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Obesity Fact Sheet

"Obesity itself has become a life-long disease, not a cosmetic issue, nor a moral judgment — and it is becoming a dangerous epidemic." Robert H. Eckel, M.D., vice chairman of the American Heart Association's Nutrition Committee

Definition

Obesity is now recognized by leading government health authorities, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), as a disease. This chronic disease is caused by any one or a combination of environmental (social and cultural), genetic, physiologic, metabolic, behavioral and psychological factors.^{1,2}

- The most common measurement for obesity is Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is calculated by dividing body weight (lb.) by height in inches squared (in²) and multiplying that amount by 704.5. The metric calculation for BMI is kg/m². Weight-loss surgery is recommended as a treatment option for persons with obesity that have: 1) a BMI ≥ 40 or 2) a BMI of 35 to 39.9 with serious medical conditions.³
 - BMI 25 to 29.9 kg/m² - Overweight
 - BMI 30 to 34.9 kg/m² - Obese
 - BMI 35 to 39.9 kg/m² - Severely Obese
 - BMI 40 kg/m² and up - Morbidly Obese

Prevalence

- Obesity is a growing national epidemic. From 1976 to 2004, the percent of adults (age 20 to 74 years) in the United States who were obese (BMI ≥ 30) more than doubled from 15 to 32.9 percent.⁴
 - For 2003-2004, 66.3 percent of adults ≥ 20 years were overweight or obese (BMI ≥ 25)⁵
 - For 2003-2004, 4.8 percent of adults ≥ 20 years were morbidly obese (BMI ≥ 40)⁵

Impact

- According to the Surgeon General's "Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity" report, the estimated cost of obesity in the United States was \$117 billion in 2000. This estimate includes the direct costs associated with obesity and its related comorbidities, such as preventative, diagnostic and treatment services, as well as indirect costs including the value of income lost from decreased productivity or lost days of work.⁶
- Obesity is considered the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States.⁷
- Obesity appears to have a stronger association than smoking or problem drinking with chronic medical conditions, reduced health-related quality of life and increased health care and medication spending.⁸
- People who are significantly overweight or obese often face serious health consequences including increased risk for premature death, risk for other serious health issues, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and sleep apnea.^{9,10}
- According to a study published in *Personnel Psychology*, obese people are subject to job discrimination and frequently stereotyped as emotionally impaired, socially handicapped or possessing negative personality traits.¹¹



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Relevant Data

- According to a report published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, data strongly supports surgical treatment as a superior option to pharmaceutical or diet options for weight loss and to help control co-morbidities associated with excess weight like type 2 diabetes and hypertension in morbidly obese patients.^{12,13}
- The National Institutes of Health reported that people who remain in weight-loss programs usually lose about 10 percent of their body weight, but regain as much as two-thirds of it in one year and almost all of it within five years.¹⁴
- According to the Diabetes Prevention Program, type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by managing weight through diet and exercise.¹⁵
- Intentional weight loss and physical activity in obese patients can improve or prevent many of the obesity-related risk factors for coronary heart disease according to the American Heart Association.¹⁶
- More than three-quarters of obese Americans say they have healthy eating habits and about half say they exercise three or more times a week, according to a survey conducted by Thomson Medstat, a Michigan-based health care research firm.¹⁷
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly two-thirds (62%) of American adults report they never engage in any leisure-time periods of vigorous activity lasting 10 minutes or more per week.¹⁸

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