



## I Can Do This...

The way to weight loss begins with honesty and support

**N**ot many topics are off-limits anymore. Overweight and obesity may be among the last. If you or a loved one is overweight, it's time to make an honest assessment and start the wheels of change.

The truth is that if you're carrying too much fat, you don't need to be told about it. You know it. What you need is loving support, encouragement in making positive changes, and an actionable plan. If you're not overweight, but you love someone who is, you're just as much a part of the solution as you may be part of the problem. What you say, what you do, and what you don't do have more influence than you know.

I need to say  
*something* to my  
loved one...

### REBELS AT HEART

“People who are obese know they’re overweight,” said Dr. Thomas Groh of ThedaCare Behavioral Health. “They don’t need to hear, ‘Should you really be eating that piece of cake?’ or ‘Haven’t you had enough already?’ That makes any of us defensive and resentful. Many people who are overweight are really rebels at heart – they want to be their own person. Like the rest of us, they don’t want to be told what to do.”

“Overweight” refers to the health condition of an adult whose body mass index (BMI) is between 25 and 29.9. “Obese” indicates a BMI of 30 or more. BMI uses your height and weight to determine body fatness, and is a good indicator of health risks associated with lugging around those extra pounds. See how to calculate your BMI on page 7. For children, obesity is also measured using BMI, but it includes the child’s age. (See your pediatrician or family care doctor to find out your child’s BMI.) In everyone who’s got too many pounds for their frame, it’s a serious health condition. Obesity is a leading cause of death, worldwide.

### READY TO HEAR

As with any serious health problem – like smoking or drinking too much – motivation to make lifestyle changes must come from within. Owning up to obesity and being willing to do something about it is no different. “None of us is likely to do something because others are telling us to,” said Dr. Groh. “If we’re going to change, it has to begin internally.”

- \* **Wait for an appropriate opportunity**, such as your loved one can no longer participate in an activity he or she previously enjoyed, someone else in the family is struggling, or a health scare has cropped up.
- \* **Speak in love.** The message should be, “I care about you. I’m worried about what’s happening. I’m concerned for your health.”
- \* **Suggest a positive activity, and join in.** “Let’s take a walk, together.”
- \* **Don’t nag.** You’ll be tuned out every time.
- \* **Suggest and support a visit to the doctor.** When your loved one’s ready to act, start with this essential first step – many people avoid it. Your primary care physician can develop a personalized plan that offers practical steps, ways you can support, and hope for both of you.

## Friend or foe?

Supporting a loved one who needs to lose weight is sometimes best done without words – especially if you manage food for the household. Want to be a true support to your spouse or child? *Lead the change!*

“If you’re concerned about a loved one with a significant weight problem, decide if you will **be a friend** or an enemy in the kitchen,” recommends Dr. Thomas Groh of ThedaCare Behavioral Health. “Change how you shop, how you cook. Don’t keep tempting snacks in the house. Determine to **be a positive helper** and don’t sabotage efforts to eat healthier.”

Most of us get serious about losing weight because of a health scare – a heart attack, a diagnosis of diabetes or high blood pressure – or because we’re anticipating a significant life event like a wedding or class reunion. For Sherwood resident Jean DeKeyser, concern about the kind of role model she was for her children, a family history of heart disease, and the stress of constant negative feelings she had about herself prompted her to lose 45 pounds. She’s kept it off for almost six years.

“I grew up with a lot of self-consciousness about my body,” Jean said. “I often heard, ‘Don’t eat that! You’ll get fat.’ I battled my weight as long as I can remember. It didn’t impact my lifestyle too much, but I didn’t feel good about myself. The key in making the change was getting to a better place emotionally, and making a healthy lifestyle a priority.”

Even if you’ve got a special event or a doctor’s warning to motivate you, you’re likely to make a sustainable change only when you decide to – like Jean. When that time comes, start with a visit to your doctor.





I'm on my way!

### EAT LESS, BURN MORE

“People need to be empowered to make positive changes on their own,” said Dr. Nikolo Quinones of ThedaCare Physicians-Internal in Neenah. Dr. Quinones works with his patients to develop a personal plan that focuses on the two essentials for weight loss: Eating less and increasing activity.

“All diets share one thing in common - reducing the amount of calories you eat,” he said. “The only way to lose weight is to eat less.” The best way to know that you’re actually eating less is to keep a food diary.

“It’s really about being honest with yourself,” explained Dr. Quinones. “There is an appropriate amount of calories we should eat - and no more. Keeping a log of the exact amount of calories you put into your body tells you if you’re overeating. You can see the decisions you are making. In my experience, patients who keep a detailed food diary are more successful at weight loss.”

When it comes to exercise, Dr. Quinones gets equally detailed. “Saying, ‘Go exercise’ isn’t enough,” he said. “You need a very specific plan that fits your life. One of the best and easiest ways to increase activity is brisk walking. It will yield results.”

## BMI matters

A good way to determine if your level of fatness is a concern is to calculate your body mass index (BMI). All you need is a calculator, rock solid math skills, or a visit to [www.thedacare.org/BMI](http://www.thedacare.org/BMI).

1. Determine your height in inches
2. Multiply your height in inches by itself (square it)
3. Divide your weight in pounds by your squared height in inches
4. Multiply the answer to step #3 by 703.

Commonly-used BMI categories help us understand how healthy we are related to our weight:

18.5 or <	<b>UNDERWEIGHT</b>
18.5 - 24.9	<b>NORMAL</b>
25 - 29.9	<b>OVERWEIGHT</b>
30 or >	<b>OBESE</b>

It’s important to know that children’s BMI categories are different than adults, and are based on age. See your child’s doctor to understand your child’s BMI.



### FIT KIDS

Worried about your child's weight? Dr. John Edwards of ThedaCare Physicians-Pediatrics in Appleton recommends parents focus on fitness not on weight. "It's healthier to have good cardiovascular fitness and a BMI in the 85th to 95th percentile than to be a constant couch potato and have a BMI in the 50th percentile," he said.

Unconditional love is important, too. "A parent's love is not conditional on a child's weight or size," said Dr. Edwards. "We want kids to know that we love them, no matter what. We want to teach them good self-esteem and how to love themselves."

### ANOTHER OPTION

A BMI over 40, or higher than 35 with conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure, is called morbid obesity. For some morbidly obese adults, bariatric surgery is the best solution for significant weight loss. It's a solution, however, that requires significant preparation

## Worried about a child's weight?

While adults often succeed at weight loss by counting calories and watching the scale, children do better in an environment that supports overall health. As you set lifetime patterns for your child, avoid the numbers. Focus instead on being a healthy example.

- \* **Manage weight concerns without using a scale.** It's best to create a healthy, happy atmosphere that is not too restrictive.
- \* **Narrow the battleground by not buying junk food.** When the options are all healthy, that's what your child will eat!
- \* **Avoid being too controlling** - that may foster an eating disorder. "We don't want kids obsessing about weight," said Dr. John Edwards of ThedaCare Physicians-Pediatrics. "We want a focus on health."



## Parents *lead* the way

and commitment. “It’s not like having your appendix out,” said Dr. Groh. “It’s a complete lifestyle change for the rest of your life, not just an interruption for a few weeks. For example, you have to be able to manage stress without using food to cope.”

Jean couldn’t agree more. “It takes strength to be healthy,” she said. “You have to like yourself to spend the time and energy required to change your lifestyle. You need new ways to relieve stress that don’t rely on food.”

Whatever your weight loss method, staying on track for the long haul is the hardest part. “There’s no rocket science for weight loss,” said Jean. “There’s no magic bullet. Eat less and move more. It takes time. If you stop with that formula, the weight will come back. Surround yourself with family and friends who will encourage you. You can do it!”



We have more resources to help you lose weight. Find the list at:

[www.thedacare.org/resources](http://www.thedacare.org/resources)

To develop lifelong healthy eating habits, check out these ideas from Dr. John Edwards, a ThedaCare pediatrician, and his wife, Jill, also a physician. The Edwards have tried these tips on their own family of seven. They note that trying to do the whole list at once is too much. Pick two or three ideas, and start there!

- ★ **Grocery shop differently.** Avoid bread that isn’t 100% whole wheat, breakfast cereal that isn’t 100% whole grain, crackers, chips, coffee cakes, mayonaise-based salads and dressings, soda, fruit drinks, processed lunch meats and dairy products that are more than 2% milk fat.
- ★ **Be mindful of snacking.** If you’re hungry, or a child is hungry, sit down at a table with a piece of fruit or veggies, and a glass of water. Walking around with anything – even veggies – is an unhealthy habit (especially for toddlers).
- ★ **Look for ways to connect food with nutrition and satisfying hunger** – not as a reward, to feel better or reduce stress. Eating healthfully means making unconscious eating behaviors obvious, so we can change them.
- ★ **Nix the short-order chef approach to meals.** Everybody eats the same thing, including kids.
- ★ **Serve the salad or some fruit first**, about 20 minutes before the meal.
- ★ **Eat all meals at the table**, as a family, if possible.
- ★ **Turn off the TV** or other electronics while eating.
- ★ **Start with small portions.**
- ★ **Drink water with dinner** – Everyone who’s 2 and older. Skim milk is okay at breakfast and lunch.
- ★ **Slow down while eating**, take your time, talk together, laugh and refresh.
- ★ **No seconds until you’ve had a glass of water** and another serving of fruit or vegetables.
- ★ **Sack the clean-plate club.** Not finishing every morsel teaches children to stop when they’re full.
- ★ **Exercise together** at least 20 minutes, three days a week. Find an activity you all enjoy – make it fun, and gradually increase the amount time.