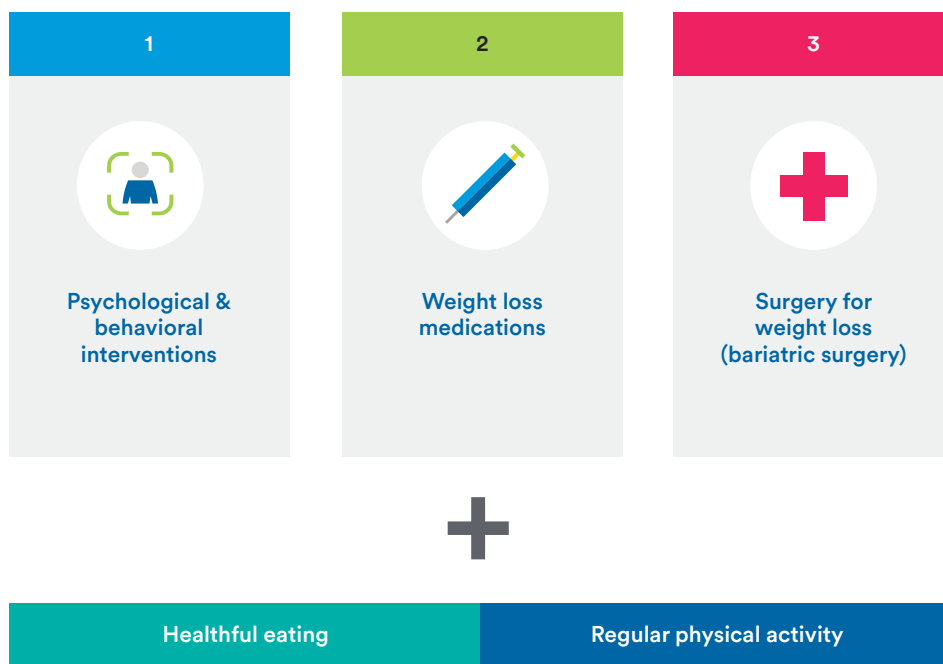


Support for weight-loss success



Healthful eating and regular physical activity are essential components of long-term weight management. Alone, healthful eating and regular physical activity tend to yield weight loss of three to five percent on average, which can result in meaningful health benefits. However, as displayed in the illustration below, when healthful eating and physical activity are combined with the three pillars of weight management (psychological and behavioral interventions, weight loss medications and/or surgery for weight loss, if appropriate), individuals tend to experience weight loss of 10 to 20 percent on average. This results in added health benefits.¹

Three pillars of weight management*



Does weight loss = willpower?^{2,3}

Some people believe that “willpower,” or having more self-control, is the key to weight loss and maintenance. Willpower is involved in weight loss and maintenance, but it is definitely not the only factor in weight loss. Research suggests that willpower alone is ineffective when it comes to making lasting behavior changes. According to the “ego depletion theory,” willpower is a limited resource that can be depleted, making it an unreliable strategy, especially in times of stress and distraction. Moreover, the notion that overcoming obesity is simply about having more willpower overlooks the significant environmental, hormonal and genetic factors that contribute to the condition.



Activity: Assess your attitudes and beliefs about eating and exercise

Exploring your current beliefs, attitudes and habits can help you develop exercise and eating habits that will work for your specific needs and goals. Answer each question below by marking the appropriate number. Please be honest with yourself when doing so.

Exercise beliefs, attitudes and habits

Rating scale from 1 to 5 (1=Never; 5=Always)

- _____ Do you avoid exercising due to feeling self-conscious about your current weight or athletic abilities?
- _____ When exercising, do you feel discouraged by your rate of weight loss?
- _____ When you exercise, do you have difficulty sticking to a routine?
- _____ When it comes to exercise, do you get bored with the available choices?
- _____ Do you have difficulty finding companions for exercise?
- _____ Do you struggle to make time to exercise?
- _____ Do you fear that you will get an injury from exercising?
- _____ Do you believe that you lack the self-control or willpower needed to exercise?

Total Score

If your total score is higher than **24**, you may find it especially helpful to think about your attitudes and beliefs about exercise and how they can help or hinder your attempts to manage your weight.

Eating beliefs, attitudes and habits

Rating scale from 1 to 5 (1=Never; 5=Always)

- _____ Do you eat more than you would like to when you have negative feelings, such as anxiety, depression, anger or loneliness?
- _____ Do you have trouble controlling your eating when you have positive feelings? Do you celebrate feeling good by eating?
- _____ When you have unpleasant interactions with others in your life or after a difficult day at work, do you eat more than you would like?
- _____ When it comes to eating healthy foods, do you get bored with the choices you have?
- _____ Do you have difficulty finding acceptable healthy substitutes for certain foods, such as sweets or candy?
- _____ Does it seem that almost everything you like to eat is bad for you?
- _____ Do you believe it takes a lot of time to eat healthfully?
- _____ Do you believe there are certain foods that are completely off limits when trying to lose weight?

Total Score

If your total score is higher than **24**, you may find it especially helpful to think about your attitudes and beliefs about eating and how they can help or hinder your attempts to manage your weight.

References:

1. "2020 Clinical Practice Guidelines: 5As Framework for Obesity Management in Adults." Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2020, doi:10.1503/cmaj.191707.
2. Jebb, Susan A., and Paul Aveyard. "'Willpower' Is Not Enough: Time for a New Approach to Public Health Policy to Prevent Obesity." BMC Medicine, vol. 21, no. 1, 15 Mar. 2023, p. 89, doi:10.1186/s12916-023-02803-z.
3. Hagger, Martin S., et al. "Ego Depletion and the Strength Model of Self-Control: A Meta-Analysis." Psychological Bulletin, vol. 136, no. 4, July 2010, pp. 495-525, doi:10.1037/a0019486.

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