

# Weight loss and willpower

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What does it take to make meaningful, lasting lifestyle changes? Some may argue it takes a fair amount of willpower to develop new habits, but a person can't rely on willpower alone. In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Donald Hensrud, a Mayo Clinic physician specializing in nutrition and editor of "The Mayo Clinic Diet," offers strategies that can help people

achieve their weight loss goals.

What is willpower? Merriam-Webster defines it as the ability to control one's own actions, emotions or urges.

When it comes to pushing away the [potato chips](#) and picking up the walking pace, it's easier said than done. Dr. Donald Hensrud often hears from patients that they don't have the willpower to undertake weight management.

"I think everybody has willpower. It's not a [matter](#) of willpower, there are powerful forces causing us to eat more and to do less activity," says Dr. Hensrud.

It's a matter of coming up with strategies to deal with the challenges.

"... and these strategies need to be practical, realistic and enjoyable enough to be sustainable. We can't just not eat. We have to eat. Nobody has perfect habits."

He says coming up with [strategies](#) to eat healthy, low-calorie, nutrient-dense foods can be a way to game the system, and not just rely on willpower.

"That usually doesn't work in the long term. It's a matter of changing habits and coming up with new [lifestyle changes](#) that will fit the bill and help us manage our weight as we move along."

Dr. Hensrud says it's important to be kind to yourself, too, and to ask yourself if you are ready for the challenge.

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