

## Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Goals

Lifestyle changes, including healthy eating and increased physical activity, are the cornerstone of all weight reduction efforts, including those involving weight loss medications or bariatric surgery. Every weight management plan should include individualized goals for improving the patient’s diet and increasing his or her physical activity.

Changing lifelong habits that are related to obesity takes time; neither the patient nor the clinician should expect an overnight conversion to “healthy living.” Drastic changes in diet and abrupt undertakings of intensive exercise programs are usually doomed to failure. As you approach the topic of healthy eating and activity habits with your patients, focus on achievable steps patients can take to overcome barriers and achieve sustainable behavioral changes.

Remember, the discussion should be collaborative; if the patient doesn’t agree the goal is a good idea that he or she can implement, it won’t work.

### Examples

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Achievable Goal</b>
Patient loves fried chicken and “can’t/won’t give it up”	Eat smaller portions less often Make favorite high-fat or high-calorie foods a treat for special occasions rather than an everyday meal
Patient works long hours and lacks time for exercise	Be more active during work day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parking farther away</li><li>• Take stairs instead of elevators or escalators</li><li>• Walk to colleagues’ offices instead of phoning them with questions</li></ul>

### Record Keeping

Patients can keep track of whether they are meeting diet and activity goals by keeping [food](#) and [physical activity](#) journals. In these journals they should also record their feelings and circumstances surrounding the meal or activity, such as:

- Hunger level before and after eating
- Time spent active and what types of activity
- Overall feelings about the lifestyle changes they are making

Ask patients to bring their food diaries and activity logs to each visit so patterns can be discussed and goals reviewed and reset as necessary. Positive feedback and encouragement will encourage the patient to adhere to their individual lifestyle change plan.

