



## Changing Behavior: Strategies for Success

Now that you know how to eat more nutritiously and how to include more exercise, you must learn the "whys," or the behavioral reasons, that cause you to gain weight or overeat. Many people know how to lose weight, but it's following through on it that becomes a problem. Behavioral choices and internal and external cues greatly influence our eating habits.

Making some key changes in your lifestyle can put you on the right track for losing weight and keeping it off for good.

**Set realistic goals.** Losing as little as 10% of your body weight can yield substantial health benefits and improve your appearance, so don't reach for the moon! Shoot for modest weight loss and use your success as motivation to continue on your road to a healthy weight.

**Gather the troops.** Studies show that people who have the support of family and friends are more successful in changing behaviors. Enlist your family and friends to help you make positive changes in your diet and exercise habits.

**Keep it small and simple.** Set realistic short-term goals in addition to big ones. Start with a few small changes in diet or activity — don't try to do everything at once.

**Eat without distractions.** Make it a rule at home to eat only at the kitchen or dining room table. Avoid watching television, working on the computer, or talking on the phone while eating. Engaging in other activities while eating interferes with your awareness of feeling full.

**Don't skip meals, but do include snacks.** Be sure to space your eating throughout the day to prevent getting too hungry. Small, frequent meals along with low-fat snacks like fruits and vegetables.

**Recognize eating cues not related to hunger.** Pay attention to the triggers that encourage you to eat when you're not hungry and work on ways to change them. For example, if you're tempted by high-calorie snacks in plain view at home or in the office, ask your family or co-workers to keep them out of sight.

**Record your progress.** Keep a food diary to track the foods and beverages you consume throughout the day. Do the same for your exercise and activities a diary can help keep you focused on your goals and keep you aware of your progress. Tracking your progress can help keep you motivated and encouraged to continue.

**Reward your success.** Give yourself a series of non-food rewards for achieving your weekly or monthly goals. Small rewards are more effective in motivating you along the way than striving toward a bigger reward — like buying an entirely new wardrobe — at the end. Treat yourself to a movie after work, a manicure or pedicure, a new award-winning book or film, or a beautiful travel magazine — whatever makes you feel especially good. Buy yourself new sneakers or workout clothes. These rewards may help keep you motivated to stay on track with your workout program.