



Dear *Walk Across Texas* Participant,

Included with this letter is the fifth topic of the Weight Management Series called “One Step at a Time.” The goal of this topic is to incorporate weight management into your lifestyle gradually.

To help you reach this goal, look for key points while reading “One Step at a Time.”

- Weight gain happens gradually over a long period of time.
- Successful weight loss, losing weight, and keeping it off requires losing weight gradually and working to maintain healthy weight for a lifetime.
- Changes should be made one step at a time.
- Choose a behavior that you feel needs to be changed first and work on changing it until you feel comfortable with the healthier “habit.” Then choose another behavior to change.
- Only start a new behavior when you are ready.
- Reward yourself for improved habits.

Happy Walking!

Sincerely,

# Weight Management Series — Health Break 5

## One Step at a Time

### Goal:

To incorporate weight management into lifestyle one step at a time

### Objectives:

Participants will:

- Determine approximately how long it took them to reach their current weight.
- Make a list of 5 things they are willing to do to improve their weight; next, put them in order of importance.
- Decide to take the first step of weight management by choosing one thing on their list to begin do right now.
- Work only on this one behavior until they feel comfortable to move to the next item on the list.
- Decide to lose weight gradually.

### Key Teaching Points:

- Weight gain happens gradually over a long period of time.
- Successful weight loss, losing weight and keeping it off, requires losing weight gradually ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 pounds a week) and working at maintaining a healthy weight for a lifetime.
- Changes should be made one step at a time.
- Choose a behavior that you feel needs to be changed first and work on changing it until you feel comfortable with the healthier “habit.” Then go to the next behavior you wish to change.
- Only start a new behavior when you are ready.
- Reward yourself for improved habits.

### Activity:

- Have participants choose five behaviors they feel should be changed to improve their weight management. They may use the behavior suggestions to help them take a personal inventory of their health habits. Then have them list the five behaviors they have chosen; then arrange in order beginning with most important to change to least important to change. Tell them they should begin to change the most important behavior on their list now.

### Evaluation

- Yes  No      1. Weight gain happens gradually.
- Yes  No      2. To successfully lose weight and keep it off, you should lose weight gradually.
- Yes  No      3. You should change five behaviors at a time.
- Yes  No      4. Only start a new habit when you are ready.
- Yes  No      5. Reward yourself for improved habits.

Answers: 1. Yes; 2. Yes; 3. No; 4. Yes; 5. Yes

## One Step at a Time

Individuals who are overweight did not wake up one morning and all of a sudden they had more pounds on their bodies than when they went to sleep the night before. The added weight happened gradually over a period of time. Why did you start gaining weight? Did you start eating more snacks, more higher fat foods, or more fast foods? Did you stop exercising?

To lose weight and keep it off, you have to decide to take off weight gradually, over a period of time, and realize that you will have to work the rest of your life to maintain the weight you desire. People with healthy weights work everyday to maintain that weight by eating properly and/or exercising regularly.

Don't try to change everything in your lifestyle at one time. Try changing one thing at a time. When you feel comfortable with that change, such as walking three days a week, make another change. It usually takes about 21 days to adopt a new habit. Let's look at some suggestions for changes you may want to make in your eating pattern.

Go through the behavior suggestions. Pick the ones you think will help you and list them in the order you think is most important to help you change. Then work on changing, starting with the most important, until you feel comfortable with the "habit" then go to the next behavior on your list. Only start a new behavior when you are ready.

### Control the Eating Environment

- At home, always eat in the same place such as the kitchen or dining room table. Sit to eat, never stand.
- If you have a place at the table where you always sit, change where you sit. You may get a new view of your eating habits from a different chair.
- When eating out, choose a restaurant where you sit to dine. Avoid stand-up bars and drive through restaurants. If you eat out often, limit eating out to 3 meals a week, only one of those should be in a fast food restaurant.
- Make eating a singular activity. Do not watch television, read, talk on the phone, or write letters. Simply enjoy the food, listen to soft music, think pleasant thoughts, or have conversation with others who are eating with you.

### Control of Eating Signals

- Store all foods in storage places out of sight. You are less likely to snack if you do not see any food.
- Most food stored in the refrigerator should be put into containers that you cannot see through. It may even help to remove the light bulb from the refrigerator.
- Put fruits and vegetables in see-through containers to eat more of them.
- If you like to nibble while cooking, try brushing your teeth before you start preparing food or chew sugarless gum.
- Serve meals buffet style instead of putting serving dishes on the table. If you put serving dishes on the table, put them on one end of the table, and you sit on the other end.
- Ask someone else to scrape dishes or put up leftovers so you are not tempted to eat the last bite of food in the pan.
- Pack lunches after the evening meal when you are not hungry instead of in the morning before breakfast.
- Do not keep tempting high fat foods such as ice cream and cookies at home or work.

### **Control of Food Buying**

- Plan meals using the Food Guide Pyramid. This is a major change in the way you look at food. Start by planning only one meal or snack a day. Increase your pre-planning only when you feel comfortable.
- Make a shopping list. Include only the items needed for your planned meals. Buy only the items you have on your list. Items not bought will not be eaten.
- Shop when your stomach is full.
- Shop when the grocery is less crowded to get in and out quickly. The less time you spend in the store, the more likely you will buy only the items on your list.
- Put groceries in the trunk of the car or out of reach while you are driving to avoid snacking on the way home.

### **Control of Food Intake**

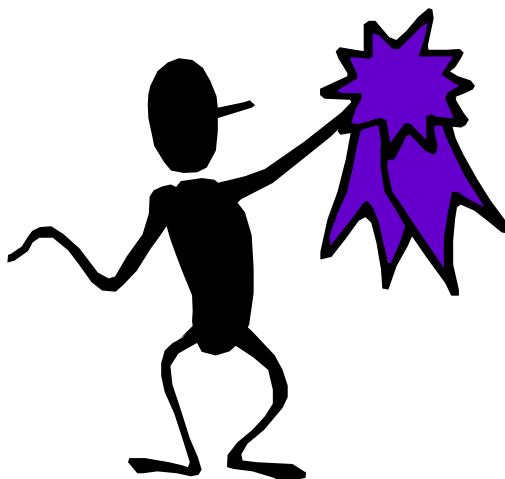
- Slow down your eating. Put your fork, knife, spoon, or sandwich down after every bite. It takes 20 minutes to begin to digest food so you no longer feel hunger.
- Taste, chew thoroughly, and swallow the food before taking another bite. This may be hard if you usually put food on your fork before swallowing.
- Stop eating in the middle of the meal or snack and wait 2 minutes or count to 120. This gives your body more time to begin to digest food.
- Leave the table and return after 2 minutes or have a pleasant conversation with someone for 2 minutes.
- Use a fork or spoon to eat everything. Do not use fingers.
- Avoid bending over your plate. Sit up straight and bring the food to your mouth — not your mouth to the food.
- When you get the urge to eat, try doing some activity like taking a walk.
- Try to eat so slowly that you are the last one finished eating, without taking second helpings.
- Use a smaller plate than you usually do and take smaller bites.
- Leave the table as soon as you are finished eating.
- Do something that signals the end of the meal — have a cup of coffee or tea, brush your teeth, and wash your hands.
- Try leaving one or more bites of food on your plate. This helps reinforce the control you have over your eating habits and helps you know you do not have to eat everything placed in front of you.
- Drink a glass of water before sitting down to eat.
- Plan 5–6 small meals a day rather than 3 larger meals. Avoid getting too hungry.
- Never skip a meal, especially breakfast.
- Control high calorie foods like chocolate rather than eliminate them; occasionally, save calories for your favorite foods and desserts.



### **Control of Eating While Away from Home**

- Choose a restaurant where you are known personally. A “regular” customer is more likely to get special food preparations.
- For restaurants that serve complimentary chips or bread before the meal, ask the server not to bring those foods to the table.
- Ask the server if you can order a “child-size” portion. Some restaurants allow you to do this; others may charge extra.
- Ask for salad dressing to be served on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing, pierce the salad, and then eat.
- When the server brings your meal, immediately ask for a “doggie bag.” Take half of your meal and place it in the doggie bag. This way, you eat less and have a meal ready to go.
- At parties with buffets, look at food on the buffet before putting food on your plate. Take small amounts and choose foods wisely.
- Sit away from the buffet to eat your food and do not go back for seconds.
- Avoid conversations near the buffet table.
- Ask for a small serving of dessert and eat only half. To avoid dessert, tell the hostess you are full from the delicious meal.
- Try to avoid alcoholic beverages or drink only one by sipping it slowly. Alcohol has a high calorie content with no nutritional value.

## **Reward yourself for improved habits.**



**Sometimes old eating habits reappear, but remember, you are looking for improvement, not perfection.**