materials. For many people, this is about 1 to 1.5 pounds of weight loss per week. You may learn how to:

- Read food labels
- Understand how much of each nutrient, such as calcium and sodium, you need in your diet
- Eat the right number of calories for you
- Eat enough protein and fiber to help make you feel fuller
- Eat the right variety of foods
- Eat enough fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Eat leaner cuts of meat and lower fat dairy products
- Limit your intake of fried foods and other foods high in unhealthy fats
- Watch your portion sizes (portion control)
- Drink water instead of other beverages that are high in calories (like nondiet sodas and most juices)
- Increase your activity level, such as walking daily

Your dietitian may suggest using preprepared products, such as frozen meals. These can be a good tool to help you learn to manage portion sizes.

You may talk about other topics as well, such as:

- Spotting your triggers for overeating
- Making strategies for coping with stress
- Forming positive thoughts about food

Your dietitian will tailor these suggestions to your preferences and health needs. You will need to keep portion sizes in check. You may need to reduce how often you eat certain foods. Be honest with your dietitian about the changes you're ready to make. Be honest about which changes are hard for you.

Your dietitian will guide you over a series of visits. They may ask to meet with your family. This can help your family support you through the process.

## What happens after medical nutrition therapy for weight loss?

How well medical nutrition therapy works depends on how much effort you put into it. Your dietitian will support you along the way and give you information and suggestions. But you must commit to making the healthy changes.

After your first series of visits with your dietitian, you can go back for follow-up checkups. You might want to do this if your weight loss stops or if you regain weight.

You may want to ask your healthcare provider for a referral to an exercise or mental health specialist. You can ask about weight-loss support groups. Working with others can help you reach your weight-loss goals.

Weight loss works best when healthy eating habits are paired with other changes, such as getting more exercise. Talk with your healthcare provider before starting a new exercise program.

Know that losing weight takes hard work and time. Making small but targeted lifestyle changes can have positive long-term effects. It can be challenging to make these changes, but the benefits are worth it.

## Next steps

Before you agree to the treatment make sure you know:

- The name of the test or procedure
- The reason you are having the test or procedure
- What results to expect and what they mean
- The risks and benefits of the test or procedure
- What the possible side effects or complications are
- When and where you are to have the test or procedure
- Who will do the test or procedure and what that person's qualifications are
- What would happen if you did not have the test or procedure
- Any alternative tests or procedures to think about
- When and how will you get the results Who to call after the test or procedure if you have questions or problems
- How much will you have to pay for the test or procedure

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