

## 5 Ways to Work Toward a Healthy Weight

Many of us think of the New Year as a time to reflect and regroup, and to resolve to put new energy into working toward goals. If losing weight is on your to-do list this year, here are 5 things that you can do **right now** to get back on track.

### 1. Keep a food and activity log so you know exactly how much you are eating and exercising

Successful dieters keep records. They know what they ate, when they were able to exercise, what foods they chose when they went food shopping, and what kinds of barriers they run into in trying to lose weight. It's a lot easier to identify problem areas and to strategize a solution when it's written down. Prefer paperless? Investigate one of the many phone apps and websites (like [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)) that allow users to track meals and exercise and monitor progress.

### 2. Have an honest conversation with yourself about portion control

Over the next few days, try to measure out all foods, and compare what you usually eat with the serving size on the food package. Are you actually eating one serving of cereal, or several? How much pasta is your usual serving? The difference between losing weight and staying put is usually in the calories that we don't keep track of. Not sure how much is a serving? Check the guide on [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov).



### 3. Have another conversation with yourself—about exercise

It's hard to lose weight by dieting alone; most of us need the metabolism boost from regular exercise. The goal is 30 minutes on most days; if time is short break, it into 10- or 15-minute sessions. Walkers slowed by the cold can look for inside options, like an exercise DVD. How important is this step? An estimated 90% of the participants of the National Weight Control Registry—a database of adults who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for at least a year—report that they exercise on most days.

### 4. Have a family meeting to talk about what kinds of food come into the house

Ask everyone to rethink how often they buy high-calorie foods—like soda, chips and ice cream—that can be hard for a dieter to avoid. Pick a time other than dinner or when everyone is tired or hungry; after breakfast on a weekend might work. Some family members may not be willing to give up their favorite snack foods, but at least get the conversation started.

### 5. Take a close look at how much fat you are eating

We're usually so focused on carbs that we forget to look at the fat, but fat is the most concentrated source of calories. One serving adds 45 calories, and that's equal to 1 tsp of butter or margarine, 1 Tbsp low-fat mayo, or 2 Tbsp low-fat salad dressing. Also mind the calories in other foods that add fat to the diet, like nuts, cheese, lunch meat, ice cream, and fried foods.

*Jean Baker, MS, is a registered dietitian at Speare Memorial Hospital. She can be reached at (603) 238-6472.*