



Maintaining Long-term Weight Loss and Preventing Relapse

At this point, each of you will have lost different amounts of weight and have had different experiences. How much weight you lose, how quickly you lose it, and how successful you are at keeping your weight off depends on your energy balance.

Energy balance is based on the energy you take in (food) and the energy you burn.

- If energy intake (calories you eat from food) is more than the energy you burn, **you will gain weight.**
- If energy intake (calories you eat from food) is less than the energy you burn, **you will lose weight.**
- If energy intake (calories you eat from food) is the same as the energy you burn, **you will neither lose nor gain weight.** This is what happens when **your weight stays the same.**

What are Some Ways You Burn Energy?

1. Through typical daily activity
2. Through regular exercise
3. Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR)

You need a certain amount of energy just to stay alive even if you do no physical activity. The amount of energy you need to sustain life while being inactive all day is known as the **Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR).** This energy is used for keeping the heart beating, breathing, brain activity, and other body functions. RMR is affected by different factors such as:

Age	RMR decreases with as you get older
Weight	RMR decreases as you lose weight
Body Composition	RMR is greater in people with more muscle mass. That's one reason why strength training is a plus in your physical activity routine
Hormones	An increase in thyroid or growth hormone increases RMR
Nutritional State	Fasting and starvation decrease RMR and overeating increase RMR. This is why it is important not to skip meals.

RMR decreases when calorie intake is decreased which makes sense because less energy is required to maintain weight. It is helpful during a starvation period but it makes intentional weight loss more difficult. This is why being physically active is important because it helps in increasing your RMR which in turn makes you burn more calories.

When should you get concerned about regaining weight?

Your weight may fluctuate from week to week. Don't panic. But if you gain **5 pounds** above the lowest weight that you reached during this study, then it's time to do something.

For example, let's say that you started at 220 pounds and lost 30 pounds to reach 190 pounds at this point. Then things get tougher. You regain 5 pounds (reaching 195). Then it's time to make some changes. Think about what you are eating and your physical activity.

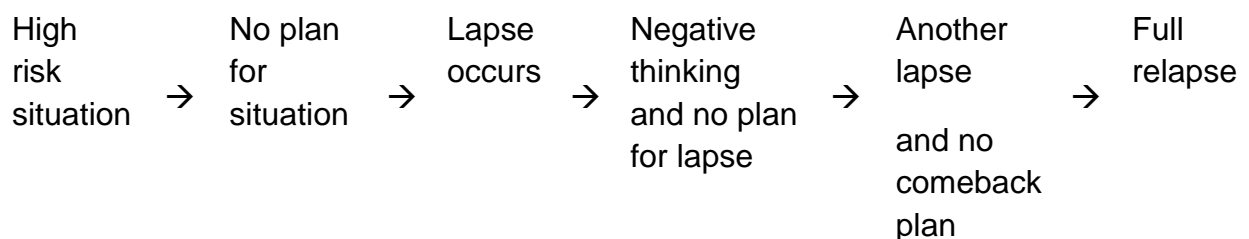
Physical activity

Consider increasing your physical activity above the goal of 175 minutes/week now. Research has shown that the people who are the most successful in maintaining their weight loss for long periods of time are VERY active. If you are comfortable doing so, increase your physical activity by another 25 to 35 minutes per day. This will help give an extra "cushion" to help you maintain your weight.

Weight regain usually starts with a lapse. **A lapse is a temporary and small slip in your weight loss efforts.** It might be overeating at a particular meal or for a day or two. Or it could be skipping exercise a week while you are on vacation. Lapses are a natural part of the process. At some point, everyone has lapses - small slips, errors or times when they briefly return to an old habit. By itself, a lapse will not cause you to gain back the weight you've lost.

However, if you don't cope with a lapse, it can grow into a relapse. **A relapse is a return to your earlier eating and activity habits and is associated with significant weight regain.** A relapse usually results from a string of several small lapses that become a full-blown relapse. The best way to prevent a relapse is to identify the lapses early and deal with them before they turn into a relapse.

The relapse chain



Preventing Relapse

1. Have a **plan to handle the small lapses** so that they do not grow into a full-blown relapse. In other words....**Don't be caught off guard.**
2. **Recognize danger zones or high-risk situations** and have a detailed plan to cope with them.

<p>Both positive and negative situations lead to a lapse. Think about the situations on the right. Do they represent risk of a lapse for you?</p> <p>Can you think of other situations that might lead to a lapse?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. You are on vacation, feeling relaxed and enjoying your family.2. You're traveling & eating out for each meal.3. You go out to dinner with friends and everyone orders high calorie meals.4. Someone gives you a box of chocolates as a gift <p style="text-align: center;">Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. You feel overwhelmed by things you can't control.2. You feel sad, depressed, or lonely.3. You are angry, upset or frustrated.4. You are ill and can't do your usual activities.5. You are very busy at work or at home.6. You feel tired or exhausted.
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