10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OBESITY AND BEING OVERWEIGHT
Overweight and obesity are on the rise.*

You may have heard that more and more people are overweight or obese. In fact, nearly 2 out of 3 Americans are overweight or obese.

You may think people who weigh too much simply eat too much. But it is more involved than that. The problem develops over time and results from:

- Eating too many calories
- Not getting enough physical activity

You should have an energy balance. That means the number of calories you take in should equal the number of calories you use.

* This brochure is meant to help you learn some things about overweight and obesity. It doesn’t tell you everything. Talk to your health care provider about what is a good weight for you.
What causes a person to be overweight or obese?

Many things may keep a person from being at a healthy weight. The balance between the calories a person eats and what he or she burns differs from person to person.

Being obese tends to run in families. This means it might be in your genes. It might also be because of other reasons. Family members may eat the same unhealthy foods but, may not be physically active.

Other reasons people are overweight or obese could be they:

- Eat the wrong types of food
- Do not get enough exercise
- Have an illness that leads to weight gain
- Are on medicines that may cause weight gain

Why are so many people overweight or obese?

You may wonder why so many people weigh too much. Years ago, many people had jobs that needed them to be physically active. They used up the calories they took in.

Today many people:

- Live in cities and work at jobs that are not physically hard
- Drive cars or take public transportation instead of walking
- Eat foods that are less healthy and are high in fats and sugars
- Watch a lot of TV and movies instead of being active

Portion sizes are much larger now than they used to be. Some portions are enough for 2 people! If the body does not burn off the extra calories, the result is often weight gain.
How do I know if I am overweight or obese?

The body mass index, or BMI, is a tool that can tell you if you are overweight or obese. It uses your weight and height to figure out the amount of fat in your body. To get your BMI:

- Figure out your weight in pounds
- Take your height in inches and square it
- Divide your weight by your height squared
- Multiply the result by 703

Here is an example.

Let us say you weigh 150 pounds and are 5 feet 7 inches tall.

- 5 feet 7 inches is the same as 67 inches. Multiply 5 by 12 inches (12 inches in a foot). Add 7 inches to equal 67 inches
- Square 67 inches: Multiply 67 by 67. This equals 4489
- Divide 150 by 4489. This equals 0.03
- Multiply 0.03 by 703. This equals 23.5
- Your BMI is 23.5

In general, if your BMI is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI Range</th>
<th>Weight Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 18.5</td>
<td>You may be underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.5 to 24.9</td>
<td>You may be normal weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0 to 29.9</td>
<td>You may be overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.0 and above</td>
<td>You may be obese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your health care provider can help you know if your BMI shows if you weigh too much. He or she may look at other things such as:

- Your diet
- Your family history
- Any medical conditions you have. These may cause you to gain weight. These may make it hard for you to lose weight

Your health care provider will also look at where the fat is on your body. Too much fat around the waist increases your risk of health problems related to obesity. Those at higher risk are women with a waist measurement more than 35 inches and men with a waist measurement more than 40 inches.
Being overweight or obese can affect your health.

Being overweight or obese is more than a problem with how you look. Many serious medical conditions have been linked to being obese. These include:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- High cholesterol (too much fat in the blood)

Being obese is a risk factor for some cancers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cancer</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cervix</td>
<td></td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esophagus</td>
<td>■</td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallbladder</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovaries</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostate</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectum</td>
<td>■</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uterus</td>
<td></td>
<td>■</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obese people put too much weight on their hips and knees. They can develop osteoarthritis [os-tee-oh-ar-THRY-tis]. This is a disease in which the cartilage [KAR-ti-lej] in the joints breaks down. This can make it hard to walk.

Some other diseases and health problems related to physical obesity are:

- Gallbladder disease and gallstones
- Gout – a disease that affects the joints
- Breathing problems, including sleep apnea (when your breathing stops for short periods of time or is too shallow while you are sleeping)

Overweight people may feel unattractive. They could suffer emotionally. They also may be treated unfairly in the job market, at school, or socially. This can lead to:

- Feelings of rejection
- Shame
- Depression
Who should lose weight?

People who have a BMI of 30 or more can improve their health by losing weight. This is even true for those with a BMI of 40 or more. Your health care provider can tell you if you should lose weight.

If your BMI is between 25.0 and 29.9, try not to gain any weight. If you have a disease linked to obesity, try to lose weight.

You should also lose weight if you have two or more of the following:

- Family history of certain chronic diseases (diabetes or heart disease)
- Medical conditions made worse by obesity (abnormal amounts of fat in the blood or diabetes)
- Large waist circumference
  - Men whose waist is greater than 40 inches
  - Women whose waist is greater than 35 inches

Your health care provider may tell you your blood glucose level is higher than normal, but you do not yet have diabetes. Weight loss and exercise may help to keep you from developing diabetes.

Your health care provider can help you lose weight.

You now know that there are lots of reasons to lose weight. You will be healthier, feel better, and have more energy.

You will lose weight if you eat fewer calories than you burn. This may sound simple, but many people have trouble losing weight. Your health care provider can help you get started with a plan to lose weight.

Your health care provider will make sure that eating less and being active will not hurt you. Then you and your health care provider can decide on the weight loss plans that are best for you. These can include:

- The type of diet that makes sense for you
- The number of calories you should eat a day
- How much and what kind of exercise would be best for you
- Ways to change habits that cause you to eat more (like not eating while watching TV)

It is always best to lose weight through a healthy diet and regular exercise.* But your health care provider may also prescribe a medication to help you lose weight. Be sure to ask about side effects. You should also tell them about other medicines you are taking.

* Make sure you talk with your health care provider if you plan to start an exercise program or to increase your physical activity level. If you have not been active, start slowly.
What you can do to reach – and stay at – a healthy weight.

Healthy eating is not a diet or a program. It is a plan that gives you the food you need to be healthy. It means staying within a calorie range that is right for you. Talk to your health care provider about finding your target calorie range. Do not decide to go on a diet. Decide to have healthy eating habits and get physically active.

The first step is to set a goal. Use your BMI and talk to your health care provider to find out what is a healthy weight for you.

Plan to lose weight gradually. Losing one-half to two pounds a week is safe. You can do this by eating less, being more active, or both.

Change your eating habits to include smaller amounts of food, and choose foods lower in calories. Eat foods that are lower in fats. Eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

Make time in your day for some form of physical activity. You can start by taking the stairs at work or parking at the far end of the lot when shopping. Then you can add some regular physical activity. Walking is something almost anyone can do and is very good for you.
How you can get the most out of what you eat?

You may think that eating healthy means only eating things like lettuce and sprouts. But you can enjoy all foods as part of a healthy diet. You just cannot overdo it. Here are some tips to help you improve your eating habits.

Look at what you eat now.
Write down what you eat and how much you eat for a few days. With a better idea of what you eat, you can make changes slowly.

Start with small changes.
Remember – you are trying to make healthy eating part of your life. Small changes are more likely to last.

Use the Nutrition Facts label.
To make smart food choices quickly and easily, compare the Nutrition Facts labels on products. Look at the percent Daily Value (% DV) column. The general rule of thumb is:

- 5 percent or less is low
- 20 percent or more is high

Use the Nutrition Facts label to make sure you get all the nutrients you need for good health.

Control portion sizes.
The label will tell you what the serving size is. You may think a bottled drink is 1 serving. Look at the label. It may actually be 2 servings. Use smaller plates or put less food on your plate. An average serving size of meat should look like a deck of cards. A serving of rice or pasta would be 1/2 cup. That is equal to about the size of half a baseball.

Control calories and get the most nutrients.
Pick foods that have lots of nutrients (like vitamins and minerals). Do not pick foods high in calories.

Some other tips:

- Know what fats are good for you (like olive oil)
- Choose lean, low-fat, or fat-free foods
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Make sure at least half of your servings of grains are whole grains
- Eat foods lower in salt and higher in potassium
- Limit foods and drinks high in sugar
Daily exercise can help you manage your weight.

Regular physical activity is good for your health. Exercise can lower the risk of colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. It also can:

- Help you control your weight (along with eating the right amount of calories)
- Keep your bones, muscles, and joints healthy
- Lower your risk of heart disease and stroke
- Help relieve stress
- Improve your confidence and self-image

Physical activity does not have to be hard to be helpful. And it does not just mean exercise or sports. Being moderately active has health benefits too. Just 30 minutes of brisk walking 5 or more times a week is good for you. You can exercise in short sessions several times a day. Or you can do it all at one time. To lose weight and keep it off, 60 to 90 minutes of regular physical activity may be recommended for you.

Being active is good for most people. It can help you have more energy. It can lower your risk of disease. And it can be a lot of fun! Take the first step and stick with it. You can make physical activity part of your life, every day.

Talk to your health care provider before you start an exercise plan. He or she can help you decide what is best for you.
Here are some small steps you can take today.

A healthy weight is the result of lots of small choices. Here is a list of small steps you can take that will help you have a healthy diet and be more active.

Small steps to eating better.

- Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day
- Choose foods that are low in fat and cholesterol
- Cut down on salt and sugar
- Eat meals at the table instead of in front of the TV
- Pay attention to portion sizes
- Grill, steam, or bake your food instead of frying
- Eat before you get too hungry

Small steps to being more active.

- Exercise at least 30 minutes every day
- Enjoy leisure activities that get you moving
- Keep records of your physical activity
- Walk instead of driving whenever you can
Search the Web for more information.

If you can get on the Internet, you might want to visit some of these Web sites. They can give you more information about overweight and obesity:

- American Heart Association: http://www.americanheart.org
- American Stroke Association: http://www.strokeassociation.org
- American Obesity Association: http://www.obesity.org
- National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Promotion: http://www.cdc.gov

References.


