



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 1

Develop healthier eating habits, be more active, and get on track to start losing weight with this easy-to-follow NHS Choices 12-week guide.

If people are overweight, it's usually because they eat and drink more calories than they need. This guide will help you to reduce the number of calories you consume.

This will help you to work towards losing weight at a safe and sustainable rate of 0.5kg to 1kg (1lb to 2lbs) a week. For most men, this will mean consuming no more than 1,900kcal a day, and for most women, 1,400kcal. You can also get your own personal calorie target using the [BMI calculator](#).

This is the first of 12 weekly information guides, which are full of diet, healthy eating and activity advice. Each pack includes a food and activity chart to help you to track your progress. Print out the chart and stick it somewhere you can see it, such as on your fridge.

Before starting, visit [nhs.uk/weightloss](#) to check your BMI, use our calorie counter and sign up for weight loss email support.



Is this for me?

This guide is intended for use by healthy adults with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 and over. It is not suitable for children or pregnant women. If you have any medical condition you should consult your GP before starting. Find out if you need to lose weight using the BMI healthy weight calculator at [nhs.uk/bmi](#)



Set your target

If you find it hard sticking to the plan's daily calorie limit of 1,900kcal for a man and 1,400kcal for a woman, use our [BMI healthy weight calculator](#) to get your own personal daily calorie target.

Week 1



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 1

Welcome to Week 1 of your weight loss journey and well done for taking the first steps to a healthier lifestyle.

Over the next 12 weeks we're going to help you make healthier choices to help you lose weight and keep it off.

From today, we'll help you stick to a daily calorie intake: 1,900kcal for men and 1,400kcal for women.

We'll be with you every step of the way, helping you achieve real change, picking you up when you stumble and celebrating your successes.

Laura's diary

Week 1



I've been on all sorts of diets and have learned there's no miracle cure. But losing weight doesn't need to be complicated. If you learn to keep an eye on the calories you're eating and those you burn off during physical activity you're halfway there. Don't forget to track your food and drink using our calorie counter. Spend some time thinking about your meals in advance. If you know what you're having each day you'll spend less time thinking about food and you're less likely to snack on impulse buys.

Your actions for Week 1

- Record your weight and waist size in the food and activity chart
- Stick this week's chart on your fridge and update it at the end of each day
- Plan your meals using our Meal Mixer at <https://mealmixer.change4life.co.uk/>
- Use our calorie counter to track your calories at nhs.uk/caloriecount
- Sign up to the weight loss forum for support and information at nhsweightloss.healthunlocked.com

Did you know?

Research shows that it takes about 12 weeks on average to form new habits.

By sticking to this routine for three months, healthy eating and regular exercise will become habits, which are key to losing weight and keeping it off.



Week 1

Fill up with fibre

Eating food with lots of fibre will help you feel full for longer, so you're more likely to stick to your calorie limit.

Fibre keeps your bowels healthy and can help reduce cholesterol. Most people in the UK eat only about 18g of fibre a day, but should aim to eat at least 30g.

Increase your fibre intake gradually, though, as a sudden increase can cause cramp and constipation. And make sure to drink plenty of water - aim for 1.2 litres a day - to avoid cramp and constipation.

Here are some easy ways to boost the fibre in your snacks and meals:

Breakfast

Adding some fibre to your breakfast can help you stay feeling full until lunch and reduce the urge for a mid-morning snack.

- Swap white bread for wholemeal or wholegrain varieties.
- Swap sugary cereals for high-fibre cereals such as wholegrain wheat cereals, unsweetened muesli, or porridge oats, and don't forget to check the salt content.

Lunch and dinner

Vegetables are a good source of fibre, so try swapping some of the things on your plate for more veg. Aim for two portions of veg on your plate at dinner.

- Swap white rice and pasta for

wholemeal versions – simply doing this can double the amount of fibre you've eaten.

- Add pulses – beans, lentils and peas – into your meals. They're a cheap, low-fat source of fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals. Add pulses to soups, casseroles, rice and pasta, or serve baked beans (choose reduced-salt and sugar varieties) on wholemeal toast.

Snacks

Stock up on healthier snacks containing fibre such as:

- Fruit – fresh, canned or frozen. Don't forget to eat the skin on fruits such as apples and pears.
- Veg sticks – carrot, celery or cucumber sticks or a packet of sugar snap peas. You can enjoy these low-calorie snacks if you feel hungry in between your meals.
- Reduced-fat hummus. For a bit of variety, dip your veg sticks, wholegrain crispbreads or pitta bread in a tub of reduced-fat hummus. You'll get the fibre from both the veg and the bread.
- Air-popped, plain popcorn. Homemade is best, to avoid the high fat, sugar or salt content in some commercial brands. Don't add any sugar or butter.

Food with fibre

- 6 apricots: 4g
- 1 medium orange: 3g
- 1 medium apple: 2g
- 2 slices of wholemeal bread: 4.2g
- 1 medium jacket potato: 5g
- 90g of peas: 4g
- 90g of spinach: 2g
- 200g of new potatoes: 3g
- 30g of chickpeas: 1.5g
- 135g of sweetcorn: 2g
- 165g of baked beans: 5g
- 220g of brown spaghetti: 8g
- 180g of brown rice: 1.5g
- 1 large wholemeal pitta bread: 5g

Protein sources

Protein can also help you feel fuller for longer. Choose low-fat protein sources, such as:

- beans, peas and lentils
- fish
- lean cuts of meat
- skinless white-meat poultry
- lower-fat dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt)
- eggs
- tofu
- Quorn

Portion distortion

No matter how healthily you eat, you can still put on weight if you're eating too much.

Food portion sizes today are far bigger than they were 30 years ago, which means we're consuming a lot more calories than we realise.

In fact, many of us no longer know what makes a normal portion – a problem known as portion distortion.

Regain some portion control with these six simple tips:

- Eat with smaller plates and bowls. You'll have a smaller portion and still feel satisfied.
- Aim for two portions of veg on your plate. This helps to cover your plate with low-calorie filling food, leaving less room for higher-calorie ingredients. Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. Go



to [nhs.uk/eatwell-plate.](https://nhs.uk/eatwell-plate/)

- Eat slowly. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain you're full. When you eat fast, it's easy to overeat.
- Turn off the TV. Eating in front of the TV can mean you eat more without noticing or enjoying your food.
- Weigh your food. Use kitchen scales to weigh your ingredients before you cook. This will help you stick to the suggested serving sizes.

Your meal guide

You need to keep an eye on your portions to help you meet the calorie target for your day's meals.

Women (allowance 1,400kcal)

- Breakfast: 280kcal
- Lunch: 420kcal
- Dinner: 420kcal
- Other food and drink: 280kcal

Men (allowance 1,900kcal)

- Breakfast: 380kcal
- Lunch: 570kcal
- Dinner: 570kcal
- Other food and drink: 380kcal

The calorie allowance at meal times includes any drinks or desserts you have. If you eat more for your breakfast, lunch or evening meal, you may need to drop a snack later in the day to stay on track.

Eating out

- Avoid appetisers including bread, nuts or olives
- Stay clear of 'supersize' or 'go large' options
- If you're having dessert, share it and go for fruit-based options
- Choose a starter instead of a main course
- Stop eating before you feel full

Recipe inspiration

The Change4Life Meal Mixer is full of easy, calorie-counted recipes for all your meals and snacks. You can download them and email yourself a shopping list of ingredients. Plus, there's a free app, too!

<https://mealmixer.change4life.co.uk/>



Week 1 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Activity |
| Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Aerobic exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strength exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

Weekly summary

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

End of the week

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun

Week 1 food and activity chart



Mon

Sat

Tue

Fri

Sun

Food

Food

Food

Food

Food

Total calories:
1,363

Total calories:
1,309

Total calories:
1,516

Total calories:
1,305

Total calories:
1,357

Food

Total calories:
1,391

Total calories:
1,710

Total calories:
1,305

Total calories:
1,357

Total calories:
1,309

Activity

Activity

Activity

Activity

Activity

Activity

Activity

Total minutes:
15

Total minutes:
15

Total minutes:
75

Total minutes:
15

Total minutes:
60

Total minutes:
40

Total minutes:
60

Aerobic exercise

walk

walk

walk

walk

walk

walk

walk

Strength exercise

yoga

60

gardening

20

Start of the week

Weight
Waist

172lbs
44in

kg/lbs
cms/in

Weekly summary



10 mins
30 mins
60 mins
90 mins
120 mins
150 mins+

mon
tues
wed
thurs
fri
sat
sun



10 mins
30 mins
60 mins
90 mins
120 mins
150 mins+

mon
tues
wed
thurs
fri
sat
sun

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

End of the week

Weight
Waist

170lbs
44in

kg/lbs
cms/in



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 2

You've made it to Week 2 – well done!

Becoming more aware of where calories are in your meal may be challenging, but stick with it; it gets easier.

From this week, we'd like you to start increasing your activity levels to help support your weight loss.

We've got tips to help you do this gradually but if you want a bit of structure, why not try our Couch to 5K running plan and Strength and Flex workout, which are both suitable for beginners.

Laura's diary

Week 2

I hadn't done any exercise for 10 years when I came across the Couch to 5K plan. When I saw that week 1 involved running for only a minute at a time, I felt relieved that someone understood my limitations, and the walking intervals made it feel less scary. I didn't find it easy but it was much easier than I expected. Having the structure of a plan was hugely helpful and having designated 'running days' meant I couldn't make excuses. I feel like I've taken something that I was so afraid of and I've well and truly beaten it. Not only have I conquered a fear but I've developed a new habit that I know is doing my health enormous good.



Your actions for Week 2

- Get active – try to get 150 minutes of physical activity every week from now on. If you've not done much for a while, aim to increase your activity levels gradually over the next few weeks
- Download the [Couch to 5K](#) and [Strength and Flex](#) programmes
- Plan when and where you are going to exercise and write it down
- Stick to your daily calorie intake – 1,400kcal for women and 1,900kcal for men

Did you know?

An unexpected benefit of taking on something new like physical activity is increased self-confidence and improved self-esteem.

Tackling something and achieving success in one area can produce a real mental boost, which can transfer into other aspects of life.



Week 2

Dust off those trainers

Evidence shows that people who combine regular physical activity with calorie-counting are more successful at losing weight and keeping it off.

But not all of us are naturally sporty. In fact, some of us may not have done any meaningful exercise since school. This makes starting again quite daunting and it can be hard to know where to begin.

You can start small by finding ways to fit more activity into your daily life and build up from there.

Try getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way or taking the stairs instead of the lift.

But as well as being generally more active, you could start setting aside a few days during the week for more structured exercise.

Your target is at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week.

Moderate activity will raise your heart rate and make you breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if you're exercising at a moderate level is if you can still talk but you can't sing the words to a song.

Brisk walking, bike rides or swimming are great examples, but if these don't appeal and you need something more structured, you could try one of the exercise plans available on NHS Choices. These are free and can be done at home or in the local park. Crucially, they recognise the limitations of a beginner. They include:

- Couch to 5K – a nine-week running plan
- 5K+ running podcasts for Couch to 5K graduates
- Strength and Flex podcasts – a five-week workout plan
- 10-minute home workouts – quick and effective exercise routines

Get these and lots more exercise tips at nhs.uk/fitness.

Before you start, plan. Think about whether you need new trainers, where and on which days you're going to exercise, and when in the day you can fit it in. A little preparation can mean the difference between getting going and making excuses not to bother.

Whatever you choose make sure it's something you enjoy, or it may be hard to find the motivation to do it regularly.

You may feel a little bit more hungry as you step up your activity levels or start a new exercise regime.

That's normal. You're burning more calories, so your body needs to replace the energy spent during exercise.

But be careful how you refuel. A post-exercise snack high in calories could actually see you putting on weight instead of losing it. Instead, choose foods that are lower in calories but still filling, such as fruit, low-fat yoghurt or reduced-fat hummus with brown pita.

Walk more with a pedometer

Pedometers, which you can buy or download as a smartphone app, are a fun way to keep track of your walking and help you increase your activity levels gradually.

The pedometer will measure every step you take: around the house, at work, out and about, on the school run or to the park. Use the pedometer to work out your average daily steps and then start adding extra steps.

Getting started

Things people choose when they start to become more active:

- walking
- cycling
- gardening
- swimming
- dancing
- playing a sport, such as badminton, football or bowls
- stretching exercise, e.g. yoga
- going to the gym

If you have a medical condition, please seek medical advice before beginning physical activity.

Tips to build activity into your day

Ten easy ways to raise your physical activity levels and burn more calories.

Walk more

Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways of increasing your activity. Find a walking pal or join a walking group.

Take the stairs

Walk up and down stairs and escalators instead of taking the lift, or get off the lift a few floors early and use the stairs.

Take up running

Our popular Couch to 5K running plan is designed to get just about anyone running 5km in nine weeks.

Exercise in your local park

Download our Strength and Flex podcast series and get fit in five weeks.

Active travel

Cycle or walk part, if not all, of your journey to work. Get off public



transport a stop before your destination and walk the rest of the way.

Ditch the car

If you need to drive to work, try to park further away from your destination and walk the rest of the way.

Exercise at work

Exercise before or after work or during your lunch break. Your workplace may have a gym or you may have access to a swimming pool or squash courts.

Family fun

Be active with the family. Take your children to the swimming pool or play in the garden or park.

Green fingers

Gardening can provide a good workout. You could also add a social element by getting an allotment.



Couch to 5K

This podcast series is designed to get just about anyone running 5km in nine weeks. The plan involves three runs per week, gradually building up fitness and stamina until you can run for 30 minutes.

nhs.uk/Couchto5k

Healthier cooking

Frying adds fat to your meals. Try these healthier alternatives:

Grilling

Grilling is a quick and healthier way of cooking as it doesn't use any fat.

Poaching

Poaching is a fat-free way of cooking eggs, some meats and fish, using a pan of boiling water.

Steaming

Steaming is a fat-free way of cooking veg and fish

Boiling

Boiling doesn't require any oil and therefore adds no calories to food.

Calorie counter

Calories in common foods:

Apple: 53kcal

Orange: 62kcal

Banana: 105kcal

Six carrot sticks: 35kcal

2tbsp of hummus: 55kcal

Buttered brown toast: 115kcal

Cup of tea with semi-skimmed milk: 13kcal

Mug of coffee with semi-skimmed milk: 20kcal

Look up the calories of more foods and drinks on our calorie counter at nhs.uk/calorie-count



Week 2 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Weight Waist

kg/lbs cms/in

Weekly summary

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins+

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

End of the week

Weight Waist

kg/lbs cms/in



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 3

You're on Week 3 already – well done for sticking with it!

So how's it going? You may be feeling sore after your first week of exercise. But don't worry, it shouldn't last long.

If you didn't manage 150 minutes' exercise, don't panic. It's better to do some exercise than none, so build up gradually if you need to. The more you do, the easier it gets.

To help you along we've got some great tips on getting active plus healthier breakfast ideas to get your days off to a great start.

Laura's diary

Week 3



With the first week of a new exercise regime under your belt, you should be feeling pretty good about yourself.

Taking up exercise and healthier eating is a lot to think about – but I find that one becomes a great motivator for the other.

If I've been for a run, I'm much more likely to make healthier food choices so my efforts aren't wasted. When you know the physical effort it takes to burn 250kcal you'll think more carefully about how you consume them!

Your actions for Week 3

- Boost your breakfast. Read our guide and make sure you're making the most of your first meal of the day
- Remember to stick to your daily calorie intake – 1,400kcal for women and 1,900kcal for men
- Keep aiming to achieve 150 minutes of exercise this week
- Remember to plan your physical activity and log them in the chart

Did you know?

If exercising in the morning, you should get up early enough to eat breakfast. If you don't eat, you may feel sluggish or lightheaded when you exercise.

If you plan to exercise within an hour after breakfast, eat a lighter breakfast and have a healthier snack after your workout.



Week 3

Exercise motivation

When you start a new exercise regime it's normal to experience some soreness.

Muscles you didn't even know you had are giving you grief and it may all feel like a bit of an uphill struggle. And it's not just your body. One of the biggest barriers to getting into an exercise routine is your mind. We're creatures of habit, and if you've not done much for a while, finding the motivation to get up and go can be a real mental battle.

But don't be discouraged. You're going through the beginner's pain barrier and after a week or two, this should be a distant memory.

If you feel your enthusiasm dipping at any point, here are our top 10 tips to boost your motivation:

1. Be realistic. Remind yourself that you want to become more active because it'll help you become healthier and lose weight. It's a crucial component of your 12-week journey.
2. Schedule it. Plan your exercise at the start of the week and put it in your diary. Planning in advance when, how and where you will exercise will increase your chances of making physical activity a normal part of your lifestyle. Even simple approaches like laying out your running kit or packing your gym bag the night before can help.
3. Pat yourself on the back. Look back at your weekly food and activity chart to remind yourself how much you've already achieved.
4. Spread the word. Share your plans

and achievements with other people; you'll feel obliged to keep going!

5. Phone a friend. Find a friend or a relative to exercise with, or perhaps join a group or club. A workout buddy can provide feedback, support and entertainment – they also put pressure on you to turn up!
6. Pump yourself up. Music is a great motivator so pick your playlist, plug your headphones in and listen to your favourite workout songs while you exercise.
7. Be flexible. Change activities if you're not enjoying them. If cycling isn't doing it for you, why not go swimming or even try some fitness classes at the gym instead.
8. Remember, the hardest part of exercising is getting out of the door – so once you've passed that hurdle, it should be plain sailing.
9. Set goals. They don't need to be grand achievements. For instance, try to walk a little bit more each day, take the stairs instead of the lift or walk part of the way to work. Keeping a written record of these mini-goals can help you to see your progress over time.
10. Reward yourself. Set yourself non-food rewards for achieving stages along the way. There's nothing like an incentive to spur you on!

Non-food rewards

Try these non-food rewards to help you celebrate your weight loss progress. Examples include:

- bubble bath
- new music
- new clothes
- a trip to the cinema
- DVD box set
- massage
- haircut
- new exercise gear

For more ideas go to nhs.uk/rewards

How much activity?

To stay healthy or to improve fitness, adults should aim to do every week:

- 150 minutes of aerobic exercise, such walking, running, tennis and cycling, and
- Two sessions of muscle-strengthening activities, such as lifting weights, exercises such as push-ups and sit-ups, heavy gardening or yoga.

On your marks, get set, go

These quick and healthier breakfasts are an ideal way to start your day.

1. Muesli, fruit and low-fat yoghurt
 No-added-sugar muesli is a great high-fibre breakfast option, while added fruit will count towards your 5 A DAY and low-fat yoghurt provides calcium and protein.

No-added-sugar muesli 40g = 141kcal

Low-fat yoghurt 125g = 81kcal

Medium-size banana = 108kcal

Grand total = 330kcal

2. Wholegrain breakfast cereal with semi-skimmed milk

Wholegrain breakfast cereals are a good source of fibre. Choose a breakfast cereal that has been fortified with vitamins and minerals.

Two Weetabix = 117kcal

Semi-skimmed milk 200ml = 103kcal

Grand total = 220kcal



3. Boiled egg with wholemeal toast and reduced-fat spread

Eggs are a good source of protein, minerals and vitamins. Choose wholegrain or wholemeal bread.

1 large egg = 78kcal

2 thin slices of toast with reduced-fat spread = 206kcal

Grand total = 284kcal

4. Grilled mushrooms and tomatoes on a wholegrain bagel

Grilling is a quick and healthier way to cook and mushrooms and tomatoes count towards your 5 A DAY.

Wholegrain bagel = 260kcal

4 large mushrooms = 20kcal

1 large tomato = 33kcal

Grand total = 313kcal

Porridge – the breakfast hero

When you're trying to lose weight, learn to love porridge! Oats are low in calories and a good source of fibre. Make it with semi-skimmed milk and top with a tablespoon of dried fruit, such as raisins, to get one of your 5 A Day.

Porridge oats 40g = 182kcal

Semi-skimmed milk 150ml = 78kcal

Raisins 30g = 90kcal

Water 150ml = 0kcal

Grand total = 350kcal

Filling cereals full of fibre

These wholegrain cereals will fill you up and keep you feeling full. If you need extra sweetness, add a chopped banana.

1 Wholegrain wheats

2 Wholegrain raisin wheats

3 Wholewheat biscuits

4 Wholegrain oat biscuits

5 Muesli (unsweetened)

6 Porridge oats (unsweetened)



Strength and Flex

A five-week exercise plan for beginners looking to increase their activity levels. The equipment-free workouts are gentle and easy to follow and can be done indoors or out.

nhs.uk/strength-and-flex

Week 3 food and activity chart



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|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight Waist

End of the week

Weight Waist

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

kg/lbs

cms/in

mon

tues

wed

thurs

fri

sat

sun



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 4

You're four weeks into your journey – keep going! This week we'll be tackling food cravings and snack temptation.

If you've increased your activity levels, you may feel like a snack or two to keep you going between meals. There's actually nothing wrong with snacking if you're hungry but avoid grazing.

A healthier snack will help you beat your cravings and keep your energy levels up between meals. Our 100-calorie healthier snacks will help you keep on top of your calories and keep temptation at bay.

Laura's diary

Week 4



I don't know about you but I find it hard not to snack between meals, especially when I've been exercising that day.

My go-to snacks include flavoured rice cakes, low-fat yoghurt and fruit, low-fat cottage cheese and oatcakes.

To avoid snacking on unhealthy foods, I don't have any biscuits, chocolate, sweets OR other high-calorie junk foods at home.

I try to plan my snacks for each day of the week, and look up the calories online beforehand so I don't have to do it each day.

I try not to fight the urge to snack because I know it'll turn into a craving for some high-calorie comfort food.

Your actions for Week 4

- To avoid temptation, plan your snacks for each day of the week. If you work, take a day's portion along with you
- Don't forget your daily calorie intake – 1,400kcal for women and 1,900kcal for men
- Keep moving! If you didn't manage 150 minutes last week, try to achieve it this week
- Look for easy ways to burn calories as part of your daily routine. Check out the tips in this pack

Did you know?

Some people need a snack between meals to maintain energy levels, especially if they are very active.

Choosing fruit or vegetables instead of crisps, chocolate and other high-calorie snacks will help you replace lost energy without putting on weight.



Week 4

Workplace diet traps

We spend on average about a third of our day at work, so it makes sense to give what we eat during working hours some careful consideration.

All too often our workload, stress, tiredness, lack of time and temptation combine to derail our best intentions.

With a bit of planning, you can use snacks and lunch to keep your diet on track, your energy levels up and even save a bit of money.

Here are 10 tips to make workplace eating healthier for you:

Eat breakfast

This should be your mantra. A healthier breakfast will set you up for the day and stop you becoming hungry before lunch. If you're not hungry before leaving home, have breakfast at work.

Bring your own

Home-cooked food is often lower in calories and fat and cheaper than food bought on the high street. If sandwiches aren't your thing, you could cook extra in the evenings and take the leftovers to work, saving you money.

Drink water

Drinking water regularly may help keep hunger pangs in check. You should aim to drink about six to eight glasses (1.2 litres) of fluid every day.

Plan your snacks

Keep a healthier snack within reach, such as fruit, veg (e.g. carrot sticks and reduced-fat hummus dip) or homemade popcorn (without fat, sugar or salt).

Go for wholegrain

When making sandwiches, go for

wholegrain bread, which is more filling than white bread, and will keep you feeling fuller for longer. Wholemeal pitta bread and bagels are alternatives to brown loaf bread.

Go 'low mayo'

Mayonnaise is about 80% fat, and a just few dollops will turn a healthier meal into an unhealthy one. Try lower-fat mayo, reduced-fat hummus, tzatziki or tomato salsa.

Work on your 5 A DAY

A snack is a good opportunity to increase your intake of fruit and vegetables. To count towards your 5 A DAY, each portion of fruit or veg should be 80g.

Swap crisps

If you have a bag of crisps at lunch, go for oven-baked crisps, which can contain up to 70% less fat than regular crisps, or a plain rice cake.

Go lean

Instead of fatty sarnie fillings such as sausages or bacon, go for lean meats, such as turkey or chicken, tuna and salmon or a hard-boiled egg. Remember to go easy on the mayo!

Make soup

Lower-calorie vegetable-based soups are a great way of filling you up and boosting your 5 A DAY intake. Make a batch on the weekend for use during the week.

100-calorie snacks

Try these 100kcal snacks; round figures are simple to track:

- 3 rye crispbreads with 1 tablespoon of reduced-fat soft cheese
- 8 tbsp of salsa and carrot sticks
- 3 tbsp reduced-fat hummus and celery sticks
- 5 tbsp tzatziki and cucumber sticks
- 3 cups air-popped plain popcorn
- 1 thin slice wholemeal toast with 1 teaspoon of peanut butter
- 1 cup of low-calorie instant hot chocolate

For more ideas, read 10 surprising 100 calorie snacks at nhs.uk/100-calorie-snacks.

Burn as you go

Turn your daily routine into an opportunity to get active, feel healthier and burn off some extra calories:

- Get off the bus a stop early
- Go for a brisk walk at lunchtime
- Forget the lift, take the stairs
- Leave the car, walk instead
- Do a daily grocery shop on foot

Food cravings

However good our intentions, when a food craving strikes it can be a real test of our willpower.

There is debate about why we have cravings. They can be caused by our emotions and by such things as stress, boredom, habit or insecurity. Use these tricks to help combat cravings:

Don't go hungry

Hunger can make cravings worse. Keep your energy levels topped up with some healthier high-fibre snacks.

Drink water

Some people find water helps to calm cravings. Because water is filling, it can trick your body into thinking it's satisfied. Hot drinks can work too.

Find a distraction

Find an activity to take your mind off your craving. Go for a walk, have a bath, call a friend, listen to music.

Chew some gum

Some people find chewing sugar-free gum curbs their appetite. But don't overdo it as chewing more than 20



sticks of gum over a day can make you ill.

Brush your teeth

Brush your teeth with toothpaste. Once your mouth is minty clean and fresh, some people find it helps to get rid of a craving.

Reduce temptation

You're less likely crave unhealthy foods if they're not readily available – so avoid buying them!

Set a time limit

Cravings are fleeting. Try holding off for 30 minutes and find something to distract you in the meantime. Chances are, your urge will pass once the time's up.

Have a small portion

If the desire just won't go away, give in, but do it the smart way: have a small portion and reduce your calorie intake later to stay on track.

Craving swaps

Try these healthier alternatives

– but remember to still count the calories:

SWAP crisps FOR pretzels

SWAP chocolate FOR dates

SWAP fried chips FOR oven chips

SWAP fizzy drinks FOR diet versions

SWAP deep pan pizza FOR thin crust

SWAP sweet and sour FOR stir-fry

SWAP sweets FOR raisins

Super soups

Soup is filling, tasty and can be low in fat. Make a batch at the weekend and store it in portions for lunches during the week. Why not try:

- Mexican bean and tomato:

117kcal

- Chunky chicken and sweetcorn:

244kcal

- Carrot soup: 103kcal

For the recipes, see the

Change4Life Meal Mixer at

nhs.uk/c4lrecipefinder



How to stretch

Learn how to stretch and cool down after a run or workout to gradually relax, improve flexibility and reduce soreness. This routine should take about five minutes.

nhs.uk/stretch

Week 4 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight Waist

End of the week

Weight Waist

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

kg/lbs

cms/in

kg/lbs

cms/in

mon
tues
wed
thurs
fri
sat
sun



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 5

You've made it to Week 5! You're on a roll!

So far we've focused on food, but most of what we drink also contains calories so it's a good idea to make sure you're keeping a close eye on those liquid calories.

If you've ever wondered why you've not been losing weight even after sticking to a strict eating regime, now's the time to see if that regular latte, flavoured water or evening tipple is sabotaging your best efforts to lose weight.

Laura's diary

Week 5



This week, it's all about reassessing what you are drinking. I ditched the lattes when I realised how calorific they are.

White coffee may seem boring at first but your taste buds soon adapt and I've never gone back. Alcohol is not your friend either.

Did you know a small glass of wine has the same calories as a piece of chocolate? When I realised this, I started to reconsider and think of it a treat rather than 'just a drink'.

Your actions for Week 5

- Track your drinking with our apps and tools at nhs.uk/alcohol
- If you're a cappuccino or latte drinker, try switching to a black or white coffee
- Try skimmed milk instead of semi-skimmed milk for a week
- Stick to your calorie limit – 1,400kcal for women and 1,900kcal for men
- You should be doing 150 minutes of activity by now. If not, get some inspiration at nhs.uk/fitness

Did you know?

The key to weight loss success is not to expect too much, too soon. Make changes to your diet and activity levels you can live with.

If your changes are too drastic, it will feel like a struggle. If you fall off the wagon, you may return to old habits and regain weight.



Week 5

Calories in alcohol

Did you know a standard glass of wine contains as many calories as a small chocolate and a pint of lager has as many calories as a packet of crisps?

The problem is, most of us just don't think of alcohol as being calorific. So, while we might go easy on the single cream when eating desserts, we wouldn't think twice about knocking back a couple of pints. In fact, the calorie content of two pints is similar to that of a full glass of single cream.

With this in mind, it's easy to understand how excess alcohol intake can easily contribute to gaining weight.

Two large glasses of white wine, totalling 360kcal, will provide a woman with nearly a fifth of her daily calorie allowance.

A beer-drinker knocking back just five pints a week would add a whopping 44,200kcal over a year, equivalent to 221 doughnuts.

Alcohol contains lots of calories – seven calories a gram in fact, almost as many as a gram of fat. And, of course, additional calories can be present in added mixer drinks.

Many drinkers add to their liquid calorie count by having snacks, such as crisps, nuts or pork scratchings, with their tipple, not to mention a hangover-induced fry-up the morning after, which can add an extra 450kcal.

Tips to avoid weight gain

- Stick to your daily recommended units. Men shouldn't regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day.

Women should not regularly drink more than 2-3 units a day. As a guide, a pint of lager and a 250ml glass of wine both contain 3 units of alcohol.

- Alternate an alcoholic drink with a diet soft drink or water – this will help to prevent you becoming dehydrated.
- Choose drinks with a lower ABV (alcohol by volume) instead of your usual tipple. There's an increasing range of lower alcohol choices available and most also have fewer calories.
- Don't drink on an empty stomach, as this can lead to snacking. If you do snack while drinking, avoid high-calorie snacks such as crisps, pork scratchings chips. Try lighter options such as pretzels, plain popcorn or oven-baked crisps.
- Drinking in rounds can mean you end up drinking more than you intended. Opt out and drink at your own pace.
- Try cutting down with a friend, as you'll be more likely to stick to it with moral support.
- Eat a healthier dinner before you start drinking. Order or cook before you start drinking so you're not tempted to go for the less healthy options.
- Avoid 'binge drinking'. Drinking a large amount of alcohol over a short period of time may be significantly worse for your health than frequently drinking small quantities.

How calorific is your tipple?

- A pint of 5% strength beer = a packet of McCoys salted crisps (170kcal)
- A standard glass (175ml) of 12% wine = one Cadbury Heroes miniature bar (126kcal)
- A double measure (50ml) of 17.5% fortified wine = one Asda bourbon biscuit (65kcal)
- A glass (50ml) of (17%) cream liqueur = a Milky Way bar (118kcal)
- A standard bottle (330ml) of 5% alcopop = three Lees teacakes (237kcal)

Drink swaps

- SWAP a pina colada FOR a mojito and save 326kcal
- SWAP a pint of lager FOR lager shandy and save 100kcal
- SWAP double rum & coke FOR single vodka, lime & soda and save 107kcal
- SWAP a large glass of white wine FOR a white wine spritzer with soda and save 35kcal

Think before you drink

It's not just alcohol, non-alcoholic drinks from lattes to colas can also lead your calorie count to creep up.

What you drink should not be overlooked when trying to lose weight. Drinking too many sugar-sweetened drinks can contribute to weight gain.

So what are the common offenders and where could you be going wrong?

Coffee:

Getting a caffeine fix could give you 193kcal or more in one hit if you opt for cappuccino or mocha. Switch to black or white coffee instead.

Fruit juice and smoothies:

You might feel virtuous guzzling these but watch out. A small glass of cranberry or apple juice racks up nearly 100kcal and a small 250ml yoghurt-based smoothie can be about 136kcal. Go for fruit-only smoothies instead. Although fruit juice counts towards



your **5 A DAY**, you may find eating pieces of fruit more filling.

Fizzy drinks:

Lemonade or cola is not only bad for our teeth but it can provide 140kcal in just one can. Switch to diet versions and think of it as a one-off treat.

Experimenting with some interesting flavour combinations can help make it feel less like you're depriving yourself so you'll stick with it – research shows that our tastebuds can be retrained over time to enjoy far less sugar in drinks (or no sugar at all).

Liquid calories

Per 250ml serving:

Cola drink: 105kcal

Mocha: 193kcal

Cappuccino: 110kcal

Chocolate milkshake: 195kcal

Smoothie: 136kcal

Pure orange juice: 122.5kcal

Pomegranate juice: 170kcal

Pure apple juice: 117kcal

Caffeinated energy drink: 112.5kcal

Note that 150ml of pure unsweetened fruit juice can provide one of your **5 A Day**.

Minty lemonade recipe

Make a refreshing, lower-calorie alternative to sugary canned drinks:

- large handful fresh mint leaves
- juice of 6 lemons and zest of 3
- 3 tbsp sugar
- sparkling mineral water

1. Tear the mint leaves to release the flavour

2. Add the mint to a jug with the juice, zest and sugar

3. Top up with sparkling water

4. Chill in the fridge

Serves 4 at 46kcal per serving



Home cardio workout

Burn calories, lose weight and feel great with our 10-minute home cardio workout routines. An ideal workout if you're short on time and need to fit in a bit of exercise without too much fuss.

[nhs.uk/cardio-workout](https://www.nhs.uk/cardio-workout)



Week 5 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Activity |
| Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Aerobic exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strength exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

Weekly summary

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

End of the week

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 6

Congratulations! You've reached the halfway stage of this guide.

There may have been bumps in the road but you've shown the determination to continue the journey. By sticking with it over the weeks, you've shown a real desire to change.

We're rooting for you. You can do it.

Use this midway point to review your routine to make sure there's nothing holding you back from losing weight.

Laura's diary

Week 6



Well done. If you've got this far and have stuck to the advice you should be feeling really pleased and proud of yourself.

And it's that mental boost that you need to push yourself on to further success.

Spend some time thinking about areas where you're struggling and come up with your own list of actions for overcoming them.

A lifestyle change like this has to be an active process. The more you invest in it, the more you'll achieve.

Your actions for Week 6

- Tell family and friends how you're doing – you might even inspire them to join you
- Plan a non-food reward for when you get to 12 weeks. See what others chose on the next page
- Use our [online weight loss forum](#) to let other people know how you're getting on

Did you know?

Setbacks are normal when trying to change habits of a lifetime. Accept this, and it will help you have the right attitude to get back on track when a slip-up does occur.

Plan ahead how you will cope with potential bumps on the road, such as a meal out or a party.



Week 6

Weight loss pitfalls

Are you struggling to lose weight? Find out what could be tripping you up. Here are some of the most common weight loss traps and some quick fixes.

Skipping breakfast

Skipping breakfast can lead to unplanned and unhealthy mid-morning snacking or bingeing at lunchtime.

Fix: go for breakfasts containing fibre, such as wholegrain bread or porridge.

Skipping meals

Skipping any meal is a bad idea. It may reduce your calorie intake for a brief period, but you'll be much hungrier later on and more likely to overeat.

Fix: eat regularly and don't starve from one meal to the next. Have some healthier snacks handy just in case.

Losing track of your calories

A cafe latte, a handful of crisps, a piece of chocolate, a biscuit ... mindless munching can easily sabotage an otherwise well-planned diet.

Fix: make a note of every bite to stay within your calorie allowance.

Unhealthy snacking

High-calorie snacks will do your waistline no favours, but healthier snacks can help you control hunger and keep your energy levels up.

Fix: choose snacks with fibre such as fruit, veg and wholegrain food.

Lapping up low-fat

'Low-fat' or 'fat-free' doesn't always mean low calorie.

Fix: always check food labels for fat, sugar and calorie content.

Drinking too many calories

Some fancy coffees, sweet fizzy drinks, smoothies and alcoholic drinks can pack a calorie punch.

Fix: go for water (still or sparkling) with a slice of lemon, tea or coffee with reduced-fat milk, or herbal tea.

Weighing yourself too often

Your weight can fluctuate from day to day, so weighing yourself daily may not give a true picture of your weight loss.

Fix: weigh yourself once a week and use other goals to measure progress.

Setting unrealistic goals

Thinking you'll lose half a stone (3kg) in your first week is probably setting yourself up for failure. A realistic goal is vital to successful dieting.

Fix: smaller goals are the building blocks to weight loss success.

Gaining weight from exercising

Take care not to cancel out the calories you've burned during exercise by eating more afterwards or you might end up putting on weight.

Fix: for a low calorie post-workout snack, read 10 surprising 100 calorie snacks at nhs.uk/100-calorie-snacks.

Oversized portions

This is a common reason why people struggle to lose weight.

Fix: use smaller plates and stop eating before you feel full.

Take the Week 6 MoT test

It's time to take stock of your progress and highlight any problems. Are you:

- Carefully recording all calories?
- Weighing food when cooking?
- Watching your drinking?
- Reading food and drink labels?
- Exercising 150 minutes a week?
- Getting your 5 A DAY?
- Having breakfast every day?

If you didn't tick all the boxes then think about why and find a fix.

Non-food rewards

Tried and tested non-food rewards to help you celebrate your progress:

- new music
- new pair of jeans
- new running shoes
- trip to the movies
- a DVD box set
- a day at a health spa
- a cooking class
- a day off work

For more ideas, read Non-food rewards for losing weight at nhs.uk/rewards

Resisting peer pressure

In a perfect world, family and friends would do nothing but encourage you during your 12 weeks.

In reality, it's not always like that. You may have had a friend tell you, "just one more drink won't hurt" or a partner say, "forget the gym tonight, let's go out for dinner" or a parent who urges you to have another slice of their homemade cake.

It's probably well-meaning. But that doesn't help when it comes to sticking to your daily calorie allowance. Here are seven ways to resist peer pressure:

- Get home support. Tell your family how much you value their support. The more involved they feel, the more sensitive they're likely to be.
- Ask those around you not to offer you your favourite treats so you don't give in to temptation.
- Plan evenings out in advance to adjust your calorie intake during the day so you don't go over your daily



allowance.

- Avoid "rounds" at the pub. They can force you to keep up with your friends' drinking. Sit them out and buy your own drinks.
- If you're eating out, decide beforehand what you'll eat. Many restaurants display menus online.
- Learn to say no. It's not unfriendly to refuse unwanted food or drink offered by loved ones. Be polite but firm.
- Celebrate your success. When you hit a target, let everyone know so they see how much it means to you.

Diet-friendly socialising

Here are some ways to spend time with friends to take your mind off food:

- A country walk
- The cinema (take your own low-calorie popcorn!)
- Bowling
- A bike ride and (low-calorie) picnic
- Roller-skating
- A game of Frisbee or football on the park
- A day at a spa

Weight loss tips for parents

Cooking for children can derail your diet so try these tips:

- Plan family meals ahead of time. If necessary, include a child-friendly option alongside your own healthy meal
- Don't 'supersize' your children's meals. That way, there'll be fewer leftovers to graze on. Good portion control can benefit the whole family

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 Connect with plan

- ✓ Share your exp
- ✓ Ask and answe
- ✓ Support and he

Join today

Weight loss forum

Connect with other people following the weight loss plan. Use the forum to share your experiences, ask and answer questions about losing weight, and help others on their journey.

nhsweightloss.healthunlocked.com



Week 6 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Weight: Waist:

kg/lbs: cms/in:

Weekly summary

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins+

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon: tues: wed: thurs: fri: sat: sun:

End of the week

Weight: Waist:

kg/lbs: cms/in:

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 7

Welcome to Week 7. Well done, you're on the home straight!

Stick with it, each week is another week of developing healthier habits and skills that you can use at home or away.

After six weeks following this guide, you should be feeling more confident with the idea of eating out.

From Italian to Thai, our eating out tips and healthier meal swaps will help you to enjoy a guilt-free lower-calorie meal out.

Laura's diary

Week 7



When you're trying to lose weight, eating out, whether for lunch or dinner, can be a challenge. There are just so many temptations and pitfalls. It's not always easy to make healthier choices. This week's tips will help your decision-making. When I go to the restaurant with friends I try to look at the menu in advance and think about the healthiest options and calorie content. I'll keep to my normal daily meal routine, that way I won't arrive at the restaurant completely ravenous which in my case always leads to bad choices.

Your actions for Week 7

- Armed with this week's advice, why not suggest a meal out with friends or family?
- Look at your last six food and activity charts to go over your progress and identify any trends you need to keep working on
- Try our [10-minute home toning workout](#) – and try to do at least 150 minutes of activity this week
- Keep counting those calories and stick to your daily limit

Did you know?

It takes approximately 20 minutes for the stomach to tell the brain that it is full, so eat slowly and stop eating before you feel full.

To avoid overeating, use smaller plates and bowls. This will help you get used to smaller portions without going hungry.



Week 7

Dining out

Going out for a meal? Don't panic. We've got you covered. Our tips will help you enjoy the occasion without breaking the calorie bank.

Read the menu online

If you know which restaurant you're going to, look up their menu online to work out the lower-calorie options and figure out your expected calorie intake. Planning ahead like this will help you make better choices and avoid temptation.

Don't skip a meal

Don't skip breakfast or lunch to build calorie credits for your evening out. Stick to your daily meal routine to keep your appetite under control throughout the day. If you go over your calorie allowance, don't worry: simply reduce your calorie intake the following days.

Stick to one course

It's perfectly acceptable to have just a main course. And don't feel the need to finish your plate. Try to stop eating before you feel overly full. If you can't resist having a starter or a dessert, find someone to share it with.

Downsize your portions

To avoid eating too much, order a starter and a side dish as your main course instead of one of the larger mains on the menu.

Avoid deep-fried

Avoid food that is deep or shallow fried, battered, pan-fried, marked as 'crispy' or with pastry. These are high

in fat. Instead, look out for grilled, roasted, poached, steamed or baked dishes.

You say tomato

Avoid cheese, cream or butter-based sauces, which are high in fat and pack a calorie punch. Instead, go for tomato or other vegetable-based sauces.

Beware of high-calorie salads

Watch out for high-calorie toppings such as croutons, cheese, bacon and nuts. Ask for salad dressing on the side and add only as much as you need.

Take your time

Eat slowly, enjoy every mouthful. You'll feel satisfied before you feel full and have more chance to take part in the conversation and enjoy the atmosphere.

Share dessert

Go for healthier options such as fruit-based desserts, including crumble. If you can't resist a decadent dessert, share it with a friend.

Don't drink your calories

Alcohol and sugary soft drinks can be high in calories. Go for water or sugar-free drinks.

Healthier side dishes

Fill up on veggie sides. If cooked, go for steamed or boiled. A portion is 80g for your [5 A DAY](#).

- Broccoli
- Mixed leaf salad
- Carrots
- Beans
- Mushrooms
- Kale
- Watercress
- Spinach
- Cabbage

How many calories?

While many menus now list calories, it's not always possible to work out the calorie content in a restaurant or takeaway meal. These tips may help:

- Choose sauce-free dishes, such as grilled meat, baked fish or tandoori dishes. Some sauces and dressings can push up a dish's calorie content
- Ask what's in a dish or how it's been cooked – the restaurant should be happy to tell you
- If you aren't sure, ask for a dish to come without a 'suspect' item
- Try to keep track of exactly what you eat and the amount so you can tot up the calories accurately

Fabulous foreign food

Tips to help you select lower-calorie options when you fancy something a little more exotic.

Italian

Avoid cheese and cream-based pasta sauces, such as alfredo or carbonara.

Thumbs up: thin pizzas with veg toppings, tomato-based sauces, vegetable-based soups, grilled dishes.

Thumbs down: cheesy and meaty pizzas, salami, creamy sauces, garlic bread, lasagne.

Chinese

Chinese food can be low-calorie. Just avoid sweet sauces and anything fried or deep-fried.

Thumbs up: stir-fries, steamed dumplings, steamed veg, plain boiled rice, steamed fish or chicken.

Thumbs down: anything deep-fried or sweet and sour, prawn toast, spring rolls, egg fried rice.



Thai

Thai food is great as it tends to feature lots of steamed or stir-fried vegetables.

Thumbs ups: salads, stir-fries, steamed rice, broth soups.

Thumbs down: coconut milk dishes, fried rice, peanut sauce, crispy noodles.

Indian

In spite of its reliance on frying, there are plenty of healthier choices.

Thumbs up: tomato-based sauces, tandoori dishes, plain or basmati rice.

Thumbs down: bhajis, poppadoms, creamy curries, pilau rice, naan bread.

Restaurant tips

- Banish the buffet: it's hard to control your portion size at an all-you-can-eat buffet. It's a real test of willpower and the food tends to be less than healthy. The solution? Avoid them completely!
- Order less: there's no need to cry off takeaways when trying to lose weight, but portion control is key. Try to avoid ordering more food than your need.
- Plain and simple: steer clear of creamy sauces and meals with lots of cheese.

When in Blighty

British favourites such as fish and chips, pub meals and traditional breakfasts can easily blow your calorie budget. Avoid fried foods, ploughman's lunch and pastry-based foods such as Cornish pasties and steak and kidney pie. Thin-cut chips and roast potatoes are also a no-no.

Instead, try lean meat, grilled salmon or white fish. And for side dishes, stick to jacket potatoes, steamed vegetables and salad.



10-minute home toning

Firm up your bum, abs, legs and arms with this 10-minute home toning workout - ideal if you're short on time and need exercise without too much fuss.

nhs.uk/toning

Week 7 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Weight	Waist
--------	-------

kg/lbs

cms/in

Weekly summary

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon
tues
wed
thurs
fri
sat
sun

End of the week

Weight	Waist
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kg/lbs

cms/in

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 8

Week 8 and you're doing great.

We all know we should eat more fruit and veg, which is especially helpful when trying to manage your weight. They contain fibre, vitamins and minerals. We should eat at least five portions of different fruit and veg a day.

Salads are often seen as the perfect dieter's food. But not all salads are as innocent as they seem. Find out what lurks beneath those healthy-looking green leaves and could be spoiling your diet.

Laura's diary

Week 8



Calorie counting has made me a much more creative cook and has led to me experimenting with a wider range of fruit and veg. Asian Recipes are particularly versatile. Tomato-based curries and marinades deliver a variety, flavour and freshness that's hard to beat. Crucially they tend to rely much less on the sorts of ingredients that send calorie values rocketing, like cheese.

I really recommend investing in some fresh and dried spices and to give it a go.

Your actions for Week 8

- Plan to have at least two portions of veg with every evening meal this week
- Try some of our homemade salad ideas and experiment with your own
- Try to plan three 30-minute lunchtime walks this week. Your lunch break is an opportunity to get active
- Stick to your calorie and exercise targets

Did you know?

Products carrying a 5 A DAY message can be misleading. '5 A DAY' logos have been appearing on food high in sugar, salt and fat such as biscuits and fizzy drinks.

Always check the label for the full list of ingredients and look for the Department of Health's official 5 A DAY logo.



Week 8

Eat more vegetables

Getting into the habit of eating more veg can help you lose weight and keep it off. There are so many ways to pack more veg into your favourite meals.

We all know that vegetables contain fibre, vitamins and minerals. But what have they got to do with losing weight?

Because they contain fibre, vegetables fill you up without packing a big calorie punch (depending on how they are cooked of course).

So, make veg a big part of your efforts to lose weight, and you can eat filling, satisfying meals – and avoid between-meal hunger pangs – without exceeding your daily calorie allowance.

Try these 10 tips to fit more vegetables into your diet:

- Aim to make your meal more filling by adding vegetables, and then cut back on another, high-calorie ingredient or food, or simply eat less. This way, you can feel full while eating fewer calories.
- Add beans, lentils and pulses to stews, bakes and salads.
- Aim for two portions of veg on your plate. If you're having shepherd's pie, have some peas with it too. Add carrots and broccoli to a roast dinner.
- Eat more salad or vegetable-based dishes. One meal can provide several portions of your 5 A DAY. For protein, you could add a boiled egg, chicken slices or cooked lentils. For example, start with some lettuce and add sliced tomatoes, red onion, apples, pears, celery, cooked beetroot, grated raw carrot and a hard-boiled egg.
- Have vegetables as snacks. Baby carrots, radishes, and sugar snap peas all make ideal snack food. They're convenient, easy to pack in handy portions and they require very little preparation.
- Swap sauces based on cheese or cream – on pasta, rice or a baked potato – for tomato or vegetable-based sauces. Throw in some kidney beans or chickpeas to make the sauce extra filling. These same ingredients can make a filling vegetable or bean-based soups as well.
- Add some crunch to your lunchtime sandwiches with lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber or grated carrot. This will help fill you up.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables. They're quick and easy to prepare in the microwave or on the hob. You can choose single vegetables – such as peas, carrots, green beans or cauliflower – or mixed veg.
- Cooked breakfast? Swap a fried tomato or mushroom for a grilled tomato or mushroom. Or, try an omelette stuffed with onion and peppers.
- Add green, leafy veg to soups or stews. Veg such as kale or swiss chard are loaded with calcium and iron. This is a really easy way to incorporate them into your meals.

5 A DAY portion sizes

A portion of fruit or veg is 80g.

Fresh, frozen, tinned and juiced fruit and veg all count towards your 5 A DAY. Use the rough guide below to work out whether you're eating your 5 A DAY:

- Half a grapefruit
- An apple
- 2 plums or satsumas
- 3 heaped tablespoons of peas, sweetcorn, beans or pulses
- 2 broccoli spears
- A dessert bowl of salad leaves

A 5 A DAY portion of dried fruit is around 30g. This is about one heaped tablespoon of raisins.

Not one of your 5 A DAY

They may be vegetables but they do not count towards your 5 A DAY.

- Potatoes – including jacket potatoes, chips and crisps
- Yams
- Cassava
- Plantain

Make the most of salads

Salads can be your best friend when trying to lose weight but beware of calorie-laden toppings.

A typical green salad of green leaves, tomatoes and cucumbers is low in calories, salt and fat and high in nutritional value.

However, toppings such as croutons, bacon bits, cheese, breaded chicken and creamy dressings will turn an innocent-looking salad into a dieter's nightmare.

The golden rule with salads: avoid fatty toppings, always ask for the dressing on the side and avoid mayonnaise or cream-based dressings.

Salad dressings

Salad dressings are almost always high in calories. A single serving (two tablespoons) of mayonnaise is 220kcal; a mayo-based Thousand Island dressing is 194kcal and blue cheese dressing is 228kcal.

- Try making your own lower-fat and



lower-calorie dressings out of fruit juices. Or make a healthier vinaigrette with olive oil and vinegar or fresh lemon juice.

- Take care when buying commercial lower-fat salad dressings – while they may be low in fat, they can often be high in sugar. Always check the nutrition information on the label.
- If you're in a restaurant or cafe, ask for the dressing to be served on the side and add only as much as you need.
- Give a wide berth to salads such as Caesar, Waldorf, coleslaw and some pasta and potato salads, all of which are generally soaked in mayonnaise.

3 lower-calorie salad dressings

Orange-balsamic (82kcal)

- 1 tbsp dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- Juice of 1 large orange

French dressing (88kcal)

- 1 clove garlic minced
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp honey

Ranch-style dressing (51kcal)

- 1-2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 tbsp fat-free natural yoghurt
- Juice of 1 large lemon
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar

Lower-calorie salad toppings

Add a burst of flavour with these 50kcal salad toppings:

- 1 tbsp toasted sunflower seeds
- 1 tbsp toasted pine nuts
- 1 tbsp toasted pumpkin seeds
- A handful of chopped grapes
- 1 tbsp of chopped toasted walnuts



5 A DAY

Find out about fruit and veg portion sizes with our 5 A DAY guides, including a downloadable illustrated poster and a portion size guide for a range of fruit and veg, including tinned and dried.

nhs.uk/5ADAY

Week 8 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Activity |
| Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | | Total minutes: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Aerobic exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Strength exercise | mins |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

End of the week

Weight

Waist

kg/lbs

cms/in

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun



Strength exercise: mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 9

Good going – you've made it to Week 9!
We hope keeping track of your calories is becoming easier.

If you started the Couch to 5K running plan on Week 2, you should be just one week from graduation!

If you're still working towards 150 minutes of activity a week, keep going! We know you can do it! Just keep doing a little bit more each week. Let's give it a big push this week. The key is to do something you enjoy that can fit into your routine.

Laura's diary

Week 9



How's the exercise regime going? Whether you're struggling or you've taken to it like a duck to water, I can't recommend the forums enough. They are truly inspiring and full of people who've found their own way of making it work for them. Exercise is a really important habit to learn – not just for the purposes of this 12-week guide but for the rest of your life.

Think about ways you can support yourself in achieving this goal. Would pairing up with a friend help, for instance?

Your actions for Week 9

- Go to the [weight loss forum](#) to find out what other people are doing to raise their activity levels
- If you're lacking motivation, use [What's Your Sport](#) to find out what activity suits you best
- Have a go at this week's recipe, which should satisfy any sweet cravings. If it's not your cup of tea – research some different lower-calorie recipes

Did you know?

Regular strength exercises, such as weight training, push-ups or heavy gardening, can boost weight loss.

Strength exercises build muscles and muscles burn more calories than other body tissue, including fat, even when you're not moving.



Week 9

What's stopping you?

Whatever it is that's stopping you from getting more active, it might not be as much of a barrier as you think.

Here are some common reasons why we might avoid exercise and how to overcome them.

'I don't have time'

Achieving 150 minutes of physical activity a week is easier than you think. It doesn't have to be structured exercise, like running or swimming. Walking to work, to the shops or the kids to school, gardening or taking the stairs all count. The easiest way is to work physical activity into your daily routine.

'I'm too tired'

It's not unusual to feel drained at the end of the day but exercise will relieve your tiredness and actually make you feel more energetic. With time, an exercise regime will also build your stamina, reducing feelings of lethargy.

'I don't have the willpower'

Many people give up on their exercise regime soon after starting it. One of the best ways to stay motivated is to keep an exercise diary or exercise with a friend. Goal-setting can also be fantastic for keeping you motivated and working towards a target that suits you.

'I don't like exercise'

Memories of school PE may still colour your judgement but there are so many ways of getting active, and enjoying it. For example, if competitive sport was your worst nightmare, focus on

a solitary activity such as walking, running, yoga or swimming.

'It's hard work'

Starting slowly and building up gradually are the key to enjoying exercise. The [Couch to 5K](#) or [Strength and Flex](#) podcast series are just the ticket. They are both designed to let your confidence grow along with your stamina and strength.

'The weather is too bad'

Many people find running in the rain invigorating. Learn to love the weather; it's bracing with the wind behind you and it can be fun splashing through puddles.

'I've missed a session. I'll never get back on track'

No one sails through never missing an exercise session. Just get your kit on and bear in mind you're not back starting from scratch. The key is to rewind a bit. For example, if you've completed Couch to 5K but haven't run for a while, pick it up at Week 5 or 6.

'I'll look stupid'

It can be hard to get active in public if you're out of shape or not used to exercise. But you can overcome this. Start off exercising at home or plan to run when no-one's about. Your confidence will soon grow.

Exercise ideas

Gym not your thing? Try one of these to get your heart rate going:

- At home: [DVD workouts](#), [Strength and Flex](#), [10-minute workouts](#)
- Outdoor: [Walking](#), [gardening](#), [bowls](#)
- Solitary: [Pilates](#), [yoga](#), [tai chi](#), [swimming](#), [running](#), [rollerblading](#)
- With a friend: [Badminton](#), [dance classes](#), [Zumba](#)
- With family: [Park football](#), [rounders](#), [Frisbee](#), [hiking](#)

Burn time?

How long does it take a 70kg person running at 6mph to burn off the calories in the following foods?

- Buttered brown toast - 10mins
- 2 Hob Nob biscuits - 12mins
- Cheese and onion crisps - 16mins
- Plain bagel - 18mins
- Chicken korma with rice (300g) - 39mins

Have your cake and eat it?

If all you can think about is chocolate, biscuits or crisps, here are some lower-calorie substitutes.

Beware that although lower in calories, some of these swaps can still be high in sugar. Also, lower-calorie should not be taken as a licence to indulge.

Crisps – swap for lower-fat, lower-salt oven-baked crisps, which contain up to 70% less fat than standard varieties.

Pork scratchings – try swapping for homemade air-popped, plain popcorn.

Ice-cream – opt for lower-fat frozen yoghurt, or try sorbet made from sweetened water flavoured with fruit.

Cereal bar – despite their healthy image, most cereal bars are high in sugar and fat. Look out for bars that are low in sugar, fat and salt.

Chocolate – swap for a lower-calorie hot instant chocolate drink. You can also get chocolate with coffee and



chocolate with malt varieties.

Biscuits – swap for oat cakes, oat biscuits or unsalted rice cakes, which contain fibre.

Sweets – try dried fruit such as raisins, sultanas, dates, apricots or figs, which all count towards your 5 A DAY.

Cake – swap for a plain currant bun, fruit scone or malt loaf. Avoid toppings like butter, icing, jam or cream.

Sugary fizzy drinks – try mixing sparkling water with unsweetened fruit juice, which counts towards your 5 A DAY, or choose a lower-calorie diet variety.

Fruit banana bran cake

Try this filling cake, which has just 132kcal per slice

- 100g low sugar bran flakes
- 250ml semi-skimmed milk
- 75g apricots, chopped
- 50g sultanas
- 40g soft brown sugar
- 150g self-raising flour
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 banana, mashed

Combine bran, milk, apricots and sultanas. Leave to soak for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 180C. Line a loaf tin with greaseproof paper. Add sugar, flour, eggs and banana to the mixture and stir. Spoon into the tin and bake for 50-55 minutes on the middle shelf of the oven.

Snack rogues gallery

- Fully loaded nachos (pub meal): 924kcal
- Pork scratchings (100g): 621kcal
- Roasted and salted peanuts (50g): 300kcal
- Garlic bread (2 slices): 209kcal
- Wasabi peas (59g): 197kcal
- Salt and vinegar crisps (35g packet): 181kcal



Find your ideal sport

Find out what activity you're best suited to with What's your sport? It uses games and quizzes to assess your personality, skills and reflexes to match you up with your ideal activity.

nhs.uk/findyoursport

Week 9 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Start of the week

Weight: Waist:

kg/lbs: cms/in:

Weekly summary

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins+

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon: tues: wed: thurs: fri: sat: sun:

End of the week

Weight: Waist:

kg/lbs: cms/in:

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 10

Well done on reaching Week 10.

Great work!

Working towards a goal isn't always easy; sometimes life just gets in the way. When we feel depressed, angry, bored or stressed, we often turn to food to feel better. Identifying your comfort eating triggers is the first step in breaking the bond between your feelings and food.

Did you try to build in some of the activity ideas we suggested last week? If you didn't, why not give some of the tips a go this week?

Laura's diary

Week 10



Last week we encouraged you to focus a bit more on exercise.

If you took up the Couch to 5K challenge in Week 2 this is your big week. Go for it!

It's amazing how much having a goal can help motivate you.

Furthermore, achieving that goal can be hugely rewarding and can help build your confidence, which will feed into other areas of life.

Spend some time this week planning your next goal and how you can achieve it.

Your actions for Week 10

- If you're about to finish Couch to 5K then get on the forum at couchto5k.healthunlocked.com and shout about it! You can claim your C25K Graduate badge there too
- If you use public transport to get to work, try to fit a 20-minute walk into your journey every day of the week
- Is stress or feeling down causing you to overeat? If you think it might be, visit the Moodzone at nhs.uk/moodzone

Did you know?

You're more likely to fall off the diet wagon at the end of the week. Research suggests that we tend to eat more on Fridays and Saturdays than at any other time of the week.

Avoid undoing all your good work by sticking to the advice every day.



Week 10

How are you getting on? Tips for diet success

You've been following this advice for almost 10 weeks, and it won't always have been easy. Here are a few tips to keep you motivated.

'Help – I've blown it'

Fix: Expect setbacks

It's to be expected that you give in to temptation once in a while, but don't let that become an excuse to give up on trying to lose weight. So, if you had a slice of chocolate fudge cake at work today, pick yourself up, put it behind you, move on and get back on the wagon straight away.

'Help – I still get hunger pangs'

Fix: Fill up on fibre

There is no need to feel hungry when trying to lose weight. Check that you're sticking to your daily calorie limit. Don't be tempted to consume less than that. Fill up on low-calorie fibre-rich foods as much as you can. They're best for staving off hunger pangs and helping you feel full.

'Help – I don't think I can carry on'

Fix: Reward yourself.

Adopting healthier habits can sometimes feel like hard work. Try setting yourself a series of mini-goals as you progress through your weight loss journey. A mini-goal can be whatever you want it to be. It doesn't

have to be weight-related. Every time you achieve a mini-goal, treat yourself with a non-food reward.

'Help – I've lost weight but not inches'

Fix: Be patient

Everyone's body-fat distribution is different, so the inches come off a little differently too. Initially, you may lose weight without losing inches. Be patient, and the inches will drop off in time. You'll soon notice your clothes getting looser and your body looking slimmer.

'Help – I've stopped losing weight'

Fix: Try something new to kickstart weight loss

Perhaps you've been losing weight nicely but for the last week or so, the scales have stayed the same. It's the dreaded weight loss plateau. Don't worry, this is normal. Check that you're sticking to your calorie limit. Are you forgetting to count a snack here or there, or overdoing your portion sizes? Also, it can really help to kickstart things by doing a little more exercise, or to try a different type that challenges your body in new ways.

How to avoid temptation

- Before eating, ask yourself if you're really hungry
- Don't store junk food, such as chocolate and crisps, at home
- Stock up on healthier and lower-calorie food for when hunger strikes
- Keep yourself busy so you're not always thinking about food
- Never shop hungry. Prepare a shopping list and stick to it
- Don't ban foods. You will only crave them more

Keep a food diary

A food diary can help you identify and tackle problems such as emotional eating.

Keeping a food diary involves writing down what you ate, whether you were actually hungry, when you ate and watching for the triggers.

You can use a notebook or one of several food diary charts freely available online. Alternatively, food diaries are often included in weight loss apps on mobile devices.

How to beat comfort eating

It's easy to turn to food when you're stressed, upset, or simply bored.

But you have to address so-called comfort eating to continue making progress on this guide. Emotional eating can be beaten, although it's not always easily done. In some cases, you may need professional help. As a first step, you could try these simple techniques:

Recognising comfort eating

To help spot when you're comfort eating, keep a food diary for a few days. Whenever you eat something, record your mood and how hungry you are on a scale of 1 to 10.

If you find you're eating in response to negative emotions rather than hunger, chances are you're comfort eating.

Now, make a "trigger" list: a list of the feelings and circumstances that tend to spark your comfort eating.



Dealing with comfort eating

Think about how to change or avoid the circumstances that prompt negative feelings, which in turn lead to comfort eating. If your commute to work leaves you stressed and reaching for a snack, for example, can you find a new route?

It's not always possible to avoid difficult feelings, but if you find yourself snacking or craving certain food, it can help to follow a routine.

Ask yourself: am I really hungry, or is this comfort eating? Then, wait 30 minutes before eating. Often, you'll realise that it is really emotional comfort, not food, that you need.

10 comfort eating triggers

Once you've identified what sets off your comfort eating, you can start to tackle it. Here are 10 common triggers:

- Work stress
- Loneliness
- Money worries
- Bad weather
- Tiredness
- Arguments with your partner
- Boredom
- Sadness
- Unemployment
- Health problems

Non-food comfort fixes

- Take your mind off food with some reading
- Listen to a favourite song
- Write down a fun thing you're going to do today, or this week
- Watch a movie
- Phone a friend
- Go for a walk
- Clean the car
- Have a bath
- Surf the web
- Do some breathing exercises
- Do some exercise



Legs, bums and tums

Tone up, firm up and burn fat from your tummy, hips, thighs and bottom with this 10-minute legs home workout. This exercise routine counts towards your 150 minutes of activity a week.

nhs.uk/bumsandtums

Week 10 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

Food											
Total calories:											
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
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Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
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Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										

Start of the week

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins +

Weight Waist

End of the week

Weight Waist

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

kg/lbs

cms/in

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon tues wed thurs fri sat sun



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 11

A big hurrah for reaching Week 11.

You're a star!

If you began Couch to 5K in Week 2, you will have completed the plan last week. Well done. To keep going, download our 5K+ running series.

If you've been exercising and eating well but have stopped losing weight, you may have hit a weight loss plateau. Don't worry, it's common. This week we'll tell you what causes your weight loss to stall and explain how to deal with it.

Laura's diary

Week 11



Congrats to all you Couch to 5K graduates.

Doesn't it feel fantastic?

For me, graduating was a real turning point. It not only totally changed my attitude to exercise but it really boosted my confidence.

For those of you still struggling, redoubling your efforts on the exercise front could be just what you need to get over a weight loss plateau. Also, try to be rigorous when you're recording calories. If an extra few are slipping through the net, they could be halting your progress.

Your actions for Week 11

- If you finished Couch to 5K, take your running to the next level with the [5K+ running podcasts](#)
- To inject some fun into your weekly physical activity, why not recruit an exercise buddy?
- Cook a healthier meal for friends in Week 12. It's a chance to share what you've learned, and celebrate what you've achieved

Did you know?

It's a myth that you can burn body fat from just one area at a time. When you lose weight, the fat loss occurs throughout the body.

You can tone specific areas – such as your abs – but without weight loss, it will still be underneath a layer of fat.



Week 11

Weight loss plateau

You've been eating healthier food and exercising but you've stopped losing weight? It could mean you've hit the dreaded 'weight loss plateau'.

Before you get too discouraged, you should know that it's normal for weight loss to slow and even stall for a while.

That is because your body has adapted to your current programme, and has learned to cope with the same energy demands while burning fewer calories.

Perhaps it's time to review your current programme and see if you need to shake things up a little.

Here are 10 ways to deal with a weight loss plateau.

Hang in there

If you're burning more calories than you take in then sooner or later you will continue to lose weight. You may still be losing weight but it's too small to register on the scales yet.

It's not all about weight

You may have stopped losing weight but it's only temporary. Think about all you've achieved – you've brought your weight under control, you're eating healthier and feeling more energetic.

Calorie creep

One of the most common reasons for weight loss slowing is that your calorie intake can start to creep up again over time. Check your portion sizes haven't increased and make sure your calorie counting is accurate.

Start exercising

Regular exercise is one of the best ways of shifting those extra stubborn pounds

that diet alone can't budge. Find something you enjoy and that you can fit into a routine.

Step it up

Your body adapts quickly to a new exercise programme and learns to produce the same effort while burning fewer calories. You may need to step it up.

Try something new

Try different activities to work other muscles. Not only will change keep you motivated, new exercises will force your body work harder than it's used to.

Be strong

Muscles are very good at burning calories. Regular muscle-strengthening activities, including heavy gardening and weightlifting, will give your weight loss a boost.

Reboot your motivation

If your motivation is flagging, think back to the start of the programme and your reasons for losing weight. Also, ask friends and family for support.

Do you still need to lose weight?

Check your BMI to see if you're a healthy weight. If so, it shows you're already a different person even without further weight loss.

See your GP

Your GP can do tests to rule out any conditions that could be causing your weight loss plateau as well as discuss other weight loss advice.

Diet-friendly dinner party

Entertaining friends at home is a great way to keep control of what's on the menu and avoid temptation.

Try this meal plan:

Starter – Mexican bean and tomato soup (117kcal)

Main – Prawn jambalaya (323kcal)

Dessert – Lemon and raspberry trifle (188kcal)

Grand total = 628kcal

See the Change4Life Meal Mixer for these recipes and many more at nhs.uk/c4lrecipefinder.

Cooking with oil

Oil is a calorie heavyweight, so watch how much you use when cooking. A tablespoon of vegetable oil contains about 120kcal. Just a few more tablespoons of oil - and that includes healthier oils such as olive oil - can add hundreds of calories to your meal. Always measure cooking oil rather than pouring it from a container: this will help you to use less.

Ways to get fit for free

The secret to getting fit for free is to use every opportunity to be active.

Armed with a bit of get-up-and-go and good planning, you can be fitter than ever without spending a penny.

Walking

Research shows that people who fit moderate activity, such as walking, into their daily life burn more calories than those making weekly visits to the gym.

Cycle to work

Cycling to work is one of the easiest ways of fitting exercise into your day. It also saves you money on travel costs.

Park games

Park games such as 'It' are ideal for all the family to get active together and burn calories while having fun.

Skipping

Skipping can be done anywhere at any time. The average person will burn up to 200kcal skipping for 15 minutes.

Trim trails

Trim trails are made up of simple pieces



of exercise equipment dotted around parks and recreation areas.

Green Gyms

Work up a sweat digging, planting and path-clearing at one of 95 free Green Gyms around the country run by The Conservation Volunteers.

Park football

Provided you can work up the bottle to join a group of strangers for a kick about, football is both an excellent way to get fit and to make friends.

Mall walking

Aimed at people who don't normally walk very much, 'mall walking' is brisk walking through shopping centres.

Contact your local authority

Your local leisure centre may offer initiatives such as free classes to encourage people to get in shape.

Calorie burn league table

The more energetic the activity, the more calories you burn. As a guide, here's what someone weighing 70kg would burn in 60 minutes:

- brisk walking (3.5mph): 266kcal
- breaststroke: 700kcal
- badminton: 315kcal
- cycling (12mph): 560kcal
- running (6mph): 700kcal
- park football: 490kcal
- aerobics class: 455kcal
- yoga (hatha): 175kcal

Chock horror!

How long does it take to burn off the calories in a Snickers bar (319kcal)? You might be surprised:

- Running (6mph): 28min
- Cycling (12-14mph): 35min
- Park football: 39min
- Breaststroke swim: 28min
- Walking (3mph): 84min

These times are based on a person weighing 70kg. Lighter people will take longer to burn off the same number of calories



Couch to 5K+

Take your running to the next level with podcasts designed for Couch to 5K graduates. Each podcast provides a structured run with music and coaching to develop your technique, speed and stamina.

nhs.uk/Couchto5K-plus

Week 11 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

Food											
Total calories:											
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Your 5 a day		Your 5 a day		Your 5 a day		Your 5 a day		Your 5 a day		Your 5 a day	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Strength exercise	mins										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>										

Start of the week

Weight Waist

kg/lbs cms/in

Weekly summary

Aerobic exercise: 10 mins 30 mins 60 mins 90 mins 120 mins 150 mins+

1 session on 2 or more days a week

mon
tues
wed
thurs
fri
sat
sun

Your weight loss tracker - Record your weight and waist size at the start and end of each week to help you stay on track

End of the week

Weight Waist

kg/lbs cms/in



Losing weight

Getting started - Week 12

Congratulations on reaching Week 12.

You've done it!

Over these past three months you've worked hard to adopt new healthier habits. As you'll have discovered, old habits are hard to break. Whether you've reached your target weight or want to keep going, this week you have something to celebrate.

But this isn't the end, it's just the start of your new healthier lifestyle. You've achieved so much – there's no going back now. Keep going!

Laura's diary

Week 12



If you've got this far and if you've stuck to the guide, congratulations! You should be really proud of what you've achieved.

You've not only taken big steps towards improving your physical health but you will be reaping the rewards of testing your willpower and really achieving something that no one else could give you. The key is to treat this as the beginning. It's no use going back to old habits. Keep up the good work, keep working on what you find difficult and be proactive in helping yourself progress.

Your actions for Week 12

- You promised yourself a non-food reward if you finished the course. So go on and treat yourself – you deserve it!
- You've learnt a lot – share your success and your tips on the [weight loss forum](#)
- Keep using the food and activity chart for as long as you want to continue losing weight or to maintain your current healthy weight

Did you know?

Studies show that [reducing your time sitting down](#) will help you lose weight. Not only should you do more structured exercise, like running or cycling, you should try to be more active generally.

That means spending less time sitting in front of the TV, using a computer or using the car for short journeys. 

Week 12

Your next challenge: keeping the weight off

If you've achieved your target weight over these last 12 weeks, well done, but the journey doesn't end here.

Weight management is a lifelong commitment but you're over the hardest part. The longer you stick to your new lifestyle, the more normal it will feel.

Our advice about how to lose weight in this 12-week guide can also help you to better manage your weight in the long term.

Below are some of the common features among people who have lost weight and have been successful at keeping it off:

Stick to lower-calorie eating

In studies of people who have lost weight and kept it off for at least a year, most continued to eat a diet lower in calories than before their diet.

Keep planning ahead

Maintain your healthier eating habit regardless of changes in your routine, such as eating out, weekends or holidays. By planning ahead, you're less likely to slip up.

Eat breakfast

Research shows that breakfast can help people control their weight. Having breakfast can help you avoid getting too hungry and snacking later on.

Stay active

Studies show that people who've lost

weight and kept it off typically do 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity most days of the week while not overeating.

Keep using the chart

Keep using the food and activity chart and calorie counter to stay in control of your calories and exercise. They will help prevent your calorie count from creeping back up.

Watch your weight

Weigh yourself regularly, for example once a week, to help you stay on track and correct small weight gains before they become serious relapses.

Get support

Get family and friends to support your new healthier lifestyle, whether it's by helping you make healthier food choices or getting active and doing some exercise with you.

Stay consistent

Stick to your eating and activity plan seven days a week. Don't be tempted to ease off at the end of the week or during holidays.

Keep it interesting

Variety is the spice of life, so if you feel yourself slipping back to old ways, mix things up a bit. Buy a new healthy cookbook, sign up for a healthy cooking course or try a new activity.

Set SMART goals

For behaviour change to be long-lasting, a simple goal-setting technique called SMART can help.

When setting goals, like losing weight, try to be SMART about it.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific:** your goal should be precise, 'I will run three times this week', rather than general, 'I will exercise more'
- **Measurable:** your goal should be measurable
- **Achievable:** break down your overall goal into easy mini-goals
- **Relevant:** choose goals that apply to your circumstances
- **Time-specific:** set yourself a time scale for achieving your goal

What should I eat now?

As a guide, the average man needs about 2,500kcal and the average woman needs 2,000kcal a day to maintain their weight. If you've now reached a healthy weight, you may want to increase your calorie intake. But do it by small amounts to avoid putting on weight again and remember to keep active.

More to lose? Here's how

Over these last 12 weeks, we hope you've picked up the skills to help you make healthier food choices and be more active.

If you still need to lose weight, keep using the weekly chart to track your calories and exercise.

You could also use the [BMI calculator](#) to check that the daily calorie target you've been sticking to until now is still appropriate.

Losing weight the healthy way is a gradual process. If you're feeling frustrated at the rate of your progress, believe that even a small amount of weight loss is a success in itself.

It means that you've managed to stop putting on weight and you're starting to change your lifestyle for the better. You're heading in the right direction. So well done and keep going!

Remember you're not alone. To get advice and find out how fellow



12-weekers have done on the plan, you can always visit the weight loss forum.

If you feel the need for some professional advice, your GP, practice nurse or a dietitian can help. They can help assess your diet and activity levels, set goals for change and monitor your progress.

Alternatively, try attending a local weight loss group. In some areas, you may be referred by your GP. You may also be referred to a local active health team, under the supervision of a qualified fitness trainer.

Stick with it

Over the course of the past 12 weeks, we've helped you get into the habit of eating healthier and taking regular activity. Now you need to stick with it.

Changing habits of a lifetime isn't easy and can be quickly undone, so you'll need to remain extra vigilant over the next few weeks to embed those changes.

You'll have ups and downs, lapses, moments of weakness. We all do. But the quicker you get back on track, the smaller the impact of a slip-up will be.

Find a dietitian

Registered dietitians are experts in diet and nutrition. They can provide advice on all aspects of eating and diet. You can find one:

- by contacting your local hospital or GP surgery
- by searching for a freelance dietitian on dietitiansunlimited.co.uk, which is associated with the British Dietetic Association
- through the Health and Care Professions Council - www.hcpc-uk.org.



Weight loss forum

Keep using the weight loss forum to get help, support and motivation to continue losing weight or to help other 12-weekers on their own weight loss journey.

nhsweightloss.healthunlocked.com

Week 12 food and activity chart



Mon **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

| Food | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Total calories: | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!		Oops!	
Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks		Unplanned snacks or drinks	
Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity		Activity	
Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:		Total minutes:	
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
Aerobic exercise	mins										
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