

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OBESITY

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What Is Obesity?

Obesity is when you have more body fat than is healthy. Too much body fat can cause serious health problems, such as diabetes and arthritis. Obesity can even shorten your life. Hormonal changes occur in the body with any degree of weight loss. These hormones make it hard to lose weight and keep it off. Many factors play a role in how much you weigh, including:

- The foods you eat
- How active you are
- Your family history
- Your sleep habits
- Taking certain medicines
- Other health problems

How Is It Diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask you about your health and weight history. This may include questions about your eating habits, activity level, and previous weight loss attempts.

Your provider will measure your weight and height in order to calculate your body mass index (BMI). In general, if your BMI is between 25 and 29, you will be diagnosed as overweight; if it is greater than 30, you will be diagnosed as having obesity. Your provider may also measure your waist.

You will have a physical examination. Simple blood tests may be done.

How Is It Treated?

Your health care provider will talk to you about how you can lose weight. They will review your medications to see whether any of them might be causing weight gain. They will also rule out other causes of obesity that may be treatable, such as a thyroid disorder.

Even a small amount of weight loss (5%-10%) can improve your health and lower your risk for complications, such as diabetes. Together, you and your provider will agree on a weight loss goal and a plan that is right for you. Some strategies include:

- Eating a reduced-calorie diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Limiting red meats, processed foods (chips, cookies, sugary cereals), and sugar-sweetened beverages like soda and juice.
- Eating out less often.
- Slowly increasing physical activity. Start small, and work up to 150 minutes per week (about 30 minutes per day most days of the week). Include muscle-strengthening activities at least 2 days per week.
- Finding a support network. There are many online and in-person weight loss groups, such as Weight Watchers. There are also free smartphone apps for weight loss.



- Making sure to get more than 6 hours of sleep each night (ideally 8 hours).

What Diet Is Best for Long-Term Weight Loss?

Research shows that there is not much difference in long-term weight loss among different eating plans. The most important thing is finding a plan that is easy for you to stick with and makes you feel good about yourself. Many popular diets are similar in that they recommend lean proteins, vegetables and fruits, and some healthy fats (nuts, avocados) while limiting refined carbohydrates (sugar, most breads, white rice, and most snack foods). Alternative diets also include meal-replacement diets and intermittent fasting.

Will I Need Medicine or Surgery to Lose Weight?

If you are not able to lose enough weight through diet and exercise alone, your health care provider may talk to you about medicine to help you lose weight. There are several different kinds available. If you have severe obesity and have other health problems because of it, surgery may be an option. It can lower the amount of food your body can take in and help you eat less.

Questions for My Doctor

- How much weight should I lose?
- How many calories should I eat to lose weight?
- How can I become more active?
- Where can I find weight loss support?
- I can't seem to stop eating. What should I do?
- Are any of the medicines I take causing me to gain weight? Are there alternatives?
- Should I consider taking medicine to help me lose weight?
- Should I consider weight loss surgery?

For More Information



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MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/obesity.html>

American College of Physicians

www.acponline.org/practice-resources/patient-education/online-resources/obesity