

# MEASURING SUCCESS



For many people, the scale is the most powerful indicator of weight loss success. Decreasing numbers on the scale can strengthen a person’s resolve to continue losing, while increasing numbers can lead to disappointment and possibly the end of one’s weight loss efforts.

Although the scale can help you evaluate your weight loss progress, success is best measured by changes you’ve made in your eating and activity habits and the results of these new behaviors. For example, success may mean you:

- Take a walk or phone a friend, rather than eat, when stressed or bored
- Feel less out of breath
- Have improved your health (e.g., your cholesterol, glucose or blood pressure has decreased)
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Watch TV without automatically snacking
- Exercise more often

Keep in mind that changes in behavior are more important for successful weight loss than changes on the scale. That’s because you have more control over your behaviors than you do over unexplained fluctuations in your weight. Sometimes the scale can undermine, rather than encourage, progress. For instance, if you overeat and the numbers on the scale don’t show it, you may think it’s okay to keep on eating. Eventually, the scale will catch up. On the other hand, if you are especially careful to follow your weight loss plan during the week, but the numbers on the scale stay the same, you may feel like your efforts aren’t worth it. But staying on the plan will ultimately lead to positive results.

If you’re going to use the scale to measure success, it helps to look at weight loss trends that extend beyond the week. Daily and weekly weight loss may be affected by factors that have little to do with your eating and activity habits. For example, weighing yourself at different times of the day or wearing different clothing when last you stepped on the scale can affect results. Menstruation and eating high sodium foods can temporarily increase the numbers on the scale. Also, realize that the rate of weight loss generally slows after the first few weeks on the program, as initial water weight loss and motivation begin to subside. However, regular physical activity can help you maintain a reasonable rate of weight loss.

## Activity: Measuring Success Now

Every effort you make is a success, since it brings you closer to your weight loss goals. Consider the successes you’ve had in the past week and write them below. For example, you ate an apple instead of a candy bar for a snack, went for a walk during your lunch break, or reached a weight loss of 20 pounds.

Successes this Week	Successes Since Beginning the Program
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____