

FEMINA health

Believe



Photo: Simone Van Den Berg

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The BMI chart works as follows:

BMI less than 18.5	Underweight
BMI between 18.5 and 24.9	Normal
BMI between 25 and 34.9	Obese
BMI greater than 35	Morbidly obese

The other indicator is the Waist to Hip Ratio (WHR). Divide the waist measurement by the hip measurement to obtain this ratio. Both measurements should be in centimetres. This ratio should not be more than 0.85 for women and 1.0 for men. A higher WHR indicates an apple-shaped figure which is prone to heart problems.

Calculate the excess baggage

The next step would be to ascertain how much excess weight you are carrying. This can be back-calculated with the help of your current BMI and the desired BMI. In

Ankita's case, her BMI is 31. Her goal should be to achieve a BMI of 24 for which she will need to lose a whopping 19 kg. Setting such goals is unrealistic and can cause frustration when not achieved. It is much better to set a goal to lose about 10 per cent of the current weight at the first go — that being 8 kg for Ankita. It will bring her BMI to 28 — a realistic goal. It takes about a week to lose 0.5 to 1 kg, so this could be achieved in two to three months.

As Dr Sujata Chari says, "Weight loss of around 2.5 kg to 3 kg per month is acceptable. Loss more than that needs to be monitored closely with biochemical parameters."

People blindly go on a diet and suffer great inconveniences later. So it is always better to be safe than sorry. Here are a few things you must ensure before you embark on a diet.

Are you really overweight?

Of course, being thin to the point of emaciation may be in, but you must ascertain whether you are really overweight or just have a full figure.

There are two indicators of obesity. The first is Body Mass Index (BMI) — a mathematical formula arrived at by dividing your weight in kilograms by your height in metres squared. Consider Ankita, whose weight is 80 kg and height, 1.60 metres. Her BMI would be 80 divided by 1.6 x 1.6 (2.56) which equals 31.25 (rounded off to 31).

Ankita falls into the obese category. If your BMI veers to more than 25, it is time to take your weight seriously.

Pause before lose

NOBODY IS TOO RICH OR TOO THIN BEFORE YOU PLUNGE INTO A WEIGHT REGIMEN, IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU WEIGH AND HOW MUCH YOU NEED TO LOSE. BY SIA MITRA



Photo: Monika Adamczyk

Check Medical conditions

Before you start on any diet, consult your physician.

People suffering from diabetes, heart problems, arthritis, thyroid problems, hypertension or polycystic ovaries syndrome should avoid taking up any activity without consulting a doctor. Discuss the regimen with your doctor to iron out any risks.

"You need to consult a physician regarding your blood pressure, sugar status and thyroid function" says Dr Chari. It is important to determine any history of exercise-induced asthma as well. She may be able to suggest alternatives too. For example, a person suffering from joint pain should not jog but swimming is okay. These conditions need to be treated especially

while doing isometric exercises like weights." Diabetics should check blood sugar level before exercising and refrain if it is too low. Dr Chari adds, "Diabetics need to be regular with their diet, especially before exercise.

Unaccustomed exercise can trigger an attack of hypoglycaemia which the trainer and patient should be aware of. A diabetic should also carry sugar or glucose in case of a low sugar attack."

According to Sheela Krishnaswamy, managing partner and founder of NICHE, a nutrition consulting firm based in Bangalore, "If there's a risk involved, both blood sugar and blood pressure need to be checked. In case of women, pregnancy needs to be ruled out before embarking on a weight-loss programme."

Examine your mind

It is important to analyse your state before you start a weight loss plan as it will need strong resolve to avoid fatty foods and stick to an exercise plan. Firstly, examine your motive. Is it to improve your health or is it to looking better? It is difficult for a person to stick to her goal unless she is convinced. If she is not, no amount of threatening from anyone will motivate. If you are stressed out, maintaining a stricter-than-usual routine can be detrimental to your wellbeing.

Ask for help

A support system is vital for those starting on a weight loss plan. Discuss your decision with those close to you. It is important that they know what it entails. Their help will prove invaluable in egging you on when getting up in the morning seems impossible. Ask your family to take time out for your routine. You may face opposition from some, so it is better to resolve these issues before starting out. Often, people eat because they are bored. A partner can help in such instances and motivate you to avoid mindless snacking.

Plan the exercise

Exercise is an important part of weight loss. Before starting out, do some research. If there is a gym that's conveniently located, get a membership. Talk to the instructor and get her to chalk out a plan to suit your needs. Taking up a vigorous game like tennis or badminton will also help. Or there's always jogging and brisk walking. You should start slowly, especially if your muscles have not seen too much work lately. Slowly increase your pace. It helps greatly if you adjust your routine to go along with a partner or friend. Do not forget to warm up and cool down before and after.

Manav Fernandes, head trainer at Sykz Gym says that "to tone up, one doesn't need hours of

cardio or hundreds of crunches. What is required is the right kind of exercise routine." He recommends doing 20 to 25 minutes of resistance training thrice a week, followed by 20 to 25 minutes of cardio daily. Resistance training should include squats, leg curls, calf raises, workouts with dumbbells, chest presses and back extensions. "Resistance training will ensure that calories are burned even after the session is completed," he explains.

The diet plan

The other important factor is a carefully drawn out diet schedule. A consultation with a dietician or nutritionist is essential to check whether the diet plan along with the supplements taken are risk free; your diet should also keep in mind your ailments, if any.

"First, meet with a qualified dietician. Stick to the meal plan and exercise programme as closely as possible. Weight loss doesn't happen in a day. Be patient and be content with steady and gradual weight loss. Get rid of junk food in your house and stock up on healthy foods," recommends Sheela Krishnaswamy "Keep comfortable exercise clothes ready for use."

Do not expect miracles. Remember, slow and steady wins the race. Armed with these tactics, you are sure to embark on a successful weight loss plan.

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