

Transition to Adult Health Care

Weight, Exercise, and PKU



**Children's Hospital Boston
Transition to Adult Care Education Initiative**



Children's Hospital Boston

Whether you are returning to PKU diet or you are on the diet, weight is often an issue.

We all need to be healthy and feel good in our bodies. What is important for everyone with PKU to realize is that finding a correct dietary balance is difficult for a lot of people, whether or not they have PKU. It may be somewhat harder for a person with PKU to plan meals, take the formula and restrict phe intake, but with a little planning and time, determination and positive attitude, and support from your family and friends, finding your healthy balance will not be as difficult.

Watching your weight is a universal problem. You need to maintain an eating plan that meets your nutrition, calorie and protein needs, but just like everyone else, diet and exercise play an important role in health and weight control.

Although the special formula is your primary nutrition source, you also consume low protein modified and natural foods. Following an eating plan based on your body's needs is important.

As you know, formulas can vary in calories and fat content. Try to find the right formula or combination of formulas for you.

The truth is that if you are avoiding protein, what else is there for you to eat and watch your weight at the same time. Simple sugars and fats on the other hand are almost completely phenylalanine free. This does not mean however that they should be consumed freely. A high fat and low fiber diet may be related to poor health.

You can try to:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables! They should make up more than half of the natural foods you eat.
- Eat low protein breads and pasta! They should make up the other half of the natural foods you eat.
- Be careful when preparing and eating food! How you prepare food and how much you eat are two factors that affect our health and weight.

Exercise! Exercising is part of being healthier.

There are many different ways for you to stay fit and help control your weight. You can start a specific exercise, do a sport, or incorporate exercise in your everyday activities.

In general, exercise can be divided into three general categories:

Aerobic (also called endurance)

Benefits of Aerobic Exercise:

- Builds endurance.
- Boosts your "good" cholesterol levels and helps you control blood pressure.
- Strengthens the bones in your spine.
- Helps you maintain normal weight.
- Improves your sense of well being.

Strength (also called resistance)

Benefits of Strength Exercise:

- Builds muscle strength while burning fat.
- Helps you maintain strong bones.
- Improves digestion.

Flexibility

Benefits of Flexibility Training:

- Prevents cramps, stiffness, and injuries.
- Allows a wider range of motion.
- Certain flexibility exercises, such as yoga and tai chi, also involve meditation and breathing techniques that reduce stress. Such practices appear to have many health and mental benefits.
- Certain stretching exercises are particularly beneficial for the back. (source: A.D.A.M., Inc., http://www.well-connected.com/report.cgi/000029_3.htm)

However, playing a sport, going to the gym or doing any of the above types of exercise is not always possible. At the same time, you are following a diet that needs planning and time to prepare. That's why we are suggesting simple ways for you to exercise in your everyday life and have a good health and weight management.

Increasing the amount of everyday exercise in your life can make a big difference. Try to incorporate some of the following everyday activities in your daily schedule:

The car:

- Walk to the corner shops instead of driving.
- Cycle to work one or two days every week.
- Walk to the bus stop or train station, and catch public transport to work.
- If taking the bus or tram, get off one stop early and walk the rest of the way.
- Park the car a fair distance from the entrance of the shops and walk, rather than parking right out front.
- Wash and vacuum the car yourself instead of taking it to a car wash.

In the workplace:

- Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Use at least half of your lunch break for a quick walk, even if it is only 10-15 minutes.
- Stretch at your desk.
- When you need to talk to a colleague, don't use the phone or internal email - get up from your desk and walk over to them.
- If your job involves sitting at a desk all day, make sure you get up and walk around for a few minutes every hour.

At home:

- Housework, like pushing the vacuum and mop around, is a great way to burn calories.
- Listen to your favorite music or the radio and dance around the house.
- Play actively with your children.
- Walk the dog more often, or make your usual walk 10 minutes or so longer.
- Get stuck into your garden. Mow, rake leaves and get some planting done.
- Incorporate a few more physical activities into your family's leisure time; for example, you could take the children to the park or kick a ball around the backyard.

Out and about:

- Ignore the lifts and take the stairs.
- In shopping centers, take the stairs instead of the escalators.
- Walk up the escalators instead of just riding them.

Things to remember

- Everyday activities, such as housework and gardening, can help burn calories!
- Research suggests that maintaining an active lifestyle is the key to good health and weight management!

(Source: Better Health Channel:
http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Exercise_everyday_activities?open)