

# Healthy Weight Loss

By Chris Dixon, M.Ed.

Weight loss is the most common goal of fitness consumers & exercisers. Losing weight can help you be healthier, feel better, and reduce the risk of certain diseases. This goal however can be extremely difficult, specifically without a sound strategy. If you want to lose weight there are a few things you should consider before you begin your journey. All weight loss is not created equal.

What is weight? Weight is mass. Your human body, its muscles, bones, fat, etc. has a total mass. When you step on a scale the number you see is the total mass of your body. But how important is that number really? Our society has taught us to focus on weight so much that sometimes people are ashamed of how much they weigh. Years ago, I changed my philosophy on coaching weight loss clients. It wasn't enough to coach weight loss but the focus became coaching "healthy weight loss".

Healthy weight loss is the term we use to describe the consistent loss of weight over a period of time that

minimizes health risks and can be maintained. With that definition it is important to discuss the tenants of healthy weight loss. The period of time is important, whether it be 6 weeks or 6 months the key is consistency. Many people become frustrated when they begin a fitness program or diet plan, have some initial weight loss and then it stops. In addition, reducing weight in a manner that minimizes health risks and can be maintained is important. Healthy weight loss takes the focus off of weight (mass) and places it on composition.

Body composition helps you understand the changes in your weight/mass. Two individuals who weigh 250 lbs., one with 15% and the other with 35% body fat have a different physique and potentially different health outcomes based on their composition. It's important to remember, the risks of certain diseases increase as the amount of adipose tissue (fat) on the body increases. So, whether your mass is

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200 lbs. or 400 lbs. that doesn't really seem to matter in the world of health. What is more important is the amount of fat you carry. This shift in focus from mass to composition essentially makes your weight irrelevant. It's a good number to know, but when it comes to health it would be more prudent to understand the composition of your body.

Promoting healthy weight loss aids individuals in losing weight as a product of reducing the amount of fat. This changes appearance as well as decreases the risk of disease. When people say they desire to lose weight, typically they don't desire to lose muscle mass. The goal of healthy weight loss is to lose fat and maintain as much muscle as possible. This is where having a healthy strategy for weight loss can set you up for success. There are three main strategies in weight reduction: *1) a reduction in calories, 2) an increase in activity level or 3) a reduction in calories AND an increase in activity level.* The strategy you choose will determine the type of tissue your body metabolizes as your mass is reduced.

Weight loss is a physically and emotionally tough process. If your

goal is weight loss you want think long-term. Many methods people use that lead to weight loss are not only unsustainable, but can create adverse effects on health. Generally speaking, healthy weight loss should be gradual and reduces the amount of fat on the body whilst preserving muscle tissue. All weight loss is not created equal.

