



**BC Cancer Agency**

CARE & RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

## ONCOLOGY NUTRITION

### **Achieving a Healthy Body Weight:**

Community Services & Programs

#### **WEIGHT LOSS or MAINTENANCE:**

The following advice and list of services are aimed at achieving weight loss and long-term maintenance of a healthy body weight after completion of cancer treatment. Weight loss, even if you are overweight is *not recommended during cancer treatment*.

#### **What Is A Healthy Weight?:**

A healthy weight is defined for persons 18 to 64 years of age as a *Body Mass Index* (BMI) in the range of 18.5 to 24.9. For persons 65 years and older the normal range may begin slightly above a BMI of 18.5 and extend up to 29.9. It is calculated based on your height and weight using the equation: weight (in kg) divided by your height (in meters<sup>2</sup>). For example if you are 45 years of age and are 5'5" tall (1.65 m), and weigh 130 pounds (59 kg), your BMI is 22 (and within the recommended range). There are health risks with a BMI below 18.5 and above 25.0. If your BMI is higher than recommended, *or* if your waist circumference is greater than 88 cm (35 inches) for women and 102 cm (40 inches) for men, weight loss is recommended.

*(Note: 1 inch = 2.54 cm and 1 pound = .45 kg).*

#### **Healthy Weight Loss:**

Slow, steady weight loss is recommended to achieve a healthy body weight. A safe and healthy rate of weight loss is gradual, in the range of 1-2 pounds (0.5-1 kg) per week. For example, it would take between 2 and 5 months to safely lose about 20 pounds.

#### **REGISTERED DIETITIAN SERVICES:**

Consider the services of a Registered Dietitian to assist with weight loss.

#### **How to Find a Dietitian:**

Contact Dial-a-Dietitian (604-732-9191 or toll free 1-800-667-3438), a free phone service for BC residents, staffed by registered dietitians. Service available in Punjabi and Chinese. Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm. Internet website:

[www.dialadietitan.org](http://www.dialadietitan.org)

This service can provide:

- a) general nutrition information on weight management, and
- b) referral to other resources.

Dietitians at outpatient clinics in some hospitals offer nutrition counseling for weight management, when referred by a doctor. This service is covered by Medical Services Plan (MSP). The Nutrition Department in your local hospital could be contacted for resources in your area if counseling is not available.

Dietitians in consulting or private practice offer nutrition counseling for weight management. A doctor's referral is not required. The cost is not covered by Medical Services Plan (MSP), but may be reimbursed with extended health coverage.

**Shop Smart Tours:**

Internet Website: [www.saveonfoods.com](http://www.saveonfoods.com)

Telephone contact: 1-800-448-2118 for information, tour dates and times at a location in your area.

- *Free service* for Save-On-More club card holders, and a \$20.00 cost for Non-members (note: it is free to obtain a club card)
- Led by a Registered Dietitian
- 60-90 minute aisle-by-aisle grocery shopping tour focusing on healthy eating choices and new food products
- Register at the Customer Service Counter of your local store

**COMMERCIAL WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAMS:**

The Yellow Pages Directory of the phone book provides a list of fee-for-service weight loss programs under 'Weight Control Services'. The programs most recommended are those that encourage healthy eating (versus dieting) and regular exercise, and those that address behaviours/habits that contribute to weight gain. Programs least recommended are those that have unrealistic and/or restrictive diets, or require the purchase of specialty foods or meal replacements. The additional cost of these products does not ensure weight loss and generally do not teach skills for successful long-term weight loss. Many people who can afford the specialized meals may initially lose weight, but are dependent on the use of products for keeping the weight off.

**Weight Watchers of British Columbia, Inc:**

Vancouver (604) 434-2134 and toll free outside Vancouver 1-800-682-8011

- Offers a variety of programs focused on lifestyle change and group support
- Registration fee (\$44) and weekly meeting fees (\$14) apply
- Call for more information on other fees, meeting times and locations

## **SUPPORT GROUPS & PROGRAMS:**

*Maintaining* a healthy body weight after losing weight can be as difficult as losing the weight itself. Long-term commitment to a healthy eating program and regular exercise is essential to losing and maintaining weight. Some people may find support groups of value, while others may prefer the services of a dietitian or physician, or support from family or friends. In any case, having support and some way to monitor your progress is recommended to avoid regaining the weight you have lost.

Contact the following weight loss support groups for more information:

### **TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly):**

Call (604) 271-1109 or 1-800-932-8677 for a listing of group leaders and locations

- Non-profit society focusing on group support and education
- Manual cost: \$14, Annual registration: \$25, Meeting fees: \$1.50 per week.

### **Overeaters Anonymous:**

Call the following numbers for information: (604)878-4575 (Lower Mainland); (250) 578-8607 (Southern Interior of BC); (250)385-3038 (Vancouver Island)

- Fellowship of men and women sharing their experience, strength and hope
- 12 step program, focus on recovery from compulsive overeating
- No registration fee

### **HUGS Program:**

Internet website: [www.hugs.com](http://www.hugs.com)

Call 1 (800) 565-4847 for information

- Ten-week program, small group, lead by a facilitator
- To contact a facilitator in your area, please go to the website for information
- Books and videotapes also available for purchase
- Fees vary

### **Body Sense: Life skills for weight management:**

Available from the BC Dairy Foundation, 3236 Beta Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5G 4K4

Telephone contact: (604) 294-3775

- Toll free in BC: (800) 242-MILK (6455), Web site: [www.bcdairyfoundation.ca](http://www.bcdairyfoundation.ca)
- A self-directed program focusing on exercise, behaviour modification and an eating plan. Group formation and support encouraged.
- Cost for the workbook is \$13.91 (includes shipping & handling, and taxes).

## RECOMMENDED READING:

- American Institute for Cancer Research (1998). *A healthy weight for life*. Washington, DC. Can be ordered from website: [aicr.org](http://aicr.org), then go to Brochures.
- The following report is intended for health care providers caring for cancer survivors, but it can also be used directly by survivors and their families. Nutrition and Physical Activity During and After Cancer Treatment: An American Cancer Society Guide for Informed Choices. CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. Volume 53 (Number 5) September/October 2003, pages 268-291. Available at the BC Cancer Agency regional libraries or online at <http://CAonline.AMCancerSoc.org> click 'select an issue', 'September/October 2003'.
- Bailey, C., & Gates, R. (1997). *Smart eating: Choosing wisely, living lean*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hoel, D. (Ed.). (1995). *Skim the fat: A practical & up-to-date food guide*. Minneapolis, MN: Chronimed.
- Kirby, J., & the American Dietetics Association. (1998). *Dieting for dummies*. Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide.
- Omichinski, L. (1993). *You count, calories don't*. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Limited. To order, call toll free: 1-800-565-4847 (HUGS).
- Omichinski, L., & Hildebrand, H. W. (1995). *Tailoring your tastes*. Winnipeg, MB: Tamos Books Inc. To order, contact: HUGS International Inc., Box 102A, RR#3, Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 3A3, Toll free: 1-800-565-4847, Fax: (204) 428-5072, Web site: [www.hugs.com](http://www.hugs.com).
- Thomas, P. R. (Eds.). (1995). *Weighing the options: Criteria for evaluating weight-management programs*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. To order, contact: National Academy Press, Toll free: 1-888-624-8373, Web site: [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu)
- Toews, J., & Parton, N. (1998). *Never say diet 7 days a week!* Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books Limited. To order, contact: Key Porter Books Limited, 70 The Esplanade, Toronto, ON M5E 1R2, Web site: [www.keyporter.com](http://www.keyporter.com).
- Toews, J., & Parton, N. (1998). *Never say diet!* Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books Limited. To order, contact: Key Porter Books Limited, 70 The Esplanade, Toronto, ON M5E 1R2, Web site: [www.keyporter.com](http://www.keyporter.com).

## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:

- [www.bchealthguide.org](http://www.bchealthguide.org) type in your postal code and then 'weight management' on the next page. This website provides information on a healthy body weight, helps you assess your eating habits, provides tools for change and links for more information.
- [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca) click on 'Eat Well, Live Well', then click 'FAQ' and then 'Healthy weights'. This website will help you analyze your diet as well as give tips on healthy body weights, how much to lose and how to control your weight.
- [www.5to10aday.com](http://www.5to10aday.com) click on 'English' or 'Francais', then click on "How" for tips on how to add healthy eating tips including how to add fruit and vegetables to meal and snack times, and also time and money saving tips.
- [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/) click on 'english' or 'français', then click on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.
- [www.becelcanada.com](http://www.becelcanada.com) Although the focus is on heart healthy eating, this website can help you compare your diet to the Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating recommendations, as well as give tips for meal planning, shopping and recipes.
- [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) type 'nutrient value of some common foods'
- [www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition](http://www.healthcanada.ca/nutrition) For information on a healthy body weight and how to calculate your body mass index, click 'Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults', or other related links.
- [www.nalusda.gov/fnic](http://www.nalusda.gov/fnic) click 'food composition'  
Both of these websites contain detailed nutrient content (e.g. calories, protein, fat, carbohydrate, fibre and vitamins and minerals) for some common foods. These tools may be helpful if you need a more detailed analysis of a food.

## **RAPID WEIGHT LOSS AND QUICK FIXES:**

Rapid weight loss through "crash" dieting or fasting can result in dehydration and loss of muscle and bone mass. In addition, extreme low calorie diets are too restrictive to follow for long periods of time, and as a result, most people who lose weight in this manner simply regain the weight when they return to their usual eating habits.

Repeated weight loss and weight gain *may* have health risks. If you are overweight it is recommended that you maintain your current weight and avoid further weight gain, rather than repeatedly losing and gaining weight. "Weight cycling" as it is called, may contribute to lowering metabolic rate and losses in muscle and bone mass, making it unhealthy and perhaps more difficult to lose weight in the future.

### **Over-the-counter weight loss products and prescription medications:**

Weight loss products are widely available, in the form of pills and powders. Unfortunately, they generally lack information on their safety or effectiveness and can have considerable financial and psychological costs. Some of these products have fraudulent claims of instant success or dramatic results that are not achievable (or safe) for most people. Their popularity is due more to the hope that they will work rather than a track record of success. If the product claims sound "too good to be true", it probably is.

Use of prescription medications to achieve weight loss is effective in limited cases. Weight loss products and medications are *not a substitute* for lifestyle changes, and they are not a "magic bullet". Anyone considering the use of products or medications to assist with weight loss is still required to eat sensibly and be physically active. If weight loss products or medications are being considered, consult your physician for further information and supervision during their use.

### **Popular diets:**

More than ever before there are new and revised diets promising weight loss. While there are far too many diets to review here, there are some general guidelines in evaluating popular diets. The following internet website provides information on "how to spot a popular diet".

The website is:

- American Dietetic Association (ADA)  
[www.eatright.org/Public/NutritionInformation/92\\_nfs0200b.cfm](http://www.eatright.org/Public/NutritionInformation/92_nfs0200b.cfm),

The success with some popular diets may be the result of simply paying attention to what is eaten, and as a result eating fewer than normal calories. To help to evaluate a new diet or weight loss program, consult with a registered dietitian (see How to Find a Dietitian above).

## **EXERCISE:**

Participation in regular exercise is *essential* to weight loss and maintenance. There is no other way around it. The key is to choose physical activity as part of your lifestyle (eg. walking to work, taking the stairs) or exercise that is appealing to you.

Exercise has numerous benefits. It increases the success of any weight loss program and allows participants to eat a more realistic and balanced diet while still losing weight. Exercise also reduces the loss of muscle and bone, and prevents the decrease in metabolic rate that occurs with dieting alone. Most people also experience improved energy and vitality, better sleep and feel improvements in mood and mild depression.

The following services are available in the community to promote regular physical activity, to achieve weight loss and long-term maintenance of a healthy body weight:

### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:**

- ❖ Commercial exercise gyms
- ❖ Community centres (offering exercise classes, swimming pool, weight room, etc)
- ❖ Employee wellness centres/programs
- ❖ Activity Clubs (eg. walking, running, cycling, hiking)
- ❖ University Programs
- ❖ Community continuing education programs (eg. exercise classes, yoga, etc.)

### **EXERCISE GUIDE:**

A copy of the Canadian Physical Activity Guide is available at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/paguide](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/paguide)

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This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or individual consultation with a registered dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety.