

Over 60? How to maintain a healthy weight as you age

Age often brings wisdom, experience, and for many people, some body weight changes that might affect their health over time.

Maintaining a healthy weight is important throughout life, but as a person gets older, it can be harder to keep extra pounds off. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says obesity prevalence was 44.3 percent among adults between the ages of 40 and 59 in May 2024. Obesity prevalence was 51.5 percent for people aged 60 and older. According to a report from the Government of Canada, 40.1 percent of seniors are overweight, and 28.1 percent are obese. Yet some older adults also are underweight and struggle to keep weight on.

It's important to note that a healthy weight for one age group may not be the same for another. Verywell Health says a healthy weight and BMI range for adults over age 65 could translate into carrying extra pounds. The National Institutes of Health says a BMI of 25 to 27, which normally is considered overweight, may offer benefits to adults over the age of 65 by way of bone health side effects that protect against osteoporosis. Some studies also indicate that being underweight can increase risk of disability, dementia and even cancer or heart failure.

Before one binges at the all-you-can-eat buffet, it is important to discuss weight with a doctor and develop a customized plan that takes individual variables, including age, into consideration. In addition, these tips can help people maintain a healthy weight.

? Spread out smaller meals

Eat five to six small meals per day to help with digestion and circumvent slower metabolism. Eating smaller meals also may help seniors who find they don't have appetites and push away food.

? Vary the foods you eat

Eat more vegetables, whole grains, fish, beans, and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Try to keep meat and poultry lean, only splurging on fattier cuts once in a while.

? Watch empty calories

Empty calories come from sugars, sugary beverages and processed foods with little or no nutritional value, indicates WebMD. Instead, when choosing calories, look for whole, nutritional foods.

? Eat more protein

Older adults are at risk of losing muscle mass, so protein is essential. Protein also helps a person feel fuller longer, which can help with avoiding eating empty calories or overeating in general.

? Consume extra fiber

As a person gets older, fibre can help prevent constipation, colorectal cancer and hemorrhoids. Whole-grain fibre also reduces the risk of heart disease. In addition, whole grain fibre is filling, which can help with weight control.

? Exercise daily

Weight loss involves a formula in which more calories are burned than consumed. For those who need to shed some pounds, increasing physical activity through low-impact exercise can help. Bike riding, swimming, pickleball, yoga, and other activities can be beneficial.

A registered dietician can help people develop eating and exercise plans that will help them achieve and maintain a healthy weight.