

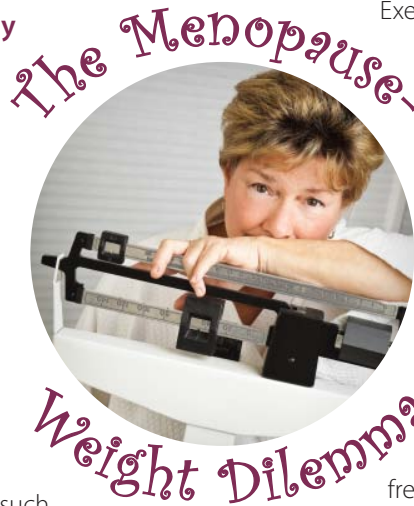
**Q.** I am a plump 63-year-old woman. I have carried extra pounds for a number of years now. It doesn't matter how much I starve myself, my weight stays the same. I try to walk at least two miles almost every day, and try to eat reasonably, but I can't lose weight. Please help!

**A.** As women approach menopause, they often find themselves experiencing unexplained weight gain – especially around the waists and hips – despite their attempts keep the weight off. Post-menopausal women can gain 10-20 pounds. But that doesn't mean that it's healthy. Before you start a weight-loss program, talk to your doctor. There might be an underlying health issue, such as insulin resistance or hypothyroidism, which is contributing to your weight gain. Once your doctor rules out any health condition as a cause for your weight gain, you're ready to start developing healthy habits that will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight for life!

The best way to lose weight, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is to follow a healthy eating plan and be active. It sounds like you are off to a good start by walking 2 miles on most days. Many people have found that it takes 60 minutes or more of physical activity most days of the week to see results. The National Weight Control Registry found that the majority of people who have lost weight and kept it off:

- Exercise on average about 1 hour each day
- Eat breakfast every day
- Weigh themselves at least once a week
- Watch less than 10 hours of TV per week

You may want to increase the amount of exercise you do each day to at least 60 minutes. It doesn't have to be continuous. For example, try walking 2 miles in the morning, a mile during a break from work, and a mile or 2 after dinner.



Exercise is helpful and has independent health benefits, but by itself will not usually result in significant weight loss unless it is in large amounts. You must eat fewer calories than you use to lose weight. An average woman your age may need about 1,800 calories a day to maintain weight. To lose weight, 500 calories less a day would be about 1,300 calories a day. That would be a good goal.

However, skipping meals, starving yourself, or going on a "diet" is not the way to lose weight. Instead, eat a healthy breakfast daily (including whole grains and fresh fruits) and choose mostly unrefined foods.

Be sure to eliminate empty calories, including all soft drinks or sweetened juices, sweets, most visible fats, and all "white" grains (white bread and rolls, refined cereals, white rice, etc.). Use whole grains instead. Aim for 25-30 grams of fiber daily. Eat lots of vegetables, whole grains, fresh fruit, soups and salads (light on dressing). On 1,300 calories a day, you will lose weight, about 1 pound a week on the average, if you continue to exercise.

You might benefit from joining a safe weight-loss program. Look for one that:

- Sets a goal of slow and steady weight loss – 1/2 to 2 pounds per week
- Offers low-calorie eating plans with a wide range of healthy, unrefined foods
- Encourages you to be more physically active
- Teaches you about healthy eating and physical activity
- Adapts to your likes and dislikes

Losing weight will take some effort. It's best to adopt healthy lifestyle habits rather than to do something temporary (i.e., "...until I lose weight"). You'll find you will be fitter and will feel better.

