



Obesity Rates Rise to Epidemic Proportions and the Consequences are Serious—What Can We Do?

Despite the flood of information available to Americans on the risks of being overweight, obesity has risen to epidemic proportions in the last 20 years. Obesity is defined as having a high amount of body fat with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more. With the trend of obesity elevating to this extent, it threatens to overtake tobacco as the No. 1 preventable cause of death.

One of the main concerns surrounding obesity can be expressed by this fact: an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 deaths per year may be attributed to obesity. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, being even moderately overweight (10 to 20 pounds for a person of average height) increases the risk of death, particularly among adults between the ages of 30 to 64 years. People who fall into the obese category have a 50 to 100% increased risk of an early death from all causes, compared to people with a healthy weight.


The number of specific diseases associated with being overweight and obese is vast. Being obese raises one's chances of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and elevated triglycerides (blood fat) while lowering HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol).

In adults, a mere 11 to 18 pound increase in weight increases a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Also, type 2 diabetes, previously known as adult-onset diabetes, has dramatically increased in children because of the rising weight levels in our younger population. Other diseases that are impacted by weight are some types of cancer (such as endometrial, breast, prostate and colon), asthma, and arthritis.

The good news is that in most cases, diagnosing and combating being overweight and obese is simple and the rewards are great. It does not require extensive medical tests, repeated doctor visits, and strange treatment modalities. By following an impactful diet program combined with healthy, balanced meals and effective exercise one can overcome the ramifications of obesity and increase overall well-being and vitality. Even losing just 10% of your body weight can have a positive impact on your health.

References: U.S. Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 

What is body mass index (BMI)?

Body mass index, or BMI, is a new term to most people. However, it is the measurement of choice for many physicians and researchers studying obesity. BMI uses a mathematical formula that takes into account both a person's weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. (BMI = kg/m²). 

How can one determine their own BMI?

Visit the Centers for Disease Control website to use their BMI calculator.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/> 

Risk of Associated Disease According to BMI and Waist Size

BMI		Waist less than or equal to 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)	Waist greater than 40 in. (men) or 35 in. (women)
18.5 or less	Underweight	--	N/A
18.5 - 24.9	Normal	--	N/A
25.0 - 29.9	Overweight	Increased	High
30.0 - 34.9	Obese	High	Very High
35.0 - 39.9	Obese	Very High	Very High
40 or greater	Extremely Obese	Extremely High	Extremely High

Source: www.consumer.gov