



February 1, 2002

Dear EAT RIGHT MONTANA Friend:

Happy Heart Month! Welcome to issue #2 in our series on **Moving Montana Toward a Fit Future**. This month we'll define a healthy weight - and then explain how **whole grains** and **walking** can help women (and their families) move toward a healthy weight - and a healthy heart at the same time.

Most American women worry about their weight. Surveys report that as many as 90 percent of women are dissatisfied with their bodies and would like to lose significant amounts of weight. Women's weight concerns are usually more focused on appearance rather than health. A *People Magazine* survey in 2000 found that 93 percent of women had tried to lose weight and **34 percent were willing to try a diet even if it posed a small health risk.**

This focus on looking good, rather than on being healthy, leads Americans to try silly fad diets and sometimes dangerous weight loss products. The goal of this year's **EAT RIGHT MONTANA** materials is to shift the focus from weight loss to healthy behaviors. This approach is supported by research showing that people can significantly improve their health and reduce their risk factors by eating better and being more active - whether or not they lose weight. In reality, healthy people come in a wide variety of sizes, shapes and weights. Our goal is to show every body how easy and delicious it is to enjoy a healthy lifestyle today - and a fit future tomorrow.

For more on **walking** and **whole grains**, visit these websites:

- www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/ (Physical Activity and Nutrition at CDC)
- www.digiwalker.com (Pedometers, walking programs, and more)
- www.choosetomove.org (American Heart Association program for women)
- www.wheatfoods.org/ (Wheat Foods Council - recipes, research and more)

As always, we appreciate your support and welcome your suggestions.

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What is a healthy weight for you?

A common-sense approach to setting weight management goals

Weight and body image in America

Aiming for a healthy weight can be confusing in today's celebrity-driven culture. Although there has been some movement toward more realistic body images, most of the models that people see in the media are extremely thin, lean and athletic.

Few average Americans have the genetics, time or money necessary for such "perfect" bodies. (Digital manipulation of fashion photography also helps quite a bit!) Unfortunately, many people damage their mental and physical health in vain attempts to be beautiful and acceptable. Dumb diets, dangerous weight loss products and disordered eating are all too common, especially among teens, women and overweight people – who will do anything in a desperate effort to reach the unattainable.

Government weight guidelines

Government weight guidelines have shifted from the old height-weight tables to the concept of Body Mass Index (BMI). In 1998, an expert panel from the National Institutes of Health chose BMI as a reliable and inexpensive way to classify the health risk of being overweight or obese.

BMI was used to define a healthy weight in the December 2001 *Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. A BMI table, complete description of BMI calculations, and the relationship of BMI to health can be found in the Surgeon General's healthy weight advice for consumers at:

www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_advice.htm

Looking beyond BMI for your healthy weight

Many health professionals are using a more holistic definition of healthy weight – one that focuses more on health than weight. Here are some thoughts from experts who think beyond BMI when looking at weight management.

A healthy weight is:

- **determined by your lifestyle, not by a number on the scale or BMI chart.**
- **a weight where you can have food be part of your life, but not all of your life.**
- **the weight that one's body settles into with a balanced lifestyle, healthful eating, and regular physical activity.**
- **a weight that is attainable and maintainable within a reasonably stable range without having to resort to heroic efforts of restricting caloric intake or excessively exaggerating caloric expenditure.**
- **a weight range that a person settles into while respecting natural appetites for food, movement, and rest; without using restrictive eating patterns, compulsive exercise, medications, or supplements to manage their weight.**

Provided by Eat Right Montana



**Moving Montana Toward a Fit Future: Every step counts
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Healthy Families 2002: Healthy weights, healthy hearts (2nd in a series of 12)

Few American women understand their risk of heart disease. Even fewer know how easy it is to reduce cardiac risk, enhance overall health, and maintain a healthy weight with simple lifestyle changes.

“More than one in five American women suffer from some type of cardiovascular disease,” says Lynn Paul, EdD, RD, registered dietitian with the MSU Extension Service in Bozeman. “Although it is a common perception that breast cancer is the leading cause of death among women, more die from heart disease than from breast, ovarian, uterine and lung cancers combined. Heart disease claims the lives of nearly 500,000 American women every year.”

The good news is that lifestyle changes can help women, and their families, reduce their risk of heart disease. The even better news is that these same simple steps are also the best way to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Taking more walks and eating more whole grains are two of these steps.

“Getting fit and staying healthy can be as simple as putting one foot in front of the other,” says Dr. Paul. Research shows that walking 10,000 steps a day can help women manage their weight and lower cardiac risk factors, like blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Most American couch potatoes currently average about 2,000 to 3,000 steps per day – so there is plenty of room for improvement.

According to Paul, eating more whole grains is another heart-healthy habit that makes delicious sense. “Many studies confirm the benefits of whole grain foods like breads and cereals,” she says. “The various nutrients in whole foods seem to be even more powerful when they are packaged together.”

Eat Right Montana (ERM), a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montana women to learn more about heart disease. Give yourself a Valentine this year and begin taking some simple, effective steps toward a healthy heart – and a healthy weight.

“Heart-healthy habits will also energize your busy life,” says Paul. “Fun physical activity and delicious whole foods can give you the get-up-and-go to do all the things you want to do.”

ATTACHED: “Eating grains the healthy weigh” and “Walking works wonders”

Eating Grains the Healthy "Weigh"

Grains, starches and carbohydrates are now one of the most confusing areas of nutrition. The high-protein diet gurus claim that almost any carbo can make you fat, but nutrition experts know that whole grains are essential for weight management and good health.

1. Eat whole grains for wholesome goodness.

Any grain product (breads, cereals, rolls, pasta, rice, crackers, etc.) can be part of your healthy eating style. However, foods made from the whole kernel offer a whole lot more. Read food labels carefully to find products that list **whole grains as the first ingredient**.

2. Eat whole grains for energy.

Carbohydrates are your body's preferred source of energy – for long-lasting muscle and brain power. Since whole grains tend to be digested more slowly than refined ones, they can **help stabilize blood sugar levels** in people with diabetes (and everyone else too!).

3. Eat whole grains for fiber.

Fiber is essential for a healthy (and regular) intestinal tract. **Whole grains have more fiber than refined grains**, since they include the outer layer of the kernel. Choose good sources of soluble fiber (oatmeal and barley) and insoluble fiber (wheat, rye, and corn).

4. Eat whole grains for vitamins and minerals.

When grains are refined, nutrients are discarded with the bran and germ of the kernel. Some lost nutrients are added back to "enriched" products like flour. However, in whole grains, **the B-vitamins, folic acid, iron, zinc and copper stay in one delicious package**.

5. Eat whole grains for phytonutrients.

These common plant chemicals are hot news in the nutrition world for their ability to fight disease and promote longevity. Like fruits and vegetables, **whole grains offer plenty of phytonutrients** to help fight cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

6. Eat whole grains for fullness.

Weight management is easiest when you feel full and satisfied with meals and snacks. Whole grains, with **nutty flavors and chewy textures**, are just what the dietitian ordered. Enjoy whole grain cereals for breakfast; whole grain granola bars for snacks; whole grain bread on sandwiches; and whole grain couscous for dinner. It's easy and delicious!



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Walking Works Wonders

Want to lose fat, get fit and have more energy? Want to improve your blood pressure, blood sugar, blood cholesterol and reduce your risk of disease? Amazingly, you can get all these benefits (and many more) from just putting one foot in front of the other!

1. Walk regularly.

The key to fitness is consistency. Start by picking a walk (or several small walks) that fits into your schedule – a walk to work, a walk to school, a walk at lunch, or a walk around the block. Make your walk a top priority – and aim for walking at least five days a week.

2. Walk 10,000 steps a day.

Research shows that walking 10,000 steps a day is all it takes to reduce stress, improve health, and reduce the risk of disease. With an inexpensive pedometer, it's fun (and easy) to see how quickly your steps add up from simple changes like taking the stairs.

3. Walk for transportation.

Using your legs instead of a car is one of the most efficient ways to fit fitness into your day. Try walking to the grocery store, the post office, or the restaurant. If walking all the way takes too long, park in a central location – then walk back and forth to your car.

4. Walk for fun.

Walking + friends or kids or dog = FUN. A daily walk can do double duty – as a daily dose of companionship with friends, a time to connect with family, or a way to keep your pets strong and healthy. It can also be a relaxing solo time to think or listen to music.

5. Walk outside.

In almost any weather, walking outside is possible with the right clothes and shoes. Look for safe sidewalks, country roads, and parks. Athletic fields are also fun to walk around. The ground is usually smooth – and watching a practice or game makes the time fly by.

6. Walk inside.

Remember, every steps counts – every step around the house, around the office or around the mall. You can walk around the house during TV commercials; walk around the office during break time; and walk around the mall before or after a shopping trip.



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DANGER SIGNS OF A FAD DIET

Want to maintain a healthy weight? Want to build muscle and lose fat? Confused by conflicting claims, testimonials, and hype by so-called experts? These signs can help you spot a diet disaster before it strikes you. **Forget plans, products and pills that promise:**

Rapid weight loss.

Slow, steady weight loss is more likely to last than dramatic weight changes. Healthy plans aim for a loss of no more than ½ to 2 pounds per week. If you lose weight quickly, you'll lose muscle, bone and water – and only a little bit of fat.

Hazardous ingredients.

Some compounds in over-the-counter products can be dangerous and even deadly. **Avoid all products with ephedra, ephedrine and Ma Huang**, which has been associated with nerve damage, heart attacks, and sudden death.

Magic foods or supplements.

There are no miracle foods or pills that melt fat away. There is nothing that will burn fat while you sleep. There are no super foods that can magically change your genetic code. And, there is no scientific proof that any food is addictive.

Bizarre quantities and limitations.

Be wary of diets that allow unlimited quantities of any food – like grapefruit or cabbage soup. Avoid any diet that eliminates entire food groups. Even if you take a vitamin/mineral supplement, you'll miss some critical nutrients.

Specific food combinations.

Forget it. Eating the “wrong” combinations of food doesn't cause them to turn to fat immediately – or to produce toxins. There is no evidence that combining certain foods or eating foods at specific times of day will help in weight loss.

Rigid menus.

Life is already complicated enough. Limiting food choices or following rigid meal plans can be an overwhelming, distasteful task. What you need is a realistic, flexible eating style that helps you be your best – in class, sports and life.

No need to exercise.

Not likely. Regular physical activity is essential for permanent weight control – and for overall good health. The key to success is to find physical activities that you enjoy – and then aim for 30 to 45 minutes of activity on most days of the week.



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Ten Smart Ways to Manage Your Weight

1. Be realistic about your goals.

Not everyone was born to have buns of steel or a model-thin body. Aiming for the impossible can mess up your body – and your mind.

2. Be gentle with your changes.

Make small changes in what you eat and the activity you do. Small changes, made over time, always work better than complete makeovers.

3. Be active in your daily routine.

If you are already physically active, make sure that you are getting enough fuel. If you're spending too much time on the couch, get up and dance.

4. Be adventurous with your food choices.

The best way to get the 40+ nutrients you need is to enjoy a wide variety of foods – and to explore different tastes, textures, and colors.

5. Be flexible with your approach.

There's no need to worry about one meal, one day or any specific food. All foods, from lettuce to pizza, can be included in a healthful eating style.

6. Be positive about your body.

Saying harsh things about your body will only make it harder to take good care of yourself. Acknowledge your strengths and take good care.

7. Be sensible with your knife and fork.

Enjoy all foods, just don't overdo it. Recognize that American portion sizes are ridiculous. Listen to the hunger and fullness cues from your body.

8. Be creative with your fitness program.

Get fit by finding activities you enjoy. If you love organized sports or working out at the gym, go for it. If not, go dancing, do yoga, or trying something totally new.

9. Be persistent in your changes.

Forget instant results and magical thinking. Realize that real progress only comes from small changes that you make over and over again.

10. Be patient with yourself.

It takes time to ditch old habits for new ones. Focus on your personal goals – and make healthy choices so you can do the things you want to do.



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Healthy Families 2002: Moving Montana Toward a Fit Future: Start today for a healthy weight

January 2002

- **The ABCs of a Healthy Weight**

February 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Women**

March 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Men**

April 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Children**

May 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Pregnant Women**

June 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight After Having a Baby**

July 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Babies and Toddlers**

August 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Teens**

September 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for Seniors**

October 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight during Menopause**

November 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight for People with Diabetes**

December 2002

- **Moving toward a Healthy Weight Forever**

