

HEALTH IDENTIFIERS & SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

WEIGHT CHANGE

Weight change refers to changes in body weight. Weight can either stay the same, increase, or decrease. Weight change is intentional if you change your diet or activity level in order to change your weight. It is considered unintentional if you are not trying to change your food intake or activity level. When we refer to changes in weight we may also mention dieting, fad diets, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating or eating disorders.



SOME FACTS about Weight Change

- Weight Change can be either good or bad. Weight loss in an underweight individual will be of more concern than weight loss in someone who is overweight.
- **Weight GAIN**
 - Excessive weight gain can lead to **obesity**. If you are obese you are more likely to have diabetes, heart disease and osteoarthritis.
 - Weight is **gained** if you eat more calories than you need (You use/need more calories if you are physically active)
- **Weight LOSS**
 - Excessive weight loss can lead to being **underweight**. People who are underweight are more likely to suffer from poor nutrition.
 - Weight is **lost** if you eat less calories than you need.
- **Weight stays the same** if you eat well and exercise enough.
- If you have not changed your diet or activity and your weight is changing, you might have a medical problem.



CAUSES

Weight GAIN

- Eating too many calories and fat.
- Not exercising enough.
- Medical Conditions like Prader-Willi Syndrome or endocrine and gastrointestinal disorders
- Side effect of *some* medications like antipsychotics, antidepressants, mood stabilizers, anticonvulsants or steroids
- Psychiatric Disorders like depression, anxiety, or eating disorders.
- Water retention.

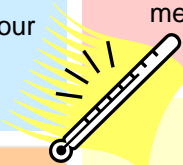
Weight LOSS

- Not eating enough due to fear of being fat (anorexia nervosa), loss of appetite, mouth pain, difficulty eating (dysphagia), or stomach pain.
- Excessive Exercising.
- Medical conditions like diabetes, chronic diarrhea, and hyperthyroidism
- Side effects of certain medications or changes in medications or doses



PREVENTION

- **Exercise:** Be physically active everyday. If there is a condition which restricts movement, have a therapist design a special exercise program.
- **Diet:** If you are concerned about weight change, meet with a dietitian to plan a healthy diet. Then, CAREFULLY follow this diet plan.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Pay special attention to:

- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Not interested in food OR Overly interested in food
- Eats to reduce anxiety or depression OR unable to eat when anxious or depressed
- Feeling full after eating very little OR not feeling full after eating a lot.
- Feeling ill after eating OR eating until you are sick.

WEIGHT CHANGE



WHAT TO DO

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Follow any prescribed diet requirements or diet modifications.
- **Use the food guide pyramid** to help choose a balanced diet.

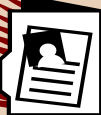
Go to this website to view the approved Food Pyramid:
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html>

- **Record** their weight and keep a diary of their food intake and physical activity, especially if they have any of the conditions that cause weight change. Try to use the same scale and weigh at the same time of day.
- Be **physically active**. Check with the doctor about any exercise restrictions first.



WHAT NOT TO DO

- If the doctor or dietitian has made a special diet or activity plan, it **MUST** be followed. **DO NOT give foods that are restricted.**
- **DO NOT** buy pills or other products that claim to help weight loss or gain, unless as directed by a doctor or therapist.



DOCUMENT

- Keep a running log that records their weight. Always take the weight at the same time of the day and in the same amount of clothes. If requested, also keep a diary of their food intake and amount of activity. **LET PEOPLE KNOW OF CHANGES.**
- File an Incident Report (if required) and complete other documentation such as writing down a description in the logbook if you notice a weight change trend or if the person requires emergency medical care.



CALL THE DOCTOR

Call the doctor or nurse if the weight change is:

- More than 5 pounds in one month (unplanned)
- Accompanied by a new medical complaint such as stomach pain, constipation, tooth ache or trouble eating
- Started after a new medication or dose change was prescribed
- Leading to weakness or being tired all the time
- Appears to be the result of depression or anxiety

Also call if:

- The person's **extremities** (feet, ankles, legs, arms, hands) **are swollen**
- There is excessive worrying about the weight change that is causing unhappiness and anxiety; especially if this leads to over-exercising and/or fasting.



EMERGENCY

Seek immediate medical care if you observe any of the following:

- **Severe Stomach Pain**
 - **Severe Diarrhea or Vomiting**
- } along with a **High Fever**



TO LEARN MORE - Go to these websites:

- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003107.htm>
- <http://www.webMD.com>
- <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/Fpyr/pyramid.html>