To manage your weight, you must achieve “energy balance.” Energy balance is like a seesaw, with energy you consume from what you eat on one side and energy you use up by being active on the other side. Both types of energy are measured in calories. If the energy you take in does not equal the energy you use, the seesaw is out of balance. Over time, taking in more energy than you use leads to weight gain. Using more energy than you take in leads to weight loss.

To lose weight, it is best to make changes on both sides of the seesaw. In other words, it is best to eat fewer calories and be more active.

To lose one pound in one week, you will need to decrease the amount of calories you have available to use by 500 calories per day. A 500-calorie-per-day decrease can be achieved by eating 200 fewer calories per day and burning 300 more calories per day through physical activity.

The number of calories your body needs is unique. Your height, current weight, age, fitness level, and the amount of regular activity you engage in all impact how many calories you require. If you would like to estimate your calorie needs, visit MyPyramid.gov.

Energy balance is the key to weight management. Eating foods that meet not only your calorie needs but also your nutrition needs is important to your health. MyPyramid.gov can help you maintain energy balance and make food choices that provide the nutrients your body needs.
Anatomy of MyPyramid

One size doesn't fit all
USDA's new MyPyramid symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. The symbol has been designed to be simple. It has been developed to remind consumers to make healthy food choices and to be active every day. The different parts of the symbol are described below.

Activity
Activity is represented by the steps and the person climbing them, as a reminder of the importance of daily physical activity.

Moderation
Moderation is represented by the narrowing of each food group from bottom to top. The wider base stands for foods with little or no solid fats or added sugars. These should be selected more often. The narrower top area stands for foods containing more added sugars and solid fats. The more active you are, the more of these foods can fit into your diet.

Proportionality
Proportionality is shown by the different widths of the food group bands. The widths suggest how much food a person should choose from each group. The widths are just a general guide, not exact proportions. Check the Web site for how much is right for you.

Variety
Variety is symbolized by the 6 color bands representing the 5 food groups of the Pyramid and oils. This illustrates that foods from all groups are needed each day for good health.

Personalization
Personalization is shown by the person on the steps, the slogan, and the URL. Find the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day at MyPyramid.gov.

Gradual Improvement
Gradual improvement is encouraged by the slogan. It suggests that individuals can benefit from taking small steps to improve their diet and lifestyle each day.