

OBESITY



An “epidemic of obesity” was declared in 1995 by the Institute of Medicine. Americans are heavier than ever and as a result, each one of them, along with their health plans, are paying out significant amounts of cash. One half of Americans are overweight and one-third are clinically obese. The future doesn’t appear to be any better: one-quarter of American children and adolescents are obese as well, according to the Institute. The American Obesity Association states that obesity causes 300,000 premature deaths each year, making it second only to smoking among leading killers of Americans.



Food and drink are the source of energy. When the energy intake is more than the energy output — when you eat and drink more than your body can use in every day activity — you put on weight. Obesity now ranks alongside of asthma as one of the fastest growing medical epidemics and contributes to the risk of numerous medical conditions, including hypertension, noninsulin-dependent diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, endometrial cancer, gallbladder disease, and degenerative joint disease.

Obesity is generally defined as 20 percent above healthy weight, and morbid obesity is 50 percent above healthy weight. There doesn't seem to be a consensus as to what is a healthy weight. In the past, life insurance companies recommended weights for underwriting purposes. This controversy led to some new dietary guidelines issued by others such as the US Department of Agriculture (saying a 50 year old man who is 5' 10" should weigh between 132 and 174 pounds and have a Body Mass Index (BMI) ranging from 19-25). The National Institutes of Health also has weight ranges for adults of various heights.

Metropolitan Life's ideal weight ranges are as follows:

WOMEN		MEN	
Height	Weight	Height	Weight
4ft 10in	102-131	5ft 2in	128-150
4 11	103-134	5 3	130-153
5 0	104-137	5 4	132-156
5 1	106-140	5 5	134-160
5 2	108-143	5 6	136-164
5 3	111-147	5 7	138-168
5 4	114-151	5 8	140-172
5 5	117-155	5 9	142-176
5 6	120-159	5 10	144-180
5 7	123-163	5 11	146-184
5 8	126-167	6 0	149-188
5 9	129-170	6 1	152-192
5 10	132-173	6 2	155-197
5 11	135-176	6 3	158-202
6 0	138-179	6 4	162-207



HEALTH RISKS OF OBESITY

Heart Obese persons are twice as likely to die of heart disease.

Lungs Respiratory diseases are caused by a restricted diaphragm.

Pancreas Buildup of cholesterol causes a risk of diabetes.

Gallbladder Increased risk of gallstones.

Joints Arthritis is caused and worsened by the load on the spine and large joints (hips, knees, ankles); trapped nerves in the back cause sciatica.

The Body Mass Indicator (BMI) is a good predictor of health. Chances are, if you are over weight, you are “over-fat.” However, highly muscular people do weigh more because muscle weighs more than fat. To calculate your body mass indicator: Get a calculator. Multiply your weight in pounds by 700. Divide by your height in inches. Divide again by your height. The result is your BMI. If your BMI is between 20-25, you fall in the normal range; 26-30, overweight; over 30, obese; and over 40, massive obesity. Generally, health risks from obesity begin to rise when the BMI exceeds 25.

TIPS ON LOSING WEIGHT

To lose weight, you will need to change your lifestyle — commit to a long term program that includes a healthy diet and physical activity. Physical activities are the key to burning calories. Exercise is an important part of any weight loss program.

Your personal self-care program for weight loss should include:

- ◆ Set reasonable weight loss goals. If you want to lose 40 pounds, start with the goal of losing five.
- ◆ Check your food intake carefully. It is reasonable to cut 500 to 1000 calories per day from what you are currently eating. This produces a weight loss of approximately two pounds per week.
- ◆ Keep diet records. People who write down everything they eat are more successful at long-term weight maintenance.
- ◆ Record (in the same diary) the positive and adverse factors that influence your weight control efforts. Note when you have the urge to eat. Is it tied to your mood, the time of day, varieties of available food, a certain activity? Do you unconsciously eat while watching TV or reading a newspaper?
- ◆ Learn to enjoy more healthy foods.
- ◆ Limit fat to less than 30 percent of your diet (20 percent is actually ideal), but do not overdo it. Your body needs some fats. Simply eating fewer meats and avoiding fried foods, fat-laden desserts, and fatty add-ons, such as margarine, mayonnaise, and salad dressing will help.



- ◆ Do not skip meals. Eating at established times keeps your appetite and food selections under better control. Eating breakfast helps increase your metabolism early in the day and you burn more calories. Consume more of your calories earlier in the day.
- ◆ Limit regular soft drinks and fruit juices. These can add calories. Drink water instead. A limited intake of diet soft drinks is okay.
- ◆ Use a daily multivitamin. Avoid expensive weight loss formulas.
- ◆ Limit sugar and alcohol. Both are high in calories and low in other nutrients. Alcohol can increase your appetite and decrease your willpower.
- ◆ Eat slowly. You will eat less and feel like you have eaten more. Put the fork or spoon down between bites.
- ◆ Focus on eating. Avoid watching TV or reading while eating.
- ◆ Use a smaller plate. This holds smaller portions.
- ◆ Try to ride out food cravings. Predictably, they usually last for only a few minutes.
- ◆ Keep healthy foods on hand. Do this for both meals and snacking.
- ◆ Do not weigh yourself often — weekly is fine.
- ◆ Do not start a weight loss program while you are depressed. Such ventures are doomed to failure from the start.
- ◆ Try to find one or more activities that you enjoy. Begin slowly and increase gradually to your goal that is 30 minutes per day. A brisk walk is a good choice.
- ◆ Activity does not need to be strenuous. Moderate, regular exercise (walking) is wise.
- ◆ Find someone to exercise with. It helps you stick to a schedule.
- ◆ Don't always take the easy way. Park at the far end of a parking lot, take the stairs, get off the bus two or three blocks early and enjoy the walk.
- ◆ Keep a log of your activity.
- ◆ Stick to your exercise schedule.

Once the weight is off, keep it off. How? The answer turns out to be fairly simple: Keep doing whatever you did to lose weight in the first place with diet and exercise. Many believe that getting people to exercise is one of the toughest challenges in weight control. Half of those who start exercise programs give them up within three to six months. Some people would actually prefer to have their jaws wired or stomachs stapled than exercise. Permanent weight loss is not something to start and then stop. (Keep Miss Piggy's philosophy in mind — never eat more than you can lift.) Successful losers keep on watching what they eat and exercising regularly.

After years of study, proof is now in that several short bouts (ten minutes each or even less) of moderately vigorous activity every day can improve cardiovascular fitness, reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and melt excess pounds.