

GEHA's Top 10 Tools

for

Weight Management





Maintaining a healthy weight is an important part of your overall healthy lifestyle. But weight management isn't a short-term project. Keeping yourself at a healthy weight requires a life-long commitment.

You can find hundreds of weight management tips, tools and techniques from hundreds of health and wellness resources. So, how do you choose what will work for you? Typically, the easiest-to-use weight management tools are the most effective in the long term ... because you'll use them long-term.

GEHA's Top 10 Tools for Weight Management e-book can give you a good start on your life-long weight management program. Each of our suggestions is readily accessible, inexpensive and easy to use.

Ask your health care provider to help you decide what your healthy weight range should be and how to achieve that weight. Then incorporate some or all of our top picks to help yourself on your way to a healthier lifestyle!

— Jim Ebberts, M.D.
GEHA Medical Director

This guide, *GEHA's Top 10 Tools for Weight Management*, is not intended as professional medical advice. Consult with your physician before beginning any health, dietary or fitness routine or before incorporating changes or additions to your current health care management program.



1. Breakfast

Your mother, the American Dietetic Association and the American Heart Association all agree: breakfast is the most important meal of the day. After eight to 12 hours without a meal, we need to refuel our bodies to generate energy for daily activities – both physical and mental.

Contrary to what many believe, skipping breakfast isn't a good way to lose or maintain weight:

- The Calorie Control Council reports that those who skip breakfast have four times the obesity rate as those who enjoy a healthy breakfast each day.
- Studies show that breakfast-eaters tend to have more nutritious diets and consume less overall fat during the day than do breakfast-skippers.
- Fueling up with fiber-rich foods and protein in the morning may keep you from binging on junk food later in the day.

What's the best way to rev up your morning metabolism? Go for whole grains, protein, fruits and vegetables – and skip the donuts and sugar-laden cereals.

Breakfast Bonuses:

- **American Heart Association studies show that people who eat breakfast every day may have less risk not only of obesity, but also of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.**
- **School breakfast programs make a difference in learning. Studies indicate higher academic achievement, fewer behavior problems and higher rates of school attendance among children participating in school breakfast programs.***

*** Sources: Food Research and Action Center; Massachusetts General Hospital**



2. Measuring Cups & Spoons

Whether size is a symbol of success or we're just determined to get more for our money, "bigger is better" tends to be an American mindset. Except, of course, when it comes to cell phones, cameras and body weight.

Desperate dieters eagerly try hundreds of weight-loss plans. Yet, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that the average American eats 148 calories more per day now than 20 years ago – which could add up to an extra 15 pounds of weight per person each year!

Over-large food portion sizes may contribute to our growing girth. But here's an easy way to help you keep from ending up super-sized: use measuring cups and spoons.

Should You Share?

Convenience-sized food packaging is ... well, convenient! But before you sip that soup, munch on muffins or polish off the pretzels – read the label. If the number following the words "Servings per package" isn't "1" ... by all means, share! Even that itty-bitty can of beans might be two servings.

- First, learn what constitutes a serving size for each food or beverage. For instance, a serving of raw, leafy vegetables is one cup; a serving of cooked vegetables is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. One serving of pasta is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup – not the two or more cups you may be served at a restaurant. A serving of milk is one cup, not whatever your glass will hold. Go to [serving sizes](#) for a quick overview of the basic food groups.
- Start by measuring all your food and beverages – don't just estimate. You may be surprised at what $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dry cereal looks like in your bowl, or how much toast a one-teaspoon serving of margarine covers.
- Once you're familiar with what a serving size looks like on your plate, you may be able to manage your servings without measuring. But keep the measuring cups and spoons handy and check yourself once in a while to make sure you stay on track.



3. Food Diary

You think you eat a nutritious, low-cal diet. You work out nearly every day. But that extra weight just won't budge – or you keep gaining. What's the answer?

Put it in writing. Research shows that writing down what you eat – and how much you eat – can actually help you reach and maintain your weight goals. And you may be surprised to see exactly how much you are eating, as opposed to how much you think you're eating. Use this [food diary](#) or come up with your own.

- To get started, keep an accurate log of everything you eat and drink for a week, without changing your eating habits. Be sure to record quantities: two slices of bread, half a cup of ice cream, one cup of green beans, 17 French fries. Don't forget those seven jelly beans, the late-night lemonade and that last heaping spoonful of mashed potatoes left in the bowl.
- Review your food diary, preferably with your health care provider or a nutritionist. Look for any problem areas: how much you eat, your nutritional balance, why you eat – are you hungry, bored or just following a schedule? Decide where you need to make changes.
- With your health care provider or nutritionist's guidance, focus on following a balanced, calorie-appropriate eating plan that can help you reach your weight goals. Write down everything you eat and drink in your food diary – having to see it recorded in black and white may help you decide if you really, really want that third chocolate chip cookie!

Record Your Reps

Add a fitness journal to your food diary. Keep track of miles walked, run or biked; weightlifting repetitions; hours of tennis; minutes of yard work. Any physical activity – even housework – counts toward your weekly fitness goal.

4. Water Bottle



Drink to your health! Water, that is. According to the Mayo Clinic, water makes up about 60% of your body weight. All the cells and organs in your body need water to function properly. And, without water, you could live only for a few days. Even mild dehydration can make you feel tired and thirsty! To make it easier to stay hydrated throughout the day, keep a reusable water bottle on your desk.

Need another big reason to keep that reusable water bottle handy? Water is an indispensable tool in weight management:

- Drinking water may help suppress your appetite. A glass of water may fill you up enough to tide you over to your next planned meal or snack.
- Water helps your body release excess fluids. If you feel like you're "retaining water," you actually may not be drinking enough water.
- If you drink cold water, your body burns calories to bring that water to your body temperature.
- You may actually be thirsty rather than hungry, and water can satisfy your feelings of need.

How Much Water is Enough?

How much water you need each day depends on many factors, including your size, your health, your physical activities and your surroundings. Your health care provider can help you determine your personal needs. While you can get some water from foods and beverages, drinking plain water is the best option to stave off dehydration. Most sources advise that you drink between six and eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day – and more in hot weather or when exercising.



5. Food Pyramid

A nutritious, well-balanced diet is essential to successful weight management. But planning your daily meals to include the right foods in the right amounts can be a challenge. Are you getting enough from the grains group? Is peanut butter a protein or an oil? Does pizza-with-everything include all the food groups? And five-to-nine fruits and vegetables a day – they're kidding, right?

If you're serious about weight control, here's just the help you need: the newly redesigned food pyramid at www.MyPyramid.gov. Use the website to plan your personal diet based on your age, sex and activity level – remember, you're unique, and so are your dietary needs.

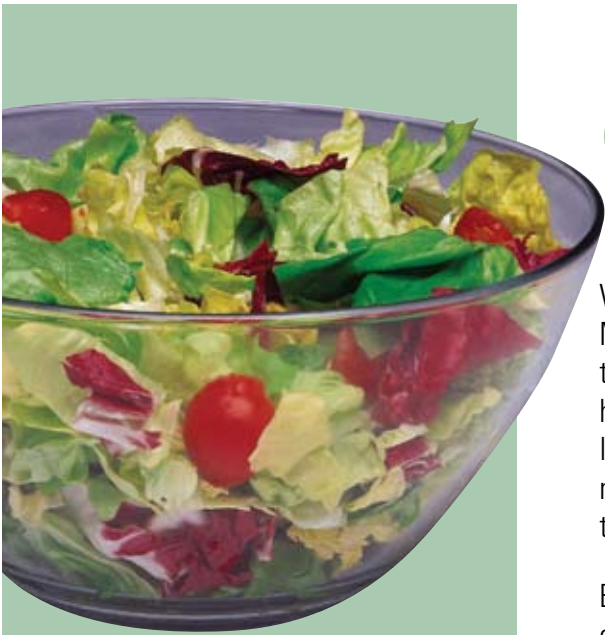
Get Physical

Regular physical activity goes hand-in-hand with a healthy, nutritious diet. Most wellness resources recommend that you get at least 30 minutes a day of moderate or vigorous physical activity in order to reap health benefits. The www.MyPyramid.gov website includes a section on physical activity. Look for information on how much physical activity you need, how many calories you can burn with different activities and how you can increase the physical activity in your day.

- See what's included in each food group: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans, and oils.
- Learn how much of each food is needed, how to make the most nutritious choices and what health benefits you'll enjoy from different foods.
- Find tips on how to fit more fruits and vegetables into your diet.
- Discover how to manage your daily calorie budget to allow for special treats like foods with added sugars, fats or alcohol.

How does your diet stack up today? Gulping coffee and a bagel on the way to work, then grabbing a burger, fries and diet soda at lunch could leave a lot of food groups to cover at dinnertime.

You may want to consult your health care provider or nutritionist to help you set up your personal pyramid plan. Remember, increasing or decreasing your weight or activity level can require changes to your personal eating plan.



6. Healthy Recipes

Warning: that raisin bran muffin may be hazardous to your health. Most likely, if you didn't bake it yourself, it's loaded with sugar and trans fat. As for Aunt Millie's secret-recipe fish fillet: isn't fish a heart-healthy choice? Well, maybe. But you'd do better with broiled, lean beef than with battered and fried fish. And watch out! That nutritious garden salad just became treacherous when you loaded on the croutons and blue cheese dressing.

But don't give up all your favorite foods and handed-down-for-generations dishes. Just do what successful weight managers do: modify your recipes! Look at the ingredients list and see where you can cut calories, lower fat and add fiber.

Click & Cook

The web can be a wonderful free recipe resource. Simply log on and use your search function to request low-fat recipes, low-carb recipes or low-calorie recipes. Some of our favorite recipe sites include www.fitnessandfreebies.com/allrecipes.html and www.caloriecontrol.org/recipes.html. You'll also find recipe sections on government websites like www.nhlbi.nih.gov and www.cdc.gov. Use the search function on those government websites to request "recipes."

- Substitute low-fat or fat-free versions for whole milk, cheese and yogurt.
- Sauté or stir-fry with cooking spray, broth or fruit juice instead of oil.
- Replace all or part of the fat in your favorite muffin recipe with unsweetened applesauce and leave out one-third to one-half the sugar.
- Season fish, poultry and lean meats with herbs and broil or bake instead of frying.
- Try fat-free egg substitutes to reduce the cholesterol content of recipes.
- Load up omelets, soup and meatloaf with chopped veggies.
- Oven bake seasoned potato strips instead of French frying.
- Swap pork sausage for turkey kielbasa and use whole-wheat pasta for your delicious baked lasagna.
- Add beans, dried berries or chopped nuts to salads instead of croutons and bacon bits. And go easy on the dressings; use low fat or fat-free – or try olive oil and vinegar.
- Skip the mayo and bring on the mustard for that turkey sandwich – and pile it high with sliced cucumbers, peppers and onions.

7. Pedometer

What's smaller than a cell phone, counts to 10,000 (or higher!) and may help you improve your waistline? Of course: a pedometer.

Whether you're a gadget-lover or a technophobe, a pedometer could be just the motivator you need to boost your weight-management efforts. Suit yourself with a simple step-only counter or a high-tech model that monitors calories used, distance, stride length and more.

Recent scientific studies indicate that taking 10,000 steps a day can not only help you manage your weight, but also lead to other weight loss-related health benefits like lowering blood pressure, decreasing breast cancer risk and improving blood glucose levels. On average, those 10,000 steps equate to about 4.5 miles.

How many steps do you take in a day? A recent HeartCenterOnline™ report notes that most sedentary people take 4,000 to 6,000 steps a day; however, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Division of Nutrition Research Coordination (DNRC) puts that number at merely 1,000 to 3,000. Why not clip a pedometer to your waistband and find out? If you're well below the mark, commit to adding 1,000 to 2,000 steps a week until you work up to 10,000 or more. Get in the habit of wearing your pedometer every day and challenge yourself to reach your goal.

Easy ways to add steps to your day include:

- Choose the parking space farthest away from the building at work or at the mall.
- Take a walk around the block at lunchtime.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk up the escalator instead of riding.
- Park a couple of blocks away from your children's school and walk to meet them.
- Go to your co-worker's office instead of phoning or emailing.
- Make a daily walking date with a friend or spouse.
- Schedule a walking meeting instead of sitting around the conference table.
- Volunteer to walk the neighbor's dog.
- Dance.



Stepping Out

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises us to get at least 30 minutes a day of moderately intensive physical activity for good health. Walking is one of the easiest ways to achieve that 30-minute target. Be sure to wear comfortable, supportive shoes and walk only in safe areas. And, for walking safety tips, a beginner's walking schedule and walking log, check out GEHA's Healthy Steps Walking Program. Go to: <http://www.geha.com/walking/>



8. Weights

You don't have to become a Mr. Universe look-alike or have the most buff bod in the gym. But the 600+ muscles in your body do have a use-it-or-lose-it feature. The good news for weight management: weight lifting builds muscle, and muscle helps you burn calories more efficiently, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

More good news, from the Mayo Clinic: strength training not only helps you control your weight, it also strengthens your bones, helps prevent injury to your joints by strengthening surrounding muscles, improves your balance and helps you sleep better. Plus, weight lifting helps tone and firm your body – and helps boost your self-esteem.

When you're ready to add weights to your weight management program, remember:

No Weighting

If your health care provider advises you not to use weights, ask about alternative strength training methods. Other options include elastic resistance bands, rubber tubing, stability balls, isometric exercises and strength-enhancing programs like yoga, tai chi and Pilates. Water exercise is often a good choice for people with arthritis; the water provides resistance to help build strength while reducing stress on your joints.

- Studies show that people of any age can benefit from lifting weights. But be sure to talk with your health care provider before you begin any new fitness regimen.
- You can use free weights or exercise machines. Decide which work best for your schedule and your budget.
- Ask a personal trainer or coach to help you set up your weight program. Or, at least follow a good strength-training video or DVD to learn proper technique.
- The American Council on Exercise recommends that you work each major muscle group at least twice a week. But be sure to rest your muscles at least two days between each weight training session.
- Build five to 10 minutes of warm-up and cool-down into your weight training program.
- Make weights part of your overall fitness regimen. Don't substitute strength training for cardiovascular training.
- Don't worry: weight training will not create huge muscles in women. Weights tone and firm women's muscles and help make them stronger.



9. Sleep

Forget the snooze-while-you-lose weight-loss products. But don't forget the role that adequate sleep plays in successful weight management.

Professor Kenneth Goodrick at Baylor College of Medicine suggests that sleep is the primary component in a successful weight management trio of sleep, nutrition and exercise. Too few Zs amount to weight management sabotage: lack of energy may mean you're too tired to exercise and you may reach for high-calorie, high-fat or high-sugar foods for a quick energy boost.

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) also notes the sleep-weight connection in a 2002 poll of U.S. adults. Twenty-five percent of those respondents said that too little sleep overnight led to eating more than usual the next day. And other studies indicate that lack of sleep affects metabolism by altering levels of the appetite hormone cortisol.

If you suspect you have a medical condition like sleep apnea that keeps you from getting a good night's sleep, consult your health care provider. Otherwise, fluff up your pillow, turn out the lights and follow these tips to dreamland:

- Follow a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at about the same time each day, including weekends. "Sleeping in" can upset your body's biological sleep clock.
- Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillow with proper support. Make sure the mattress is appropriate for your size.
- Do away with distractions: turn off the TV and muffle the music. Keep your sleep area cool, dark and quiet.
- Eat earlier in the evening so you don't go to bed on a full stomach. But don't go to bed hungry!
- Cut back on caffeine and alcohol and don't smoke. Those three culprits can make falling to sleep more difficult and cause more sleep interruptions.
- Exercise daily, but do so several hours before bedtime.
- Put your worries and cares aside until morning.

Can I Leave a Wake-up Call?

If it's the middle of the night and you're awake, why not log on to the website of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research? You can test your sleep IQ, read patient-oriented information about sleep problems like sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome and insomnia ... or read enough pages of the technical professional information to put yourself to sleep. Go to <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/patpub/patpub-a.htm>.



10. Kitchen Table

We're back to what your Mother told you: sit down at the table and eat your dinner. She was right again, even if she didn't know it at the time. If you eat at the table, and only at the table, you're more in control of what, when and how much you eat – which is essential to weight management.

But old habits are hard to break. So if you find yourself grazing through the fridge or crunching through a bag of chips in front of the TV, either stop eating or take it to the table. Soon, you'll automatically take your snacks and meals to the table.

To make the most of each dining experience, you can:

- Use the table only for eating. Read, pay bills, watch TV, fold the laundry and phone your friends from some other location.
- Serve your meals and snacks on plates. You'll be more in control of your portion sizes and you'll feel more pampered than if you eat out of a bag.
- Leave extra servings on the stove. If you have to get up to refill your plate, you're less likely to have seconds or thirds.
- Enjoy the company of other diners. Make dining with family or friends a pleasant social experience and avoid controversial topics of conversation.

Table Talk

If eating away from home is your downfall, try a modified kitchen-table technique. At work, designate an eating location, like the break room or an outdoor table. That way, you won't be tempted to nibble through the afternoon at your desk. Make your car a food-free zone, too. It's too easy to finish off a couple of candy bars on the drive home when you're ravenous. And, it's safer to focus on your driving.



Daily Food & Activity Diary

Daily Food and Exercise Diary for _____

Week of _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST							
LUNCH							
DINNER							
ACTIVITY							

GOALS:

DIET _____

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY _____

BEHAVIOR _____

Serving Sizes Appendix



Grains and grain products

1 slice bread
1 ounce dry cereal*
½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal



Meats, poultry and fish

3 ounces cooked meats,
poultry or fish



Vegetables

1 cup raw, leafy vegetable
½ cup cooked vegetable
6 ounces vegetable juice



Nuts, seeds and dry beans

⅓ cup or 1½ ounces nuts
2 tablespoons or ½ ounce seeds
½ cup cooked, dry beans



Fruits

6 ounces fruit juice
1 medium fruit
¼ cup dried fruit
½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit



Fats and oils

1 teaspoon soft margarine
1 tablespoon lowfat mayonnaise
2 tablespoons light salad dressing
1 teaspoon vegetable oil



Lowfat or fat-free dairy foods

8 ounces milk
1 cup yogurt
1½ ounces cheese



Sweets

1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon jelly or jam
½ ounce jelly beans
8 ounces lemonade

*Equals ½-1¼ cups, depending on cereal type.
Check the product's Nutrition Facts Label.

Source: The DASH Eating Plan from the National Heart,
Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health.