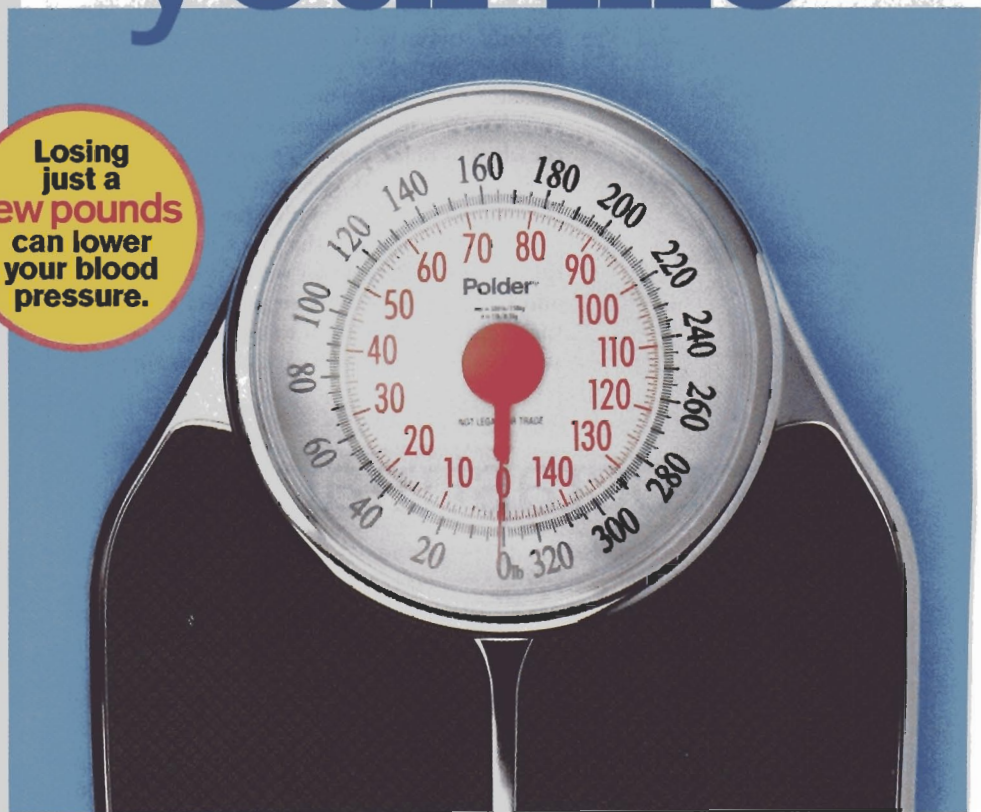


how losing (even a little) weight can save your life

Perhaps by now, after three months of following our Real-Life, Healthy Life Makeover plan, your clothes fit better, your energy level is higher, and just thinking about that lower number on the scale makes you grin. Well, here's even more reason to stick to your healthy-eating, regular-exercising guns: **Shedding extra pounds can also ward off disease and other serious medical conditions.**

The result: less time spent in your doctor's waiting room and more time enjoying your recharged life. by Nancy Rones

Losing just a few pounds can lower your blood pressure.



Staying at a healthy weight means you'll...

■ **Live longer.** Keeping your body mass index (BMI) at 24.9 or less could add up to eight years to your life, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Why? The higher your BMI (30 or higher is considered obese), the greater your chances of developing diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease, gallbladder disease, or osteoarthritis. In fact, 80 percent of obese adults have one of these conditions, and 40

percent have two or more. These are the factors, experts believe, that eventually contribute to higher mortality rates in overweight and obese people.

■ **Dodge diabetes.** When participants in the national Diabetes Prevention Program, who were all at high risk for type 2 diabetes, lost just 5 percent to 7 percent of their body weight, they reduced their risk of diabetes—a life-

threatening disease that causes chronically high blood sugar and can lead to heart and kidney damage—by a staggering 58 percent.

■ **Ward off heart disease.** Obese people, even those who have no other risk factors (such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol), are at four times greater risk for hospitalization or death from heart disease in older age than people who maintain a normal weight, researchers from Northwestern University found.

■ **Lower your blood pressure.** Drop 10 percent of the weight you've gained since you were 18 and chances are you'll decrease the top number of your blood pressure by 7 mm Hg and the bottom number of your blood pressure by 4 mm Hg, says RLHL expert Michael F. Roizen, M.D., coauthor of *You: The Owner's Manual*. So, for example, if you've gained 20 pounds since high school, losing as little as two pounds will usually lower your blood pressure. You could also take up to five years off your body's age, Roizen says.

■ **Boost your fertility.** Being overweight (with a BMI between 25 and 29.9) can lower your chances of conceiving. Carrying extra pounds increases estrogen levels, which may prevent you from ovulating regularly or at all. Shedding just 5 percent to 10 percent of your weight can reduce that risk.

■ **Increase your odds of beating breast cancer.** Women who were overweight before being diagnosed with breast cancer were one-and-a-half-times more likely to die from the disease, researchers from the Brigham and Women's Hospital Nurses' Health Study found. And women who gained an average of 17 pounds after diagnosis had a more than 50 percent greater risk of recurrence or death. Experts suspect the reason obese women have less success battling breast cancer is that they tend to exercise less, have fatter diets, and have higher levels of estrogen—all of which can increase risk.

■ **Have more sex.** Half of the obese people in a Duke University study reported low libidos compared to just 2 percent of their healthy-weight counterparts. Obese women and men reported sexual problems such as avoiding sex up to 25 times more than those who fell within normal weight range.

■ **Get more years out of your knees.** With every 11 pounds they lost, overweight older women in one study halved their risk for developing painful knee osteoarthritis. The math is shocking: Being only 10 pounds overweight increases the force on your knees by 30 to 60 pounds with every step—ouch!

■ **Get more sleep.** Losing 10 pounds can result in a 30 percent reduction of sleep apnea—a sleep disorder common in overweight people that causes a person to stop breathing for short intervals without realizing it.



WAS:
244
pounds

NOW:
217
pounds

Adrienne Schiffer, 33

Stay-at-home mom, married with two children, ages 7 and 3, Powell, OH

"Now that I'm 27 pounds lighter I feel incredibly energetic and strong—like the old, fun-loving me is coming back. My husband says he's noticed my 'renewed life' too. On top of that, I've reduced my risk for heart disease, which runs in my family."

	STARTING STATS	CURRENT STATS
HEIGHT, WEIGHT:	5'3", 244 lbs	217 lbs
BODY FAT:	34%	26%
WAIST:	47"	42¾"
HIPS:	57"	53¾"
BUST:	47¼"	43¾"

THE SMALL CHANGE THAT'S ALREADY PAID OFF FOR HER:

"Our family loves pizza, but we've started ordering it with half the cheese, and extra sauce. We've also added a salad to round out the meal. My kids even seem to like this new pizza better!"

THE HURDLE SHE STILL FACES:

Overcoming self-consciousness at the gym.

"It seems like everyone there is extremely fit. I feel as though they're all looking at me."

HOW TO JUMP OVER IT:

Adrienne needs to remember that many of her fellow exercisers, no matter how fit, probably have similar insecurities, says

RLHL fitness expert Jillian Michaels, a coach on NBC's *The Biggest Loser* and author of *Winning by Losing*. "If anyone does notice her, they're probably thinking, 'Good for her.'" Keeping a realistic perspective on others' insecurities will cancel out negative self-talk and the "I quit" mentality it can lead to.

BEFORE: PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREW PARSONS. GROOMING BY DEANNA BELL. AFTER: PHOTOGRAPHED BY GEOFF BUTLER. GROOMING BY DEANNA BELL.



WAS:
178
pounds

NOW:
171.5
pounds

Julie Graves, 39

Pharmaceutical sales rep, married with two children, ages 10 and 7, Indianapolis

"Before I started working out, my doctor said I had pre-hypertension. Now, my blood pressure is normal and it feels great knowing that I'm headed in the right direction."

	STARTING STATS	CURRENT STATS
HEIGHT, WEIGHT:	5'4", 178 lbs	171.5 lbs
BODY FAT:	34%	29%
WAIST:	33"	33"
HIPS:	44"	43"
BUST:	38 3/4"	38"

THE SMALL CHANGE THAT'S ALREADY PAID OFF FOR HER:

"I'm taking tennis lessons. Last summer, my friends always invited me to play, but I didn't have the stamina to run around on the court. During my first lesson, I got a great workout and it felt good."

THE HURDLE SHE STILL FACES:

Finding variety in healthy fare. "I can't stand another yogurt for breakfast or grilled chicken breast over greens for dinner."

HOW TO JUMP OVER IT:

Julie needs to allow herself small splurges, says RLHL nutrition expert Lisa R. Young, Ph.D., author of *The Portion Teller*. For instance, add a couple of tablespoons of mac-and-cheese to a chicken dinner. Or have steak! Just choose a lean cut like sirloin, about a six-ounce serving, and plate it up with a veggie and wild rice to keep it healthy. For breakfast, make a grilled low-fat-cheese sandwich.

10 ways americans harm their health



Dr. Roizen lists our worst habits.

1. We put TVs in our kitchens. Watching TV makes it too easy to mindlessly eat, thus leading us to overeat. Move yours in front of your exercise equipment or to a place where you have enough room to do a fitness DVD.

2. We order fatty restaurant entrées without question. Since you're paying, ask questions and make substitutions, such as swapping cream sauce for tomato-based marinara.

3. We don't get nearly enough bone-building nutrients. Low-fat dairy products like yogurt and skim milk, as well as fortified O.J., are packed with calcium and vitamin D, both of which will help you avoid bone fractures later in life. Take a daily calcium supplement (make sure it also has vitamin D and magnesium) so you don't have to worry about running up a deficit.

4. We gloss over food labels. If we took the time to read them, we'd see that so many of the foods we buy (potato chips, nacho cheese sauce) aren't worth the staggering amount of fat. The result: We'd shop smarter.

5. We don't eat enough fruits and veggies. About 74 percent of us repeatedly don't eat the recommended five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day needed to reduce our risk of disease. And it's not that hard: An entrée-size salad can pack in three veggie servings, a small cup of O.J. delivers a fruit serving, and a half cup of cooked spinach equals a veggie serving.

6. We don't strength-train as often as we should. Pumping iron strengthens bones and boosts your body's calorie-burning power. And it doesn't take much—just three times a week, 10 minutes at a time.

7. We put up with secondhand smoke. Hanging around someone who is smoking for an hour is like smoking four cigarettes yourself. Only zero exposure is healthy.

8. We drive everywhere. Just 30 minutes a day of walking—even broken down into three 10-minute bursts—can lead to increased energy and weight loss.

9. We skip regular medical checkups. Seeing your doc is a must for detecting silent killers like high blood pressure. Experts have learned how to decrease arterial aging by up to 80 percent. But if you never get your blood pressure checked, doctors can't help you.

10. We don't monitor our own health. Score one if you see your doctor regularly. The next step is to be an active patient—research any health problems you have or treatments you need. The more aware you are of your body, the more likely you and your doctor will catch a serious illness in its early stages.



RLHL GENERAL-MEDICINE GURU
Michael F. Roizen, M.D.,
is the coauthor of *You: The Owner's Manual*.

BEFORE: PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREW PARSONS; GROOMING BY RENEE CARTER; AFTER: PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN BRAGG; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY BRENDA SOTOLONGO.



WAS:
211
pounds

NOW:
199
pounds

Jennifer Strange, 28

Human services worker at a homeless shelter, single mom of a 2-year-old son, Traverse City, MI

"I was thankful to achieve normal blood sugar and cholesterol levels considering my former soda-and-Wendy's habit. Without all that greasy fast food in my body, I feel more energetic and happier. I love having more control over my health."

	STARTING STATS	CURRENT STATS
HEIGHT, WEIGHT:	5'10", 211 lbs	199 lbs
BODY FAT:	33%	31.5%
WAIST:	43 1/4"	40"
HIPS:	47 1/4"	46"
BUST:	41"	40 3/4"

THE SMALL CHANGE THAT'S ALREADY PAID OFF FOR HER:

"Recently, I joined a gym with my sister, so we could help motivate each other to exercise."

THE HURDLE SHE STILL FACES:

Eating breakfast every day. "The last three mornings, I've been so busy getting my son and myself out the door that I haven't had time to eat."

HOW TO JUMP OVER IT:

Jennifer should stock up on grab-and-go breakfast options—whole-grain granola bars, baggies filled with high-fiber cereal, hard-boiled eggs, low-fat yogurt drinks—that she can eat in the car or at work, says Young. Since skipping breakfast can cause a dip in your blood sugar later on, triggering a craving for sugary, high-calorie foods, it's important to eat—even if it's on the run.

Dr. Roizen's lifestyle changes for April:

Rx DATE *today*
FOR you

Take a daily multivitamin.

Since you may not be getting all the nutrients you need through food, especially when it comes to folic acid, pop a supplement for good health insurance.

PLUS, CHOOSE TWO OUT OF THREE BELOW:

Reduce your intake of artery-clogging fats.

Avoid saturated fats, found in meat and full-fat dairy, and trans fats, the man-made kind in packaged goods like crackers and cookies. Read food labels carefully, and aim to eat no more than 20 grams of these fats a day. Instead, fill up on healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, found in nuts, fish, and olive oil.

Wash your hands. Sussing up is one of the most powerful ways to protect yourself from illness. Don't limit yourself to washing up before meals and after using the bathroom—the more you clean your hands, the healthier your immune system will be.

Arm yourself with a de-stressing trick. Stress zaps energy, something none of us can afford to lose. Here's an easy relaxer to do in the ATM line: Scrunch up every muscle in your face, then count to 10 and slowly release the muscles. Aaaaaaah.

PHYSICIAN *Dr. Roizen*

HOW'S YOUR HEALTH?
Assess your risk for life-threatening disease with the tools below.

msn

CHECK US OUT ONLINE

Go to lifestyle.msn.com/redbook, where you can:

- Find out about the five numbers that every woman must know to live a long, healthy life: blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, BMI, and waist circumference. We'll tell you what a healthy range is for each one, based on your own health history.
 - Get a decade-by-decade look at what medical screenings you need and when.
 - Read Adrienne, Jennifer, and Julie's blogs.
 - Post your own message to them and other readers in the RLHL program.
 - Plus, get lots more tips on how to live healthy.
- **Coming next month:** Is your house sabotaging your diet? Our experts will show you what you can do to make your own home health-friendly.