



**Small**  
changes

**big**



Public Health  
Agency

**benefits**

## Did you know that almost 6 out of 10 adults in Northern Ireland weigh too much?

Being overweight increases the risk of health problems, including heart disease, some cancers, diabetes and raised blood pressure. It also aggravates other problems, like arthritis, joint pain, breathing difficulties and snoring. Even a small weight loss of 5-10kg (approximately 1-1½ stones) can help to reduce many of these problems. Research shows that the best way to lose weight – and to keep it off – is to do it gradually by making small, long-term changes to what you eat and being more active every day.

### Do I need to lose weight?



A good way to find out is by checking your waist measurement. Storing fat around your middle increases the risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Measuring your waist is an easy way of finding out whether you are at increased risk. Find the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips and measure half way between the two (often this will be at tummy button level).

Use the table below to see if you are at risk of health problems. Remember these measurements refer to adults.

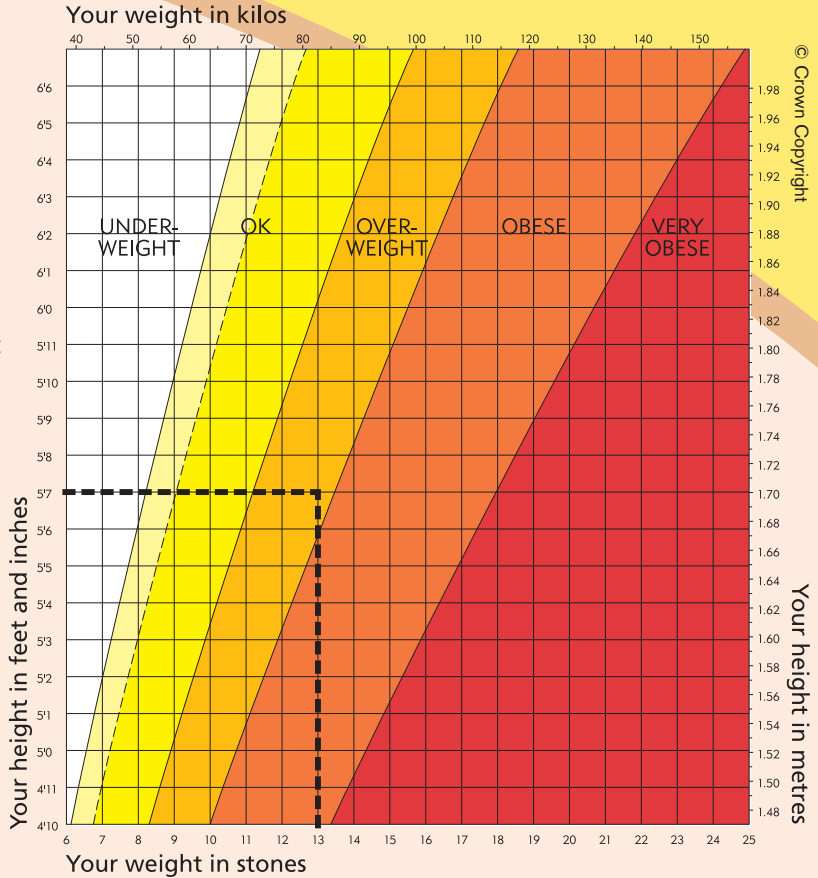
Waist measurement for:	at increased risk	at high risk
Men	94cm (37 inches)	102cm (40 inches)
Asian men	90cm (36 inches)	
Women	80cm (32 inches)	88cm (35 inches)

Your overall weight in relation to your height is also important. Check your height and weight against the chart opposite.

# Check out your weight

To find out if you could benefit from losing a few pounds (or kilograms), check your height and weight against the chart.

The dotted line shows that a person who is 5' 7" tall and weighs 13 stones is overweight.



## How did you score?



Underweight – you may need to put on weight by eating more.



OK – you are a healthy weight and you should aim to stay that way.



Overweight – you need make sure that your weight does not continue to rise and to try to lose some weight if you can.



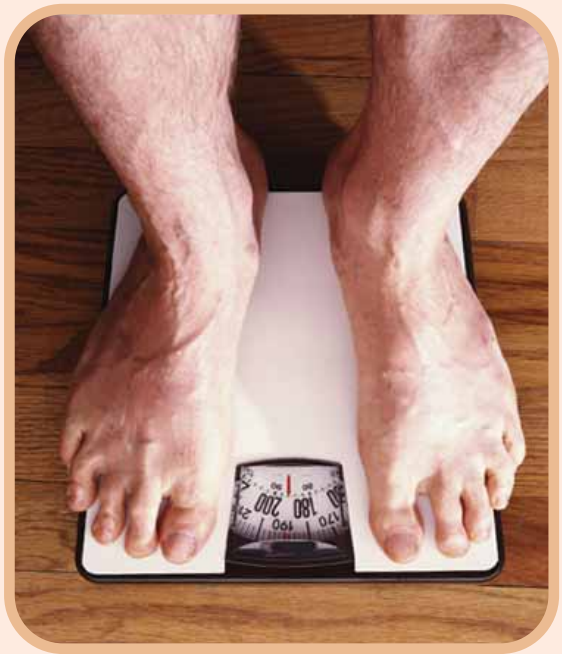
Obese or very obese – your health is at risk and you need to lose weight.

Many people find that they gradually gain weight without realising it over a number of months or even years. Others may find they are likely to gain weight at a particular time, for example after they have stopped smoking or after having children. Losing weight has very important health benefits, but even stopping further weight gain will be helpful.

## So how can I lose weight?

If you decide you do need to lose weight then start by taking a look at what you eat. You don't need special weight loss foods, drinks or diets. Use the following points to help you get started.

- Keep a food diary. Write down everything you eat and drink for two days. Do you eat regularly or do you tend to skip meals and then eat a lot later to make up for it?
- Compare what you have recorded with the eatwell plate (see opposite). This picture shows us the different food groups and the proportions of food from each of these groups that we should aim to eat. For example, the majority of foods we eat should come from the fruit and vegetable food group, and the bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods group.
- Have you recorded foods from the five food groups? How do the amounts compare with the proportions on the eatwell plate?



Most people in Northern Ireland eat too few foods from the fruit and vegetable group, and too many from the foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar.

# The eatwell plate



Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



**Fruit and vegetables** – eat at least five portions a day. This includes fresh, frozen, dried, canned and juiced varieties. Don't add butter, margarine or creamy sauces to cooked vegetables or use mayonnaise or salad cream on salads.



**Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods** – eat some foods from this group at every meal, but don't fry them or add butter, margarine or creamy sauces. The higher fibre versions (eg wholemeal or wheaten bread, brown rice or pasta, wholegrain breakfast cereals) are more satisfying so they'll help stop you feeling hungry.



**Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein** – eat moderate amounts of foods from this group. Try to use cooking methods which don't add extra fat, eg grilling, stewing, dry roasting, casseroles, or microwaving. Avoid fatty meats and try to eat fewer processed meat products, like sausages, sausage rolls and burgers.



**Milk and dairy foods** – choose lower fat versions of these foods, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, low fat yogurts and lower fat cheeses, such as Edam, cottage cheese and reduced fat cheddar.



**Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar** – try to eat these foods less often and in small amounts. Use butter, margarine or low fat spreads sparingly on bread and don't add them to cooked vegetables or potatoes. Avoid fried food. Have hot drinks without sugar or use an artificial sweetener if necessary.



## Setting targets

Once you have identified some things you need to change, change just two or three things to begin with. Set yourself a few realistic targets that you will be able to stick to, for example:

- eat an extra portion of fruit and vegetables every day;
- swap deep fried chips for oven chips;
- change from white bread to wholemeal or granary.

Here are some simple alternatives to reduce calorie and fat consumption in your lunchtime choices:

Replace	With	Save
Chocolate caramel biscuit (62g)	Plain scone	80 calories and 7.5g fat
Can of sugary drink	Bottle of water	140 calories
1 pint whole milk	1 pint skimmed milk	200 calories and 22g fat
Packet of cheese and onion crisps (35g)	Apple	130 calories and 11.5g fat
Ham and cheese toasted sandwich	Chicken salad sandwich	162 calories and 15.5 g fat
Small packet of salted peanuts	2 crispbreads with low fat soft cheese and 1 sliced tomato	200 calories and 20g fat.

## Getting active

Now think about how you can be more active each day. This doesn't have to involve running a marathon or joining a gym. Some suggestions include:

- go for a walk either in your lunch break or when the kids are at school;
- get off the bus a stop earlier and walk the rest;
- take the stairs instead of the lift.

Aim for 30 minutes moderate activity most days. You don't have to do it all in one go – three 10 minute sessions are just as good.



## Keep going!

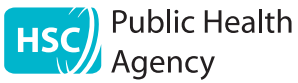
Once you've set your targets, then **keep going!** It's what you do most days that really matters, so if you eat too much or don't exercise on any one day, it doesn't matter too much. Just accept it and get back to your new way of eating and being more active.

Weigh yourself once a fortnight on the same scales and keep a record of your progress. Aim to lose between 1–2 pounds each week, that's approximately 0.5–1kg. It doesn't sound like very much, but within two months you could have lost as much as 1 stone.

## Top ten tips!

- Short-term or quick-fix diets are not a good idea – you need to make changes you can keep to long-term.
- Eat regularly – aim to have three meals each day. If you skip meals, you're likely to eat a lot more later to make up for it.
- Eat meals slowly and enjoy them.
- Plan your meals in advance and don't shop for food when you are hungry. Make a list and stick to it – you'll save money and avoid impulse ready-to-eat purchases that are often high in fat and sugar.
- Watch out for hidden and unnecessary fats – grill foods instead of frying, and if you do fry, try to use less oil or use a spray oil.
- Find odd jobs to do between meals to avoid nibbling, or go for a walk.
- Alcohol is high in calories, so try to drink less – or opt for water, fruit juice or sugar-free soft drinks.
- Be as active as possible, as often as you can – aim for at least 30 minutes most days. Walking, swimming and cycling are all good, and you can also try to build more activity into your daily routine.
- It can be more fun to exercise with a partner or friend.
- Remember you probably put the extra weight on over several months or even years, so don't expect it to come off overnight!





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