

Being overweight happens one pound at a time. It is very easy to gain a few pounds over the course of a year and not being attentive to your weight may increase your risk for a number of health conditions.

What kinds of health problems are linked to overweight and obesity?

- Type 2 diabetes: 80% of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese.
- High blood pressure (HBP): A blood pressure of "120 over 80" is considered normal.
- Heart disease
- Strokes: Increased weight increases blood pressure and HBP is the leading cause of strokes
- Sleep apnea: Obesity is the most important risk factor for sleep apnea.
- Osteoarthritis: Extra weight increases pressure on the joints and cartilage where bones connect and can cause damage (increased wear/tear).
- Kidney disease: Increased weight increases risk of diabetes and high blood pressure which are the most common causes of chronic kidney disease.
- Certain types of cancer
- Pregnancy problems and increased risk for cesarean delivery (C-section).

Gain an Understanding of Your Risk:

Two numbers are looked at to assess an individual's weight status:

- **Body Mass Index (BMI)**: Measures weight in relation to a person's height. Based on the score, a person is either considered to be of normal weight (BMI of 18.5 to 24.9), overweight (BMI 25 to 29.9) or obese (BMI of 30 or higher). A BMI calculator can be found at: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm.
- **Waist Size (in inches)**: A person with increased weight around their waist has increased health risks associated with this extra weight. For women, a waist size of more than 35 inches and for men, a waist size of 40 inches puts them at risk for developing diseases related to obesity.

If you are overweight, losing as little as 5% of your body weight may lower your risk for a number of the diseases mentioned above. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, this means losing 10 pounds. Slow and steady weight loss of ½ to 2 pounds per week, and not more than 3 pounds per week, is the safest way to lose weight.

Federal guidelines on physical activity recommend that you get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity (like biking or brisk walking). To lose weight, or to maintain weight loss, you may need to be active for up to 300 minutes per week. You also need to do activities to strengthen muscles at least twice a week.

Additional information can be found at:

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans www.health.gov/paguidelines

Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010: www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines

MyPlate: www.choosemyplate.gov

Information from the Weight-control Information Network, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health.