

How to lose Weight options



Option area	Options	Benefits	Serious Harms and Side Effects
Prevent weight gain	Avoid gaining the average of 0.8kg that most adults gain each year	Maintaining weight over 4 years reduces diabetes by 13% May be more realistic for many adults	None
Exercise - as good as giving up smoking in providing health benefits - If you start at 50, within 10 years you will have the same health benefits that you would have had for always being active	Ideally 30 minutes of exercise 5 days a week. OK to start and stop several times. Start with activity that increases breathing but allows conversation.	30% less deaths 30% less heart attacks 40% less diabetes Maintains weight 50% less hip fractures Helps and prevents arthritis 40% less bowel and 20% less breast cancer Good for mental health	Almost none
	5 minutes of intensive exercise 5 times a week	Many believe that high intensity exercise is almost as good for weight and avoiding heart attacks and strokes, as longer bouts of activity. Early evidence backs this up	Almost none
Diet Most diets are effective but will only work in the long term if they are doable The very low calorie diet is a short term diet and should usually be done with the support of a dietician It's fine to combine diets or to change between them. This can make dieting doable. Consider getting help such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to help with other emotional health problems linked with being overweight. Don't forget the calories in alcohol. Please see the alcohol options tool.	Fruit and vegetables	5% decrease in all risk mortality with each portion of fruit and veg up to 5	Almost none
	Dietary fibre Especially cereal and whole grains. Linseed/ Flaxseed.	25% reduction in relative risk of mortality after MI, even more benefit before MI	Almost none
	Fast diet (5 and 2 diet) - good for those who are bad at sticking to a diet - men 2 days of <600 calories, women <500 calories	You should lose around 11lb (0.46kg) a week. Improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and insulin sensitivity.	Safe unless you have anorexia or bulimia. Unproven unless you are overweight.
	Mediterranean diet - includes healthy oils, nuts, cereals, seeds and fish	NNT 61 for five years to prevent one heart attack, stroke or death. NNT 18 if you have already had a heart attack.	Safe
	Low Glycaemic Index diet - good for keeping you full longer and preventing sugar and insulin peaks and hunger afterwards	Reduces average blood sugar readings by 0.5 and recommended for type 2 diabetes treatment and prevention	Safe
	Very low calorie diets - only for 12 weeks - less than 800 calories daily - needs medical and dietitian support	Effective for short term weight loss but you will need help to sustain your weight loss	Nutritional deficiencies and heart problems if used for longer than 12 weeks tiredness and low energy
Medication	Orlistat capsules	NNT 6 in one year for a 10% weight loss.	Looser stool and possible incontinence of stool, especially when eating fatty foods.
	Metformin - usually in type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes and polycystic ovary syndrome	Prevent diabetes and promotes normal menstrual cycle. Helps with weight maintenance.	Looser stool, nausea and occasionally abdominal discomfort (lower the dose)
	GLP-1 agonists and SGLT2 inhibitors - only for type 2 diabetes	Uncertain	Nausea, diarrhoea or urinary tract infections
Bariatric surgery	Suitable for BMI 35+ with severe co-morbidities (e.g. heart attack), or BMI 40+	NNT 77 in 10 years for one death saved Resolves: 77% diabetes; 79% high lipids; 62% high blood pressure; 86% sleep apnoea 50% reduction in heart attacks and cancer in 7 years. Become less depressed and more mobile.	13/100 have some complication of surgery. Includes infections, bleeding or clots. Most of these are reversible.
Benefits of weight loss	15+ kg loss	Makes diabetes go away in most people with diabetes	Skin folds that might need treatment or even surgery
	5+ kg loss	Prevents pre-diabetes becoming diabetes	None