

# HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN

because prevention is better than cure

## Losing weight



*“Keeping a healthy weight can help cut your risk of cancer and other serious diseases. The good news is that small changes to your lifestyle that you keep up over time can make a real difference.”*

Cancer Research UK

### Did you know?

According to the NHs, most people who need to lose weight can get health benefits from losing even a small amount (about 5%) of their weight if they keep it off.

### Find a personal motivation

Whether it's losing weight for a key life event, wanting to fit into a particular item of clothing, or to climb a set of stairs without feeling

puffed out, personal motivations are important. Research in the USA concluded that if individuals fully endorse weight loss-related behavioural goals and feel not just competent but also autonomous about reaching them, their efforts are more likely to result in long-lasting behaviour change.

### **The importance of positive relationships**

Your relationships are important when it comes to maintaining a healthy weight. A study with 50 female participants revealed that those experiencing more stressful interpersonal tensions had higher levels of the hormone ghrelin, which stimulates appetite, and lower levels of leptin, which suppresses appetite. Those who were experiencing higher levels of interpersonal stress also ate a higher calorie diet.

### **Set SMART goals and measure success**

One study found that self-monitoring activities such as self-weigh-in, daily steps, high-intensity activity, and persistent food logging were significant predictors of weight loss during a 6-month intervention. Try the NHS *Losing Weight: Getting Started* guide if you're not sure where to start with weight loss and goal setting.

### **Find options that work for you**

Find accessible ways to stay on track. A UK study of 128 overweight volunteers published in 2017 showed that participants using the smartphone app (My Meal Mate) lost more weight than those using a website or paper diary, and stuck to the trial for longer. And *Good Housekeeping* has a useful guide to portion size. Vegetables should be the size of your hand, with your fingers wide open, Fruit and carbs the size of your fist (or a tennis ball), Protein the size of your cupped palm, and Fat (like butter) the size of your fingertip.

### **Find support from people around you**

Weight loss can take patience, time and dedication but research suggests people are more likely to achieve their weight loss goals and sustain them over time, with the support of family and friends.

## Be flexible to stay on track

In a 2014 research paper entitled *Can we say what diet is best for health?* researchers compared the medical evidence for and against every mainstream diet. The paper concluded that diets constituting rigid principles and strict food groups are not effective. The weight of evidence strongly suggests that eating natural, nourishing food is the best thing you can do to be healthy, prevent disease and lose weight.

## Case study

The NHS reports that Stephanie lost 9.2kg (1.4st) on the NHS 12-week weight loss plan. She says the plan helped her to develop healthier habits such as eating healthily, having smaller portions and exercising regularly.

*Naomi Adams, December 2019*