

Summers coming!

Are you ready to lose weight?

As the warmer months approach many of us begin to wish we hadn't given up that exercise routine, or hadn't eaten as much over the winter months. We start to think about how we might start to lose those extra kilograms before trying to squeeze into last season's swimming outfit.

If weight loss success is high on your list of things to achieve before summer then now's the time to consider; am I actually ready to lose weight?

Weight-loss success depends on your readiness to take on the challenge. I have prepared the following questions to help you judge whether now is the best time to get started on your weight-loss journey.

Are you motivated to make long-term lifestyle changes that require eating healthy foods and exercising more? Be honest. Knowing you need to make life changes in your life and feeling up to the challenge are two different things.

Do you currently have distractions in your life that may prevent you from committing to your weight-loss program? You may set yourself up for failure if you're distracted by other major events in your life, such as marital problems, job stress, illness or financial worries. Give your life a chance to calm down before you start.

Do you truly believe that slower is better? Losing weight at a relatively slow pace has proved safe, healthy and effective over the long term. You should aim for a weight loss of 0.5 to 1.5 kilograms a week.

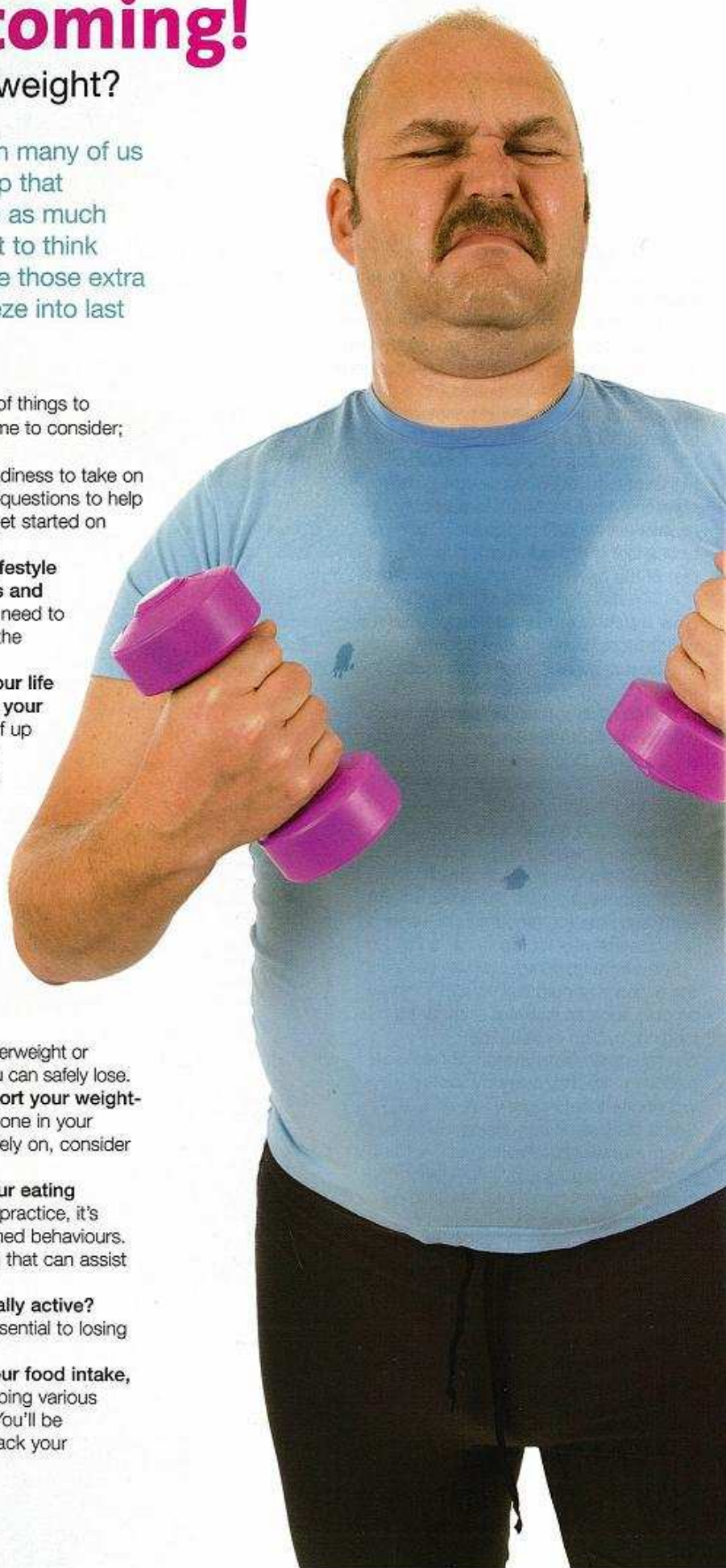
Are you realistic about your weight-loss goal? Remember, losing as little as 5 to 10 kilograms can improve your health if you're overweight or obese. Ask your doctor how much weight you can safely lose.

Do you have family and friends to support your weight-loss efforts? It certainly helps to have someone in your corner. If you don't have someone you can rely on, consider joining a weight-loss support group.

Do you believe that you can change your eating habits? Sounds easy to do in theory, but in practice, it's often difficult. It's hard to cast aside established behaviours. Try a specialised behavioural eating program that can assist in overcoming these habits.

Are you willing to become more physically active? Increasing your level of physical activity is essential to losing weight and keeping it off.

Do you have time to keep records of your food intake, appetite levels and physical activity? Keeping various records increases your chance of success. You'll be pleasantly surprised by how helpful it is to track your progress.



Are you willing to look at past successes and failures in weight loss and other areas of your life? Learn from the past about what motivates you. Keep working to resolve barriers that might prevent success.

Do you view a healthy-weight program as a positive experience? Lose weight because you want to, and not because you think it's expected by others.

Have you resolved any eating disorders or other emotional problems that make it difficult for you to achieve a healthy weight? If you have a tendency to binge, purge, starve or overexert yourself when you exercise, or if you're depressed or anxious, you may need professional help. Specialised programs exist that can help you overcome these problems.

Do you believe that a healthy weight is a lifelong commitment? Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is a lifelong process. There's no going back to your old behaviours.
Are you ready to make a permanent change?

If you answered yes to all of these questions, you're probably ready to make the lifestyle changes necessary for permanent weight loss.

However, if some of these questions troubled you, then may be you're not quite ready. And that's OK. Explore what's holding you back and face those obstacles. In some cases it may be a simple matter of timing. For instance, you may need to resolve other problems in your life. In other cases, you may need to work on related issues - such as your feelings toward weight loss, or your willingness to commit to permanent changes.

You may be able to make these changes alone, or you may feel you need additional help. Educating yourself about the process of successful weight management is a fantastic start. For example, learn more about dietary changes necessary for losing weight. See a medical professional or enrol in a behavioural-based program. There are programs available that can help you change the behaviours that may interfere with weight loss, such as eating when you're stressed or bored.

If you're ready for weight loss, but fear you'll become discouraged quickly, think about the future. As you become more physically active and make dietary changes, you'll feel better and have more energy. And rather than thinking of weight loss as short-term drudgery, view it as an enjoyable lifestyle change that will help you feel great indefinitely.

*Nicholas Arthur BA,
GDipHumN, MHumN, RNutrNSA*

Nicholas is a Registered Nutritionist and Director of Appetite Right™, a unique company that specialises in appetite control products and weight loss programs. Appetite Right has successfully helped many people control their appetite and overcome problem eating behaviours. For more information please call 1300 307 646 or visit www.appetiteright.com.au

