



Obesity: It's Gaining on Us

The number of overweight adults and children continues to increase. Nearly two-thirds of all American adults and one in seven children are overweight. Increasing obesity affects every age, racial and ethnic group, and gender. It limits our physical activities. Most importantly, obesity increases the risk of early death, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and other serious health problems.

A person's body weight is based on many influences. These include genetic, or family history; how the body processes food; behavior; the environment; and our cultural or social backgrounds. The major causes are easily recognizable: Too many calories and too little physical activity. However, it is not that simple for some people. Obesity may "run" in a family. Certain medical conditions can also be the cause of obesity.

This brochure is filled with information about obesity and helpful hints for losing weight and being more active.

The simple answer is to lose the extra weight and be healthier. You'll also live longer. Losing 5% to 15% of total body weight reduces the risk for some diseases, especially heart disease. Changing your behavior and environment are also major ways to help you reduce your weight. Always consult with your doctor or health care professional. He or she will be able to determine the exact cause of obesity and help you start a weight control program.

Facts About Obesity

Premature Death – Obesity causes about 300,000 deaths per year. Individuals who are obese (BMI>30) have 50 to 100% increased risk of premature death from all causes, compared to individuals with a healthy weight.

Heart Disease – 25 extra pounds makes heart disease more likely. Overweight adults have high blood pressure twice as much as others.

Diabetes – More than 80% of people with diabetes are overweight.

Cancer – Extra weight increases the risk for some types of cancer.

Breathing Problems – Obese people often suffer from sleep apnea, or interrupted breathing while sleeping. Asthma is also more likely to occur.

Arthritis – Gain as little as 2 pounds, and you increase the possibility of arthritis by 9 to 13%.

Reproductive Complications – When the mother is overweight during pregnancy, there is an increased risk for death in both the baby and mother, high blood pressure, and birth defects.

Children and adolescents – Overweight teens have a 70% chance of becoming overweight adults.

Healthy Advice for a Healthy Life

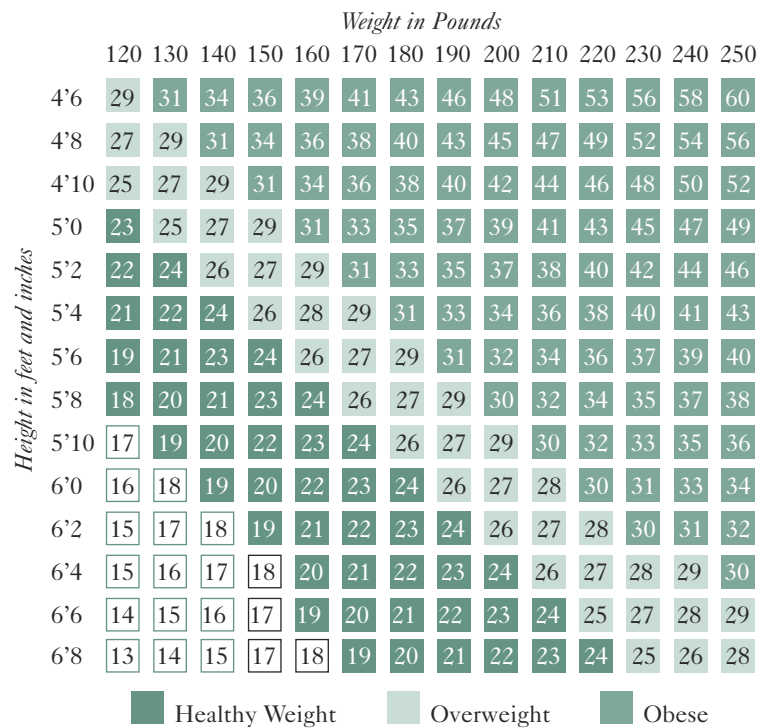
The Surgeon General of the United States advises every adult to take these steps to lose weight and live healthy again.

Aim for a Healthy Weight

Use the chart below to find your Body Mass Index (BMI). Losing just 10% of your body weight can improve your health. Lose weight gradually: 1/2 to 2 pounds per week.

Aim for a Healthy Weight With the Help of the Body Mass Index (BMI) Chart

Find your height on the left side of the chart. Find your weight on top of the chart. The number where they meet is your BMI.



Note: This chart is for adults (aged 20 years and older)

BMI Categories

Underweight	Less than 18.5
Healthy weight	18.5 to 24.9
Overweight	25 to 29.9
Obesity Class 1:	30 to 34.9
Obesity Class 2:	35 to 39.9
Obesity Class 3:	40 or more

To be sure, visit your doctor or health care professional for an exact diagnosis. They are also the best people to determine whether children are overweight. Their diagnosis will be based on BMI growth rate charts and a child's age and growth patterns.

Be Active

Be physically active to balance your intake of calories. Adults should be active 30 minutes and children 60 minutes on most days of the week. Limit TV viewing to 2 hours per day. Most weight loss occurs because you reduce the intake of calories. Physical activity will help you from regaining weight. Exercise will also reduce your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and other serious health conditions.

You should always check with your doctor or health care professional before beginning any type of regular exercise program. Start slowly, especially if you have not been exercising regularly.

Very light activities

Household chores are a good place to start.

- Washing windows or your car for 45 to 60 minutes
- Gardening for 30 to 45 minutes
- Raking leaves for 30 minutes

Light activities

- Walking 24 minutes per mile or 2 miles in about 45 minutes
- House cleaning
- Golf
- Sailing

Moderate activities

- Walking 15 minutes per mile or 2 miles in about 30 minutes
- Cycling
- Skiing
- Tennis
- Dancing

Vigorous activities

- Walking 10 minutes per mile or 2 miles in about 20 minutes
- Heavy yard work – removing trees and digging holes
- Basketball
- Running
- Jumping rope
- Climbing
- Soccer

Children

- 60 minutes of moderate physical activities every day of the week
- Plan enjoyable family activities that include exercise
- Less TV and video games

Other helpful hints

Split your activities into shorter periods: Three 10-minute periods instead of one 30-minute period. Try to set aside the time every day. Don't be discouraged if you miss a day or two. Be committed to physical activity and it will become a regular part of your day. Try activities you can do in groups. It helps to be supported by others and support them as well.

Eat Well

Read labels. Know what you are buying and eating. Eat sensible amounts of food. Follow the Dietary Guidelines of Americans (www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines). Remember, the real secret to weight loss is reducing the amount of calories in your food. Try to reduce your total calories by 500 to 1,000 everyday. This can be done by eating foods low in both fat and carbohydrates. Check with your doctor before you start.

Start by shopping smart. Learn how to read food labels. Reduce the size of the portions you cook and eat. Don't increase the amount of food you eat just because it is fat-free or low fat. Try new food items with fewer calories, but with a new taste. Be food wise when dining at restaurants.

Children need additional guidance in the foods they eat.

Encourage your children to eat only when hungry and eat slowly. Eat meals together as a family as often as possible. Don't use food as a reward or punishment. Limit beverages with added sugar. Give children more water to drink. Serve 5 fruit and vegetable portions every day.

Make Changes

Losing weight is all about making changes in your life. Buying the right foods, eating fewer calories, and being more physical are the changes you can start making today. Some people need to change their behavior before they can start to lose weight. Here are some ideas for changing your behaviors.

Set the Right Goals

Make your goals 1) specific; 2) doable; and 3) forgiving, or less than perfect. “Exercise more” is not enough. “Walking 5 miles a day” is specific, but not doable if you’re a beginner. “Walk 30 minutes everyday” makes more sense. However, you may miss a day. “Walk 30 minutes, five days each week” is specific, doable, and forgiving.

Nothing Helps You Succeed Like Success

Take short steps toward your goal. If your goal is to reduce calories by 1,000 a day, then start with 100 a day for the first week, 200 a day the second week, etc. When you achieve small goals you’re more likely to work for the next one.

Reward Success (but Not With Food)

Give yourself a reward for achieving your small goals. The reward doesn’t have to be big. It should never be food.

Record Your Achievements

Keep records of your small achievements. Create a chart of lost weight, reduced calories, or daily exercise. Such charts will keep you focused on the goal. It also provides your doctor or health care provider with valuable information for review.

Avoid a Chain Reaction

Learn what causes bad habits such as eating the wrong foods or not exercising. You may learn that you snack when watching television. You may eat treats at the office just because they are next to the coffee pot. Teach yourself to change your behaviors. Don’t snack while watching TV or watch less TV. Pour yourself a cup of coffee, but leave the treats.

Receive the (Fullness) Message

You’ll eat less if you change the way you eat. Eat slower, and the brain will signal that you are full by the end of your meal. Use small plates so smaller portions don’t look small. Eating more vegetables will make you feel fuller.

Your doctor and health care provider can help you find the right kind of weight loss and exercise programs for you. For more information, visit the Web sites listed below.

References:

Office of the Surgeon General of the United States. The Surgeon General’s call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. October 27, 2003. Available at: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction>.

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