

EXCESS WEIGHT, YOUR HEART, AND YOUR HEALTH

The Science on Excess Weight is Evolving

While we are still learning about excess weight and how it can lead to obesity, many factors are known to be connected. These include genetics, poor nutrition (both the type and amount of food and beverages consumed), a sedentary lifestyle, chronic stress, and environmental influences, such as access to healthy food, quality healthcare, and neighborhoods that support safe physical activity.

Defining Overweight and Obesity

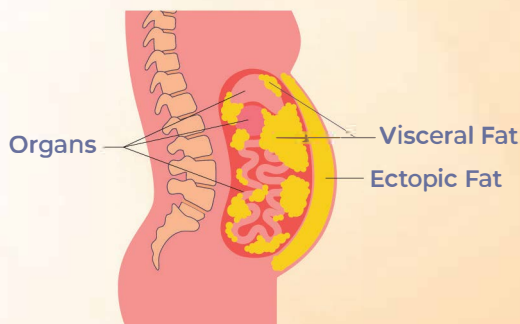
Overweight and obesity are often determined by body mass index (BMI), a calculation based on height and weight. Specifically, BMI is calculated as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared and aims to assess the amount of fat in the body. Although BMI is strongly correlated with body fat at the **population level**, this tool doesn't always work well at the individual level, since body fat can differ based on muscle mass, sex, age, and race/ethnicity. However, it is still widely utilized because it is quick and inexpensive.

BMI is commonly used to define weight categories:

HEALTHY WEIGHT: BMI 18.5 to 24.9

OVERWEIGHT: BMI 25 to 29.9

OBESITY: BMI of 30 or higher



In addition to BMI, waist circumference is a tool that can be helpful in identifying abdominal obesity. A waist circumference above 35 inches can increase risk for cardiovascular disease, even if the BMI is within the healthy range.



Body fat can also be measured directly using special imaging tests, but these tests can be expensive and are not widely available. Imaging can show fat that is around organs such as the heart and liver (known as **visceral fat**) compared to fat stored elsewhere (known as **ectopic fat**). **Visceral fat is more dangerous** when it comes to heart-related events.

How Excess Weight Impacts the Heart

Fat tissue plays a major role in our body's function and can release chemicals that cause inflammation throughout the body that impacts the heart and blood vessels. When fat tissue accumulates in excess amounts, changes in heart function can occur.

Taking Action for Your Health

Losing 5% of your starting weight is considered beneficial for your health because it can lead to improvements in blood pressure, lipid profiles, blood glucose and reduced risk of death in people with excess weight. For all individuals, lifestyle remains the foundation of care.



GET ACTIVE:

Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise (or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity) to improve overall heart health.



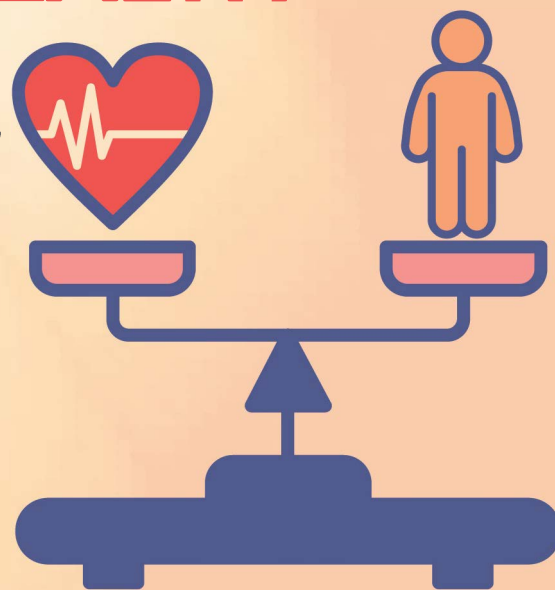
FOCUS ON NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS:

Eating fruits, vegetables and other nutrient dense foods can help people feel fuller on fewer calories. Aim to get a minimum of 5 servings of fruits/vegetables each day.



REQUEST SUPPORT:

Talk with your doctor or registered dietitian nutritionist for help with managing your weight. In some cases, referral to an obesity medicine specialist can provide additional options, including medications and surgery.



A note about medications and surgery:

Newer medications, including GLP-1s, are very effective in helping many people achieve a healthier weight and reduce their risk for heart-related events. Bariatric surgery has also been found to help thousands of people achieve these results.

An ongoing partnership with your clinician

is highly recommended to manage this chronic disease. It is also important to recognize that many people experience weight bias and stigma, which prevents them from receiving appropriate care. Seek out clinicians who actively listen and respond to your concerns to ensure you get the best care.

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People living with excess weight, whether classified as overweight or obesity, are at increased risk of heart, kidney and metabolic problems. Excess weight can contribute to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease, heart failure and many types of cancer, among others.

Obesity is a chronic disease, defined by abnormal or excess body fat, and influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, behavior, and the environment.

Over 73% of American adults — or **nearly 3 in 4** — are living with overweight or obesity.

Taking steps to manage excess weight can help lower risk of heart disease and other related conditions.



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