

Women and Underweight



Studies show low weight can affect your health, your mood and your appearance. You may look and feel tired or stressed, have bone loss or low iron, and get sick more often. There are many easy tips for gaining weight so you can look and feel your best. Flip the page to find answers to:

- *Why are you underweight?*
- *What can you do to add pounds (or gain enough weight if you are pregnant)?*
- *What are some tips to make it easy to get to a healthier weight?*

Why Are You Underweight?

If you smoke:

Smoking may take the place of eating regular and healthy meals. Quitting or cutting down on smoking will improve your health in many ways. And you may find it easier to gain some weight.

- Listen to your body and eat when you feel hungry. Try not to curb your appetite with a cigarette.
- Start your day with breakfast, not a cigarette.
- If you want help to kick the habit, call **1-800-QUIT NOW** to make it easier.



If you are too stressed to eat regularly:

When some people are stressed, they might not feel like eating. If this happens to you, think about what causes the stress in your life. Learn what you can do to relax more or reduce the stress.

- When you feel stress building, take a few minutes to breathe deeply so you can calm down and collect your thoughts.





- Listen to music or call a friend and talk it out when the going gets rough.
- Take care of you and get help if the stress gets to be too much. Talk to your health care provider for support to get through it.

If you do not have enough food to eat:

If you don't have enough money for food, how can you be healthy? No one deserves to be hungry. Help is out there.

- If money is tight for food, buy low cost foods that pack a healthy punch. Try lentils, beans (e.g. black and pinto), eggs, peanut butter, powdered milk, and fruits and vegetables in season.
- Learn to cook. You will likely spend less, eat better and have skills to be proud of. Also, cooking can be relaxing or fun!
- Call WIC, SNAP or your local food bank for food assistance. Ask your health care provider for a phone number and call today.



If you take street drugs or drink alcohol:



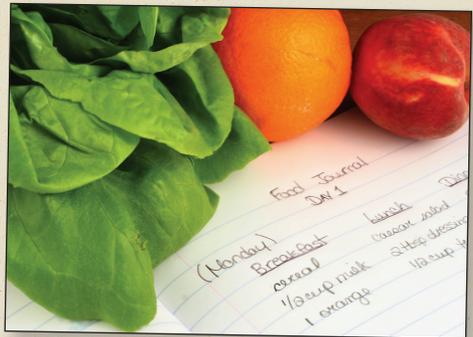
Taking drugs or drinking alcohol sometimes takes the place of healthy eating. It takes a toll on your health and how you look. It can also “rule your world”. Learn to take control of your body and your looks.

- Don't skip meals. Hunger can be a trigger to reach for drugs or alcohol.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand. You can reach for them when you are not able to fix a healthy meal.
- You deserve to be drug and alcohol free. Call the **Alcohol and Drug Council of NC** at **1- 800-688-4232** for help to stop drinking or using.

If you eat, but never seem to gain weight:

Some people seem to eat all day and never gain weight. Maybe this is you. Take a closer look at what you eat each day for some clues for how to gain weight.

- Write down what you eat for a few days to see how much you really eat and bring in to your next appointment. You might be surprised once you see it in writing. It may not be enough food, especially if you are very active.



- Eat lots of mini-meals or snacks throughout the day. You will often eat more this way than if you eat fewer large meals.
- Do not eat on the run. Even small meals and snacks taste best when you take the time to enjoy them.

Underweight and Pregnancy

If you are underweight and get pregnant or do not gain enough weight during your pregnancy, you and your baby may have health problems. Be at a healthy weight before pregnancy and aim to gain enough weight during your pregnancy. See the chart below for how many pounds you should gain to have a healthy baby.

Ask your health care provider if you do not know your pre-pregnancy BMI. Write it here: _____

Recommendations for Total Weight Gain During Pregnancy		
Weight Status	Pre-Pregnancy BMI	Total Weight Gain (pounds)
Underweight	<18.5	28–40
Healthy Weight	18.5-24.9	25–35
Overweight	25.0-29.9	15–25
Obese	≥30.0	11–20

Easy Food Tips for Gaining Weight

- Eat often throughout the day (three meals plus two or three snacks).
- Eat a bedtime snack so it will not take the place of meals during the day.
- Make it easy to snack. Plan and carry healthy grab-and-go snacks with you.
- Eat higher calorie foods such as nuts, peanut butter, cheese and avocados.
- Spread peanut butter on crackers, apple slices or bananas.
- Eat dairy foods made with whole milk. Try pudding, cheese, yogurt, ice cream.
- Drink breakfast shakes, fruit smoothies and whole milk.
- Make hard-boiled eggs to keep on hand in the refrigerator for meals or snacks.
- Add nuts and seeds, such as almonds or sunflower seeds, to salads and casseroles.
- Add powdered milk or protein powder to smoothies.



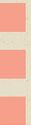
A Healthy Weight for You

Getting to a healthy weight may take some time. Set a weight goal. Allow yourself to take baby steps in reaching that goal. Reward yourself along the way!

Current weight: _____

Goal weight: _____

Steps I will take to gain weight:





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