

What **Surrounds You** Can Put **More Around You**

On the face of it, controlling your weight is simple: eat less and exercise more. But it's much harder than it sounds. Researchers have recently found several factors influencing your weight that you might not be aware of. For one, did you know that your neighborhood and community may affect your weight? A research team has found that access to produce markets, supermarkets and health food stores is associated with lower rates of obesity in New York City.

Here's how to recognize and take control of the things that may be tripping up your efforts at weight control.

Learn how to read and pay attention to nutrition labels. Learn how to read nutrition labels and ignore the rest of the packaging. Phrases like "low-fat" don't necessarily mean anything if you're concerned about calories. Some low-fat and non-fat foods actually have more calories than the normal versions. Make sure to look at the number of portions, too. That muffin might seem like it has 150 calories, but if the serving size is $\frac{1}{3}$ of a muffin, it really has 450 calories.

Watch those portion sizes. Did you know that the size and shape of what's holding your food can affect how much you eat? People basically eat what's put in front of them. So try serving food on smaller plates and bowls if you'd like to eat less. If you're eating out, order smaller dishes or plan to share larger ones. Or set aside a portion to take home with you before you even put a bite in your mouth.

Get enough sleep. You may not think about sleep when you're concerned with weight, but studies show that people who get less sleep have a higher risk of obesity (along with other health problems). Lack of sleep can disrupt the normal chemical signals in your body and lead you to eat more. So try to get enough sleep. And make sure not to snack mindlessly when you're sleepy, like late at night.

Calories =

...the amount of energy stored in food. When you eat more calories than your body can use, it stores that extra energy as fat.



CONTINUED
ON NEXT PAGE

Your Surroundings And Your Weight

(Continued from previous page)

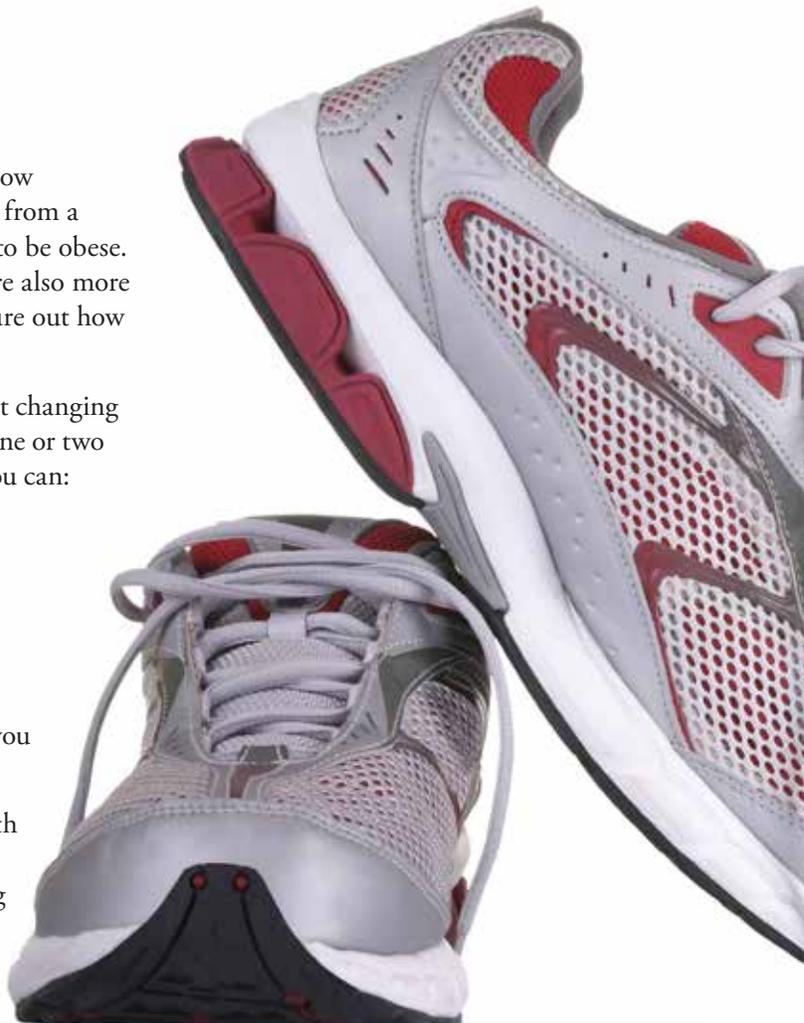
Your surroundings can also affect how active you are. Studies show that people in neighborhoods without sidewalks, or who live far from a recreational facility or a walking or biking trail, are more likely to be obese. People who perceive their community as unpleasant or unsafe are also more likely to be obese. Recognize your particular challenges and figure out how to add exercise and physical activity to your daily routine.

Once you identify the things that affect your weight, you can start changing them. Set modest goals and gradually improve your habits. Pick one or two things in your life that you think you can change. For example you can:

- ✓ Add one extra fruit or vegetable to every meal
- ✓ Walk 15 to 30 minutes a day
- ✓ Cut out one soda every day
- ✓ Stand up and stretch for one minute every hour

You may have to try a few times, but when you meet each goal you can move on to the next one.

Moreover, you may be more likely to lose weight if you work with friends, relatives and co-workers to develop healthier lifestyles. Get the family together to make nutritious meals. Form walking groups with co-workers. Take a dance class with friends.



WEIGHT CONTROL TIPS

- ✓ **Use nutrition labels.** Don't guess how many calories you're eating.
- ✓ **Watch your portions.** Value-size servings aren't a bargain if you're eating too much.
- ✓ **Cut the sugar.** Don't let sugary soda or other sweets crowd out healthy foods and drinks.
- ✓ **Don't eat out of habit.** Mindless eating at work or in front of the TV can pack on the pounds.
- ✓ **Think about the whole meal,** not just the main course.
- ✓ **Use smaller dishes and containers.** Larger ones encourage you to eat more.
- ✓ **Keep reminders of how much you're eating.** Wrappers, empty containers and bones nearby remind you of how much you've eaten.
- ✓ **Get enough sleep.** Less sleep is linked to higher rates of obesity.
- ✓ **Get active.** Look for opportunities to add physical activity to your daily routine.
- ✓ **Do it together.** Family, friends and coworkers can all help each other make healthy changes to their weight.