

Weight Loss for Older People

Here is no reason why older people should be overweight. But there are a number of factors which may cause it. One is that as we get older our metabolism decreases. That means that we need less food to function and if we continue eating as we always have we will get fat. Older people are often more sedentary than when they were young. They feel the cold more, perhaps osteoarthritis makes their joints painful. Walking or other exercise becomes less attractive and is often given up altogether.

There are other reasons why older people put on weight. Stress is high on the list. The image of living a tranquil old age in a thatched cottage with a blossoming garden and a cat, surrounded by adoring grandchildren, is one we all cherish. The actuality is often worries about health and money. The inability to care for the house and garden and concern about what happens to the cat if we are ill.

Stress causes many problems, among which are raised blood pressure and heart rate and release of cortisol. The effect of cortisol is to slow down the metabolic rate making us burn less fat and gain weight. Of course, stress can also cause comfort eating and snacking which just makes matters worse.

Excess weight in the elderly can greatly affect quality of life. Like most overweight people they will have abdominal fat, but can also accumulate fat around the lungs. This can cause breathlessness. So we have the familiar sight of an overweight breathless Senior having problems climbing stairs and being helped in and out of vehicles. We all slow down as we get older but better fitness levels equal better mobility which in turn leads to a more happy and healthy way of life.

So how do we achieve better fitness levels? We need to look at how much exercise we take and what we eat. The easiest way for older persons to exercise is to walk. They can walk as long or as short a distance as they are able. Just walk every day and a few minutes longer each time. Aim for 30 minutes of walking daily as an ideal length of exercise. This should help maintain essential muscle mass and go a long way towards making you feel more fit and alert.

For a basic diet it is best to eat lean meat, oily fish, such as mackerel, and fresh fruit and vegetables. You will still be able to eat milk products, bread and other carbohydrates, but try to decrease your daily intake. More than one egg a day can raise your cholesterol level, so do not eat too many. As long as your basic diet is right and you exercise you can have the occasional treat. A glass of red wine a day will do no harm and may do good. Just cut down on snacking, fizzy drinks and large portions.

Eating like this should not be an imposition and together with gentle exercise will soon result in weight loss, a more healthy lifestyle and the prospect of a happier longer life. It really is worth a try.

About the Author

Peter Stockwell is a writer, walker and author of the Senior Walking Fitness Blog helping all ages to [walk for weight loss](#) and achieve lifetime fitness.

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