

# WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?

## Ditch Your Excuses: Commit to a Healthy Lifestyle

We have many reasons for not doing things that are healthy for us. Our excuses for avoiding them are often rooted in truth, but they can stand in the way of the positive benefits of a healthy lifestyle. What do you tell yourself that stops you from making healthy choices? Check your “go to” excuses below. Learn what’s really going on in our minds, along with suggestions for overcoming them. Use the spaces below to jot down other ideas you might try.

Excuses	What's really going on?	Strategies
<input type="checkbox"/> I am too busy with ____ to exercise. <input type="checkbox"/> It takes too much time to make healthy meals. <input type="checkbox"/> I have too much work to do. <input type="checkbox"/> It's too expensive. <input type="checkbox"/> If I do ____, I can't do _____.	<b>False or “either/or” fallacy</b> Presents two options as in conflict with one another or as either/or decisions when there are other options available (e.g., “It’s too expensive” assumes that the only options for healthy choices require money).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Plan ahead (meal prep, schedule exercise)</li> <li>› Maximize efficiency (meal prep shortcuts, “mini” 5-10 min workouts)</li> <li>› Stretch your dollar with smart choices (buy in bulk, free online workout videos)</li> <li>› Incorporate healthy habits into everyday routines (take stairs, substitute healthy snacks)</li> <li>› Add to your routines, don't take away</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I've been so good! <input type="checkbox"/> I did well yesterday. <input type="checkbox"/> It's a special occasion. <input type="checkbox"/> I deserve a treat!	<b>Moral licensing</b> Using past positive behaviors to grant ourselves permission to “give in” to unhealthy behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Avoid labeling foods as “off limits.” Try “always” or “sometimes” foods instead</li> <li>› Enjoy favorites in moderation</li> <li>› Think of making good choices as steps towards a goal you don't want to derail</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I've already blown it! <input type="checkbox"/> I've tried this before and failed. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not good at anything. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm too ____ to do this. (old/clumsy/uncoordinated...)	<b>Self-defeatism</b> Believing that we are incapable of the positive behavior due to past or present mistakes, slip-ups, or perceived inadequacies. An “all-or-nothing” mindset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Focus on healthier habits overall, not a specific diet or exercise regimen</li> <li>› Know there is no “perfect” way to eat healthy or stay active</li> <li>› Provide encouragement with positive self-talk</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> It's genetics. <input type="checkbox"/> I can't help myself! <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone else is doing it. <input type="checkbox"/> My family doesn't like it. <input type="checkbox"/> It's rude to refuse food.	<b>Passing the blame</b> Blaming our choices on someone or something else, such as others' preferences, the situation, or circumstances outside of our control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Enlist others for support of your goals</li> <li>› Find ways to “sneak in” healthy habits (family bike rides, “healthify” favorite recipes with healthy substitutions)</li> <li>› Have pre-planned responses to peer pressure (“I ate beforehand,” etc.)</li> </ul>

Excuses	What's really going on?	Strategies
<input type="checkbox"/> I had a bad day. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm too tired. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm embarrassed or intimidated. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel good about myself.	<b>Emotional barriers</b> Allowing difficult or negative emotions to prevent us from making healthy choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Consider formal training to build confidence (fitness or cooking classes, personal trainer)</li> <li>› Find a workout partner</li> <li>› Remind yourself of your "why"</li> <li>› Reward yourself for successes (in a healthy way!)</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm bored. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel like doing it. <input type="checkbox"/> It's too hard. <input type="checkbox"/> I just don't like it. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't want to get sweaty.	<b>Motivational hurdles</b> Lacking the energy or drive to make healthy choices. Relying on old habits to make things "easier," faster, or more convenient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Experiment to keep it fresh (new cooking techniques/foods, workouts)</li> <li>› Commit to just the first step (putting workout clothes on, wash a vegetable)</li> <li>› Pair activity with something you enjoy</li> <li>› Remember that low impact activity "counts"</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I'll start tomorrow. <input type="checkbox"/> I'll do better next month. <input type="checkbox"/> It's the weekend/a holiday.	<b>Procrastination</b> Putting off decisions until a later time or giving a "pass" for today with the promise of better choices in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Remember, you'll be the same person tomorrow as you are today</li> <li>› Set small, achievable, structured goals</li> <li>› Make success time-bound, such as X number of workouts in 2 weeks' time</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm already thin. <input type="checkbox"/> I like the way I look/feel. <input type="checkbox"/> It hurts. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a chronic condition.	<b>Accepting the status quo</b> Justifying unhealthy habits or behavior because of pre-existing factors, like health status or body type.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Keep a list of the positive benefits of making healthy choices within easy view</li> <li>› See a healthcare professional to develop an eating/fitness plan that won't aggravate your injury or health condition</li> </ul>

### What will you do?

- › Use the space below to write down ideas you can put into practice today to overcome one or more "favorite" excuses:

# MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES

## Ditch Your Excuses: Commit to a Healthy Lifestyle

Trying to eat in a healthier way can feel like starting over with a brand new diet. But developing healthier eating habits doesn't have to be overwhelming. Below are a few simple changes you can make in some of the foods you choose. You don't have to give up your favorite foods, but try these as healthier alternatives.

Breakfast	
Instead of...	Try this...
Flavored instant oatmeal	Rolled oats topped with cinnamon, nuts, and fruit
Sugary cereal	Greek yogurt with fruit, honey
Granola	Walnuts, almonds, or pecans with drizzled honey
Jam or fruit preserves	Nut butters (peanut, almond, etc.), fruit compote, honey
Cheese	Vegetables like spinach, tomato, or onion (omelets, etc.)
Bagel	Whole grain English muffin
Cream cheese	Pureed low-fat cottage or ricotta cheese
Buttered toast	Avocado toast with seasoning
Bacon	Turkey or Canadian bacon, prosciutto or pancetta

Lunch	
Instead of...	Try this...
White bread	Whole-wheat or Ezekiel bread, leaf lettuce as a wrap
Cream-based soups	Broth-based soups with vegetables, meat, or beans
Grilled cheese sandwich	Use whole-wheat bread, add spinach, tomato, or avocado
French fries	Zucchini fries, sweet potato fries (baked if possible), fresh fruit
Mayonnaise	Hummus, mashed avocado, pesto, Greek yogurt
Fried meat/fish sandwich	Charbroiled, grilled, or roasted sandwiches
Deli/lunch meat	Chicken, tuna, chickpea, or egg salad with Greek yogurt
Hamburger	Veggie, bean, or lentil burger, turkey burger
Frozen meals	Freeze healthy homemade meals into individual portions, low sodium options

Drinks	
Fruit juice	Fruit smoothie with frozen fruit, spinach, protein powder
Soda	Kombucha, flavored sparkling water
Energy drinks	Green juices/smoothies, green tea, protein shakes, water
Blended coffee/ dessert drinks	Iced coffee (no cream/sugar) with flavoring, Greek yogurt fudge pops

Snacks	
Candy	Homemade trail mix with nuts, dark chocolate, dried fruit
Potato chips/ salty snacks	Air-popped popcorn, vegetables with hummus, edamame (boiled, lightly salted), freeze-dried veggies, kale chips
Crackers	Cut vegetables, dehydrated vegetables, nut/seed crackers

Dinner	
Instead of...	Try this...
<b>Butter</b> (for frying)	Olive, avocado, or coconut oil
<b>Ground beef</b>	Ground turkey or chicken, plant-based meats, beans
<b>White rice</b>	Quinoa, barley, brown rice, or cauliflower rice
<b>White pasta</b>	Whole wheat pasta
<b>Spaghetti</b>	Spaghetti squash, zucchini noodles
<b>Lasagna noodles</b>	Zucchini strips, eggplant strips, corn tortillas
<b>Mashed potatoes</b>	Sweet potato or cauliflower mash
<b>Sushi rolls</b>	Sashimi (raw fish without rice)
<b>Fried food</b>	Baked, grilled, or roasted food
<b>Red meat</b> (steak, pork, etc.)	Grass-fed meat, lean options, chicken, turkey, or fish
<b>Flour tortillas</b> (tacos, burritos)	Corn tortillas, burrito “bowls” with no tortilla, leaf lettuce
<b>Pizza</b> (regular, deep dish crust)	Thin crust pizza, flatbread with vegetable toppings

Desserts/baking	
Instead of...	Try this...
<b>Ice cream</b>	Frozen mashed bananas, frozen yogurt, açai bowls
<b>Milk chocolate</b>	Dark chocolate (70% or more for heart healthy option)
<b>Frosting</b>	Whipped cream, meringue
<b>Ice cream bars</b>	Fresh fruit bars
<b>Chocolate/vanilla pudding</b>	Greek yogurt parfait with fruit/nuts, chia pudding
<b>Cookies</b>	Graham crackers, ginger snaps, fig or fruit bars, trail mix with nuts and dark chocolate
<b>Cake</b> (chocolate, yellow, marble)	Angel food cake
<b>Fruit pies</b>	Baked apples, oats with fruit/puree and seasonings
<b>Butter</b>	Avocado puree, mashed banana, applesauce, chia seeds (soaked in water), grass-fed butter
<b>Cookie pie crusts</b>	Graham cracker crusts
<b>Sugar</b> (baking)	Applesauce, honey, maple syrup, vanilla extract
<b>Flour</b>	Black beans (drained and rinsed), whole wheat flour, nut flours

Condiments/seasonings	
<b>Mayo-based salad dressings</b>	Oil- or vinegar-based salad dressings, salsa, mustards
<b>Barbecue sauce</b>	Mustard/vinegar-based sauces
<b>Table salt</b>	Splash of vinegar, squeeze of lemon, herbs/spices, nutritional yeast
<b>Ketchup</b>	Salsa, pico de gallo, hot sauce
<b>Soy sauce</b>	Tamari, coconut aminos
<b>Veggie dip</b>	Hummus, tahini, salsa, guacamole, homemade dip with Greek yogurt

Dairy	
<b>Dairy milk</b>	Low-fat dairy, nut or soy milks, rice or seed milks
<b>Dairy creamer</b>	Nut, soy, oat, or coconut milks, half-and-half
<b>Cheese</b>	Nutritional yeast, use goat cheese or feta for healthy fats
<b>Sour cream</b>	Greek yogurt

References: Eat This, Not That! (2020, November 5) 35 Easy Swaps That Make Every Meal Healthier. <https://www.eatthis.com/healthy-food-substitutes/>

Nall, R. & de Bellefonds, C. (2021, April 23) 10 Heart-Healthy Ingredient Substitutions. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/foods-for-the-heart>

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (n.d.) Low-Calorie, Lower Fat Alternative Foods. [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/eat/shop\\_1cal\\_fat](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/eat/shop_1cal_fat)

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# GETTING AND STAYING ACTIVE

## Ditch Your Excuses: Commit to a Healthy Lifestyle

Exercise doesn't have to be a drain on your schedule. Every minute of activity "counts" towards your recommended amount of physical activity. Use the tips below to incorporate physical activity into your daily life and routines.

### Everyday ways to get moving: At home

- › Work in the garden or cut the grass with a push mower.
- › Go for a short walk before breakfast, after dinner, or both.
- › Walk or bike to errands that are a few blocks away.
- › Do exercises during commercial breaks during TV time.
- › Walk yours, a neighbor's, or an animal shelter dog.
- › Do housework at a brisk pace.
- › Wash the car yourself instead of going to a car wash.
- › Try active games with your kids (or on your own!) like jump rope or hula hoop.
- › Use the exercise equipment you already own.
- › Plan family outings around physical activities like canoeing, swimming, skating, or skiing.
- › Play energizing music during house chores – take a dance break if you want to!

### Everyday ways to get moving: Out and about

- › Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- › Park further away from the entrance to the office, the grocery store, etc.
- › When doing several errands, park in a central location and walk to different destinations.
- › At the airport, walk the corridors while waiting for your flight to leave.
- › When golfing, walk instead of using a golf cart.
- › Carry your own groceries.
- › Break up long drives with hiking nature trails and scenic walks.

### "Mini" workouts

Research shows that small bursts of activity throughout the day is just as effective as longer workouts for health benefits<sup>1</sup>.

#### Example mini workout format:

- › Have a list of 5 exercises.
- › Do each exercise for 2 minutes.
- › You may split up exercises as fits your fitness level (e.g., 30 seconds on/30 seconds off).
- › You can also cycle through each exercise, 30 seconds of each for 3-5 minutes total.

#### Example exercises:

- |                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| › Squats            | › Lunges                    |
| › Plank position    | › Jumping jacks             |
| › Push-ups          | › High knees                |
| › Jog in place      | › Burpees                   |
| › Mountain climbers | › Dumbbell/weight exercises |

<sup>1</sup>Lindberg, S. (2021, September 22) Fit It In: Mini Workouts Are a Great Option When You're Crunched for Time. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness/fit-it-in-mini-workouts>

## Chair exercises

If you have a job that keeps you seated most of the day, you may need to be creative to find ways to get moving. Here are some simple chair exercises that can be done at your work station or at home.

**Note:** If your chair rolls, lock your wheels for safety.

### Push up



Put one hand on each arm of your chair. Push yourself up off the chair. Lower yourself back down slowly, but don't let your bottom touch the seat. Repeat 15 times.

### Leg raise



Lift one leg off the seat and stretch it out straight. Hold for two seconds. Then lower your foot but don't let it touch the floor. Hold for several seconds then switch. Repeat with each leg 15 times.

### Arm stretch



Stretch your arms over your head toward the ceiling. Then stretch your right hand just a little higher than the left. Switch and stretch your left hand higher.

### Torso stretch



Turn your head to the left and twist your upper body to the right. Hold that pose for a few seconds. Then switch directions and twist everything the other way.

### Stomach squeeze



Tighten your stomach muscles and hold that pose for several seconds. Relax, and then do it again. Try to do 15 of these.

## Everyday ways to get moving: At work

- › Take a walk during your lunch hour.
- › Set a “stand timer” to break up sitting time.
- › Get up and talk to someone rather than calling or emailing.
- › Do squats, desk push-ups, wall sits, or other exercises while on the phone.
- › Have “walking meetings” when you don't need to be at a computer.
- › Have a set of hand weights or a resistance band at your desk to use during meetings or downtime.
- › Sit on an exercise ball.
- › Do chair exercises (see sidebar).
- › Explore options for standing or treadmill desk.



### What is your exercise action plan?

You're more likely to follow through on goals if you make them specific. Think through the questions below to form an exercise plan that works for you and your schedule. You might cut this plan out and put it in a place you look at often.

**My exercise goal(s):**

**What will I do?**

**When will I do it? (days/times)**

**What is my reward for successfully meeting my goal?**

**Who can I enlist to help?**



# SCREENING TOOLS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

## Ditch Your Excuses: Commit to a Healthy Lifestyle

Weight management refers to the behaviors that contribute to a person's ability to attain and keep their weight at a level that provides optimal physical and mental health benefits. Everyone's "ideal" weight is unique to them. It is determined by factors such as your age, height, muscle to fat ratio, sex, bone density, and body type. There are multiple screening tools available for determining our body weight, as listed below.

Note that no screening tool is perfect. Talk to a healthcare professional or registered dietitian to help determine the body weight that is healthy for you. If you think you may struggle with weight management or you have unrealistic expectations about your body weight, a clinical therapist may be beneficial. Your EAP has resources to help.

### Body mass index (BMI)

BMI is the most widely used body weight screening tool, measuring body weight in relation to height. The formula is below<sup>1</sup>:

1. Your weight in pounds: \_\_\_\_\_  
(example: 190)
2. Multiply that number by **703**: \_\_\_\_\_  
(example:  $190 \times 703 = 133,570$ )
3. Multiply your height in inches by itself: \_\_\_\_\_  
(example:  $70 \times 70 = 4,900$ )
4. Divide the answer to #2 by the answer to #3. This is your BMI. \_\_\_\_\_  
(example:  $133,570 \div 4,900 = 27.26$ )

#### BMI INTERPRETATION:

<b>Under 18.5:</b>	Underweight
<b>18.5–24.9:</b>	Normal weight
<b>25–29.9:</b>	Overweight
<b>30 and above:</b>	Obese

Most health experts agree that BMI is a useful tool for measuring body weight, despite its limitations. But health risks should be measured by several factors, including your age, gender, medical history, activity level, nutrition, etc. BMI may also be used in conjunction with other screening tools listed on the next page.

### Limitations of BMI

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes there are some limitations to using BMI as a measure of healthy weight levels:

- › It does not distinguish between weight that comes from fat or from muscle/bone density, which can result in overestimating body fat in those with a muscular build, such as athletes.
- › It may underestimate body fat in those who have lost muscle, such as older adults.
- › It does not account for where fat is stored in the body, such as around the waistline, which can also impact health risks.

#### References:

National Institutes of Health & Human Services (n.d.a)  
*Assessing Your Weight and Health Risk.*  
[https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/risk.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/risk.htm)

Lemond, A. (2021, March 17) How BMI Came to Define Obesity, and Why This Measure is Flawed. Everyday Health.  
<https://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition/bmi/bmi-flaws-history-other-ways-measure-body-weight/>

## Other measures

Excess fat in the abdomen, called visceral fat, may increase health risks<sup>2</sup>, such as high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, diabetes, and premature death<sup>3</sup>. Various measures can help determine levels of fat stored in the abdomen:

### Waist circumference:

1. Stand and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hips. Make sure it is horizontal around the waist.
2. Keep the tape snug, but not compressing the skin.
3. Measure your waist just after you breathe out for the most accurate measurement: \_\_\_\_\_

#### WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE INTERPRETATION:

You may be at risk of developing obesity-related conditions if your waist circumference is:

**Men:** 40 or more inches

**Non-pregnant women:** 35 or more inches

### Waist-to-Hip Ratio (WHR):

1. Measure your waist circumference using the steps above.
2. Measure your hip circumference by measuring the distance around the largest part of your hips, or the widest part of your buttocks: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Divide your waist circumference by your hip circumference to obtain your WHR: \_\_\_\_\_

#### WHR INTERPRETATION:

Health risk	Women	Men
Low	0.80 or lower	0.95 or lower
Moderate	0.81-0.85	0.96-1.0
High	0.85 or higher	1.0 or higher

### Waist-to-Height (or Waist-to-Stature) Ratio (WSR):

1. Measure your waist circumference using the steps above.
2. Measure your height in inches: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Divide your waist circumference (#3 at the top) by your height in inches to obtain your WSR: \_\_\_\_\_

#### WSR INTERPRETATION:

A waist-to-height ratio of **more than 0.5** may put you at higher risk of conditions like heart disease or diabetes<sup>3</sup>.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup>National Institutes of Health. (n.d.). *Calculate your body mass index*. [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm)

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) (2022, June 3) *Assessing Your Weight*. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html>

<sup>3</sup>Watson, S. & Nall, R. (2021, November 18) *What Is the Waist-to-Hip Ratio?* Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/waist-to-hip-ratio>

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