DVD INSIDE

Excess Weight and Your Health

A Guide to Effective, Healthy Weight Loss

OAC Obesity Action Coalition

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ACP American College of Physicians
Internal Medicine | Doctors for Adults

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Introduction

About 2 out of every 3 adults in the United States are affected by obesity or by being overweight. This excess weight can raise your risk of type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart and kidney disease, cancer, and even early death.

The good news is that losing even a modest amount of weight—and keeping it off—can help you avoid these health issues and boost your overall quality of life. The first step is to learn more, which you are doing right now! The more you know about why people tend to gain excess weight, and what really works for losing weight and keeping it off, the better your chances of success. The second step is to talk to a health care provider. She or he can give you valuable support and guidance.

Now is the time to start that conversation. View your health care provider as a coach on your journey to lose excess weight and improve your health. This booklet and DVD can help, too.

In this booklet and DVD program, you'll learn:

- Why some people gain excess weight
- Nutrition and fitness tips
- How obesity medications may help you lose excess weight
- Surgical options for the treatment of severe obesity

Why Do Some People Gain Excess Weight?

This is a simple question, but the answer is complex. The truth is that people gain weight for many reasons. Biology, genetics, emotions, and modern culture can all play a role. Let's take a closer look at some of these factors.

Our Body's Response to Food

If you look around, you see that people come in all shapes and sizes. Some people can seemingly eat any type or amount of food and not gain weight. For others, gaining weight is too easy! This is because body weight is controlled by an inner "thermostat" that is in part "set" by the genes you inherit from your parents. In fact, a large share of a person's tendency to develop obesity may be determined by his or her genes.

These genes control how fast your body "burns" calories and how hard or easy it is to gain weight. Hunger, eating, and weight are controlled by complex systems in your body. If you cut back how much you eat, these systems work against you. Your body may burn fewer calories, or you may become very hungry. This is why it can be so difficult for people to lose excess weight and keep it off.

Losing weight is often more complicated than just "eating less and exercising more."

Modern Life

Human cravings to eat evolved when food was scarce and activity levels were very high. We naturally desire sweet, high-calorie foods. These cravings were helpful when food was limited and hard to get. But in most countries today, food is plentiful and modern life has reduced the need for physical activity. In addition, portion sizes in many restaurants and snack shops have become much larger, and are often higher in calories and fat than food made at home.

Emotions

Emotions can also play a role in excess weight. Some people deal with stress, anxiety, or depression by eating. This may help temporarily, but it can also make the problem worse. "Emotional eating" can end up harming your mental and physical health. That's why finding ways to cope with feelings and emotions can be a key part of any effort to lose weight.

Medicines

A side effect of some medicines is that they cause you to gain weight. Some do this by making it harder to burn off calories or by making you feel more hungry. Talk to your health care provider, and see if your medicines may be affecting your weight.

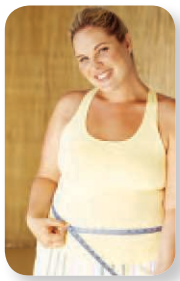
The bottom line is that losing weight is often more complicated than just "eating less and exercising more." Cutting calories and being more active are essential, but other kinds of changes may be needed to lose weight long-term. Fortunately, there are many health care providers who can give you the guidance and support you may need to lose weight and improve your health.

Measuring Excess Weight

There are several ways excess weight can be determined. Since height is proportional to weight, health care providers use the Body Mass Index (BMI) to determine what is an excessive amount of weight for your height. BMI uses your weight and height to give you a single number (see Figure 1).

A BMI between 18.5 and 25 is considered healthy. You are considered overweight if your BMI is between 25 and 30. Obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 or higher. You can use the BMI chart to find out if your weight is outside the healthy range.

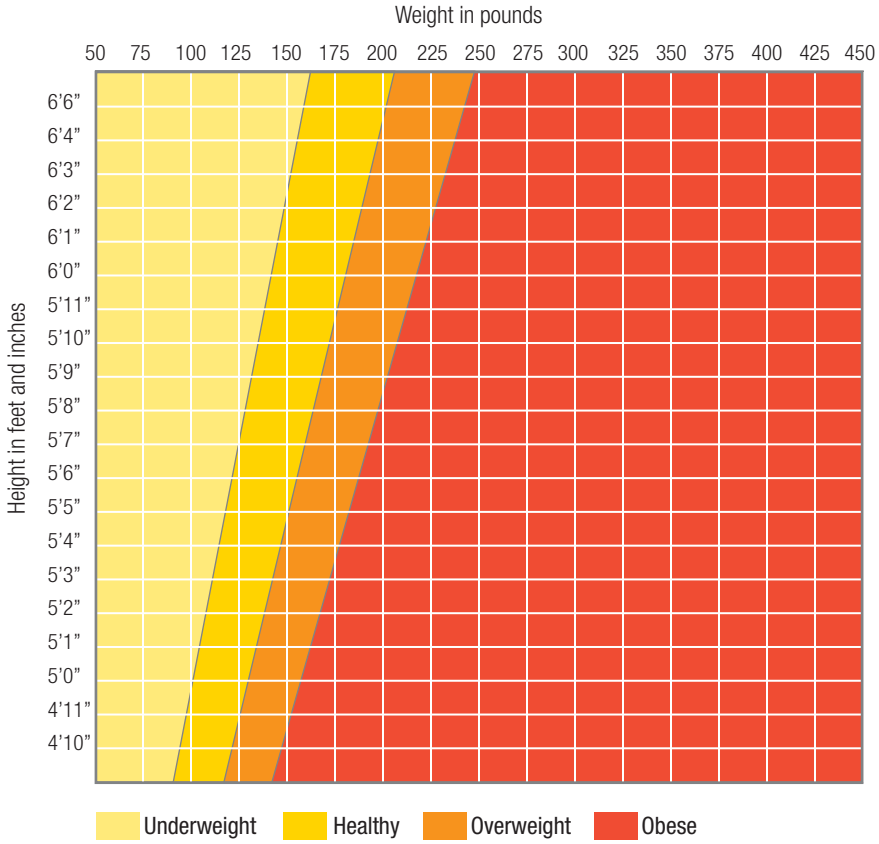
Another sign of excess weight is the distance around your waist. This is called your *waist circumference.* To find it, wrap a tape measure around your waist at the level of your upper hip bones.



- For females, a waist circumference of 35 inches or greater is considered unhealthy
- For men, a waist circumference of 40 inches or greater is considered unhealthy

Some studies show that weight carried around your middle ("belly fat") may be a bigger risk factor for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke than general excess weight.

Figure 1: **Body/Mass Index Chart**



The Risks of Having Excess Weight

You may know that having excess weight is not good for your health. But you may not realize just how many serious health problems are directly linked to excess weight. These problems include:

- Type 2 diabetes (including the risks of nerve pain, amputation, and blindness)
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Cancer
- Kidney disease
- Infertility
- Erectile dysfunction
- Arthritis
- Sleep apnea
- Migraine headaches

Having a significant amount of excess weight may also shorten your life. It is estimated that a 25-year-old man with severe obesity will *die 12 years sooner,* on average, than a similar man of healthy weight.

How Much Should You Aim to Lose?

Losing as little as 5% of your excess weight can reduce your risk for diabetes and other conditions. Losing more may provide even greater improvements in health and may reduce your risk further. In general, your weight loss goals should be:

- **Specific** (better to say you will walk 5 days a week for 30 minutes, than to simply say you will "increase exercise")
- **Realistic** (be honest about your abilities, your time, and what you truly enjoy doing)
- **Flexible** (give yourself a little "wiggle room" to allow for unforeseen events)

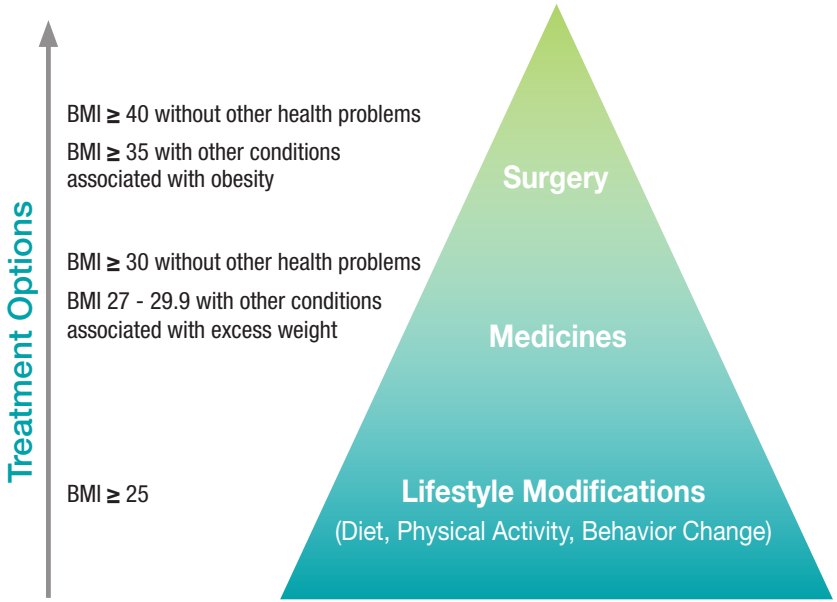
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends that a reasonable weight loss goal to achieve over 6 months is to lose between 1 and 2 pounds each week, or about 10% of your current weight.

Losing as little as **5%** of your excess weight can reduce your risk for diabetes and other conditions.

Getting to a healthy weight and staying there is not easy. People may spend years trying different diets or plans. But healthy weight loss *is* possible! While cutting calories and being more active are key in any weight loss plan, many people need other kinds of help to lose and manage weight long-term.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends that treatment choices be guided by your BMI or other measures of excess weight. Another important thing to consider is whether you have any other health problems (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



Again, your best bet is to talk with your health care provider about your options. She or he can create a weight loss "road map" that is right for you. If your provider does not want to talk about weight loss, or if you feel you need extra support or guidance, there are many ways to find other providers (see the Resources section on page 29 of this booklet).

No matter what options you choose, everyone who is affected by obesity or by being overweight should:

- Reduce calories (from foods and beverages), reduce portion sizes, and focus on eating healthy foods
- Be physically active
- Modify behavior in ways that help you achieve your weight loss goals

No matter how you intend to lose weight, eating healthy food is vital.

Eating for Weight Loss and Good Health

No matter how you intend to lose weight, eating healthy food is vital. No plan, no pill, and no surgery will succeed unless you eat nutritious food in portions that are right for you. Knowing more about food and meal planning can make a big difference.

To be healthy, your body needs water and four major nutrients:

- carbohydrates (carbs)
- proteins
- fats
- vitamins and minerals

Most foods contain a combination of these nutrients.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates, or carbs, are your main source of energy. There are three types of carbs: simple, complex, and fiber. Simple carbs are foods like table sugar, honey, and the sugars found in fruit and milk. Complex carbs are found in vegetables, grains, and cereals, and are also called starches. Fiber includes the stalks and leaves of vegetables, fruit skins, and is contained in whole grains. Fiber doesn't provide energy, but it helps keep your digestive tract healthy.

Protein

Protein is the building block of cells and helps your body repair tissues. Protein comes from both plants and animals. Meat, fish, beans, nuts, milk, and milk products (such as cheese and yogurt), peas, lentils, and eggs are good sources of protein. Your body needs some protein every day.

Fats

You also need at least some fat in your diet. Liquid fats, such as olive oil and canola oil, tend to be healthier than fats like butter and lard that are solid at room temperature.

Although you need some fat in your diet, fats are also high-calorie. Proteins and carbohydrates contain about 4 calories per gram. Fat has more than double that: 9 calories per gram.

Vitamins and Minerals

Many Americans don't get enough calcium and vitamin D in their diets. Everyone needs these and other vitamins and minerals for strong bones and good health.

Eating more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk products can help you get these essential nutrients.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding may need extra vitamins and minerals.

Water

We often do not realize the amount of extra calories we consume through beverages like soda and fruit juices. On average, American adults consume about 400 calories each day from beverages alone! Water, however, has zero calories and is needed for good health.

People who are trying to maintain a healthy weight are encouraged to drink water and other no-calorie beverages.

In general, it's best to limit high-carb foods and drinks such as regular soda, white breads, pasta, and sugary foods like cookies and cakes. One advantage of diets that are higher in protein may be that you feel less hungry than you do with diets high in sugars or carbs.

tips for healthy eating

Drink a glass of water before every meal.

Eat smaller portions by:

- Putting food on a smaller plate
- Taking smaller bites
- Putting the fork/spoon down between bites

Build a Healthy Meal
Divide your plate with these proportions.

Eat breakfast
Choose a low-fat protein source (cottage cheese, yogurt, etc.) as well as a whole grain and fruit or vegetable

Eat a fruit or vegetable with every meal

Read food labels
Look at how much fat, sodium (salt), and calories a food has, and whether the portion size is reasonable

Avoid regular sodas

Avoid mindless eating

- Sit down to eat
- Don't eat while watching TV or using the computer
- Eat slowly and chew your food well

Try to **weigh yourself at a set time** every few days, and always use the same scale. Expect that your weight will go up and down a bit, and look for long-term trends rather than, say, an immediate loss after an exercise routine.

Avoid food "triggers." Sometimes certain places or activities are linked to unhealthy eating, such as coffee rooms that have snacks available. Avoiding such places can help you avoid unplanned eating.

Get the "fullness message." It can take 15 minutes for your brain to get the message that you've been fed. So it can help to slow down, stop eating for a moment, and focus on the signals coming from your stomach and body.

Reward success, but not with food! Patting yourself on the back when you achieve a goal is great—but choose non-food rewards such as going to a movie, buying some music, or getting a massage.

SERVING SIZES FOR FOOD GROUPS

1 serving looks like...

Grains

1 cup of cereal flakes = fist

1 pancake = disc

1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta, or potato = 1/2 baseball

1 slice bread = cassette tape

1 piece of cornbread = bar of soap

Fruits and Vegetables

1 medium fruit = baseball

1/2 cup of fresh fruit = 1/2 baseball

1/4 cup raisins = large egg

1 cup of salad greens = baseball

1 baked potato = fist

1 serving looks like...

Milk

1 1/2 oz cheese = 4 stacked dice or 2 cheese slices

1/2 cup of ice cream = 1/2 baseball

Fats/Oils

1 tsp margarine or spreads = 1 die

Lean Meat and Beans

3 oz meat, fish, and poultry = deck of cards

3 oz grilled/baked fish = checkbook

2 Tbsp peanut butter = ping pong ball

Live a More Active Life

Having excess weight can make it harder to be active, but if you start slowly you can make real progress. Being active can help you maintain weight loss and improve your physical *and* mental health. For example, studies show that people who exercise regularly are in a better mood, and are less anxious and depressed.

Being more active doesn't mean you need to run a marathon! You could start with moderate-intensity activities such as brisk walking, leisurely bike riding, dancing, or light swimming. More vigorous activities include power walking, jogging, hiking, and aerobics. And everyday activities that keep you moving are good too, like taking the stairs, raking the leaves, or mowing the grass. The key to success is finding activities you *enjoy* doing and that fit with your lifestyle.

Of course, if you are able to and are interested, going to a gym or taking some kind of strength training, yoga, or exercise class can really help. Working out with others can keep you motivated, and can be fun as well! If you have joint pain, consider water aerobics, or work with a trainer on exercises that won't cause pain or injury.

If you are not already active, talk with your health care provider before starting any new program of physical activity. Whatever kind of activity you choose, start slowly and build gradually. For example, you could walk just 5 or 10 minutes twice a week. Then, gradually build up to 30-60 minutes five or more days a week. Also, consider buying a pedometer, which lets you track how many steps you take during the day. Try to work up to at least 10,000 steps each day.

The key to success is finding activities you enjoy doing and that fit with your lifestyle.

It is important to be open with your health care provider and give her or him as much information as possible.

Physician-Supervised Weight Loss Options

First Steps

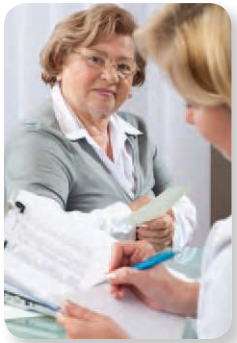
Wherever you are on your weight loss journey, working with your health care provider can be a key to success. It is important to be open with your health care provider and give her or him as much information as possible. Here are some tips for your first visit:

- Write down the food you consume for one week in a food diary (don't forget snacks and drinks)
- List exercise activities you enjoy
- List any medications you currently take (most pharmacies can print this information for you for free)
- Write down any family history of obesity-related conditions, such as type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure

Your provider may direct you to other specialists, such as dietitians or exercise specialists, who can help. A dietitian can help you identify food triggers, plan meals and shopping, and help you change behaviors related to weight gain.

Prescription Medicines for Weight Loss

Recently, new medicines have become available that may help you lose excess weight. Your health care provider can help you decide if a prescription weight loss medicine might be right for you. These medicines are typically only considered for patients with a BMI greater than 30 (if they have no other health problems), or a BMI greater than 27 if they have other weight-related health problems, such as diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure.



There are two types of weight-loss medicines:

- Those that reduce your feelings of hunger or make you feel full sooner by altering chemical signals in the brain.
- Those that block fat from being absorbed by your body. Less absorbed fat means fewer calories.

Studies show that people using some of these medicines can expect to lose on average between 5% and 11% of their starting weight, and maintain this weight loss for at least 2 years. Some patients taking these medicines have been shown to lose up to 20% of their starting weight, which can provide even greater improvements in health.

Talk with your health care provider about the risks and benefits of taking any medicines. All medicines carry some risk. Any type of medicine-based plan should be considered only as part of an overall weight management program given to you by your health care provider. This program should include education about healthy eating, physical activity, and addressing any emotional issues around food and weight that you might have.

New medicines have become available that may help you lose excess weight.

Surgical Options for Weight Loss

Weight loss surgery, also known as *bariatric* surgery, may be an option if you have a significant amount of excess weight. This means a BMI of 40 and above, or a BMI above 35 if you also have other weight-related health problems, such as diabetes or heart disease. Your health care provider will help you decide if bariatric surgery might be right for you.

Surgery often results in significant weight loss (as much as 32% of starting weight, depending on the procedure type) and the weight tends to remain off for years. Patients who have bariatric surgery may also have improvements in weight-related health problems, such as high blood pressure, sleep apnea, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes.

Reported Health Improvements Following Bariatric Surgery

Health condition	*Reported Effect**
Type 2 diabetes	86% (went away or improved)
High blood pressure	79% (went away or improved)
Sleep apnea	86% (went away or improved)
High cholesterol	70% (improved)
Osteoarthritis/degenerative joint disease	41% (went away)

** Long-term results are likely to be lower*

In addition, bariatric surgery results in an 89% reduction in risk of early death, and a 95% improved quality of life.

Three basic types of bariatric surgery are available:

- **Gastric Bypass Surgery:** the stomach is permanently reduced to an egg-sized pouch, which is reattached to the intestine, bypassing most of the stomach and the first part of the small intestine
- **Adjustable Gastric Banding:** an adjustable band is placed around the stomach to limit the amount of food you can comfortably eat
- **Gastric Sleeve:** removal of most of the stomach, turning it into a narrow tube

There is no "best" procedure—your health care provider will refer you to a bariatric surgeon who will work with you to decide which type of surgery might be right for you.

As with any surgery, bariatric surgery involves some risk of complications. When performed by an experienced surgeon, however, bariatric surgery has a very low incidence of death and is as safe as other major surgeries. Talk with your surgeon about the possible risks of each procedure.

Remember: bariatric surgery is not a "quick fix." It requires a life-long change in your lifestyle and eating habits. Patients should not resume their previous eating habits after undergoing a surgical procedure. Long-term follow-up with a health care provider is essential.

As with weight loss medicines, any type of bariatric surgery should be considered only as part of an overall program that focuses on healthy eating, exercise, and the emotional components of overeating.

Starting Your Weight Loss Journey

Now you know that having excess weight greatly raises your risk for future disease and early death. But you've also learned there is hope, and that having excess weight is not a choice or matter of willpower. Genes and biology are involved, and many aspects of modern life can make it easy to gain weight.

The important thing is that you can learn to change your lifestyle, lose excess weight, and become healthier. You can slowly make better food choices and build more physical activity into your life. Medicines or surgical techniques may be options for those with significant excess weight.

Controlling excess weight is a lifelong effort, but you have taken the first steps on your journey by reading this booklet. By working with a health care provider, you can find the best path toward success and the many benefits of a healthy weight!

Resources

American College of Physicians
acponline.org

Obesity Action Coalition
obesityaction.org

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
eatright.org

American Diabetes Association
diabetes.org

American Society of Bariatric Physicians
asbp.org

American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery
asmbs.org

Obesity Society
obesity.org

Weight-Control Information Network
win.niddk.nih.gov

Your Weight Matters
yourweightmatters.org

Credits

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Presenter

American College of Physicians

The American College of Physicians (ACP) is a national organization of internists—physicians who specialize in the prevention, detection and treatment of illnesses in adults. Established in 1915, ACP is the largest medical-specialty organization and second-largest physician group in the United States. Its membership of over 126,000 includes internists, internal medicine sub-specialists, medical students, residents, fellows, and allied health professionals. Members are physicians in general internal medicine and related subspecialties, including cardiology, hematology, neurology, pulmonary disease, oncology, infectious diseases, allergy and immunology, and geriatrics. Internists treat the majority of adults in the United States. Learn more at the ACP website: www.acponline.org

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Partner

Obesity Action Coalition

The Obesity Action Coalition is a non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to those affected by excess weight and obesity. The OAC was formed to build a nationwide coalition of those affected to become active advocates and spread the important message of the need for obesity education. To increase obesity education, the OAC offers a wide variety of free educational resources on obesity, severe obesity, childhood obesity, and weight bias, in addition to consequences and treatments of these conditions. The OAC also conducts advocacy efforts throughout the U.S. on both the National and state levels, and encourages individuals to become proactive advocates. For more information on the OAC, please visit www.ObesityAction.org.

OAC
Obesity Action Coalition

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Vivus, Inc.

Vivus is a biopharmaceutical company developing innovative, next-generation therapies to address unmet needs in obesity, diabetes, sleep apnea and sexual health for US, European and other world markets. For more information about the company, please visit www.vivus.com.

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DVD INSIDE

Excess Weight and Your Health

A Guide to Effective, Healthy Weight Loss

Having excess weight is a complex condition. Genes and biology play a key role, and many aspects of modern life make gaining weight easy.

But having excess weight raises your risk for future health problems and early death. That's why it's important to learn about your options for losing excess weight and improving your health.

This booklet and DVD program will show you how to make better food choices and build more physical activity into your life. You'll also learn about medicines and surgical techniques that may be options for those with significant excess weight.

By working with your health care provider, you can find the best treatment plan to help you succeed and achieve the many benefits of a healthy weight!

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