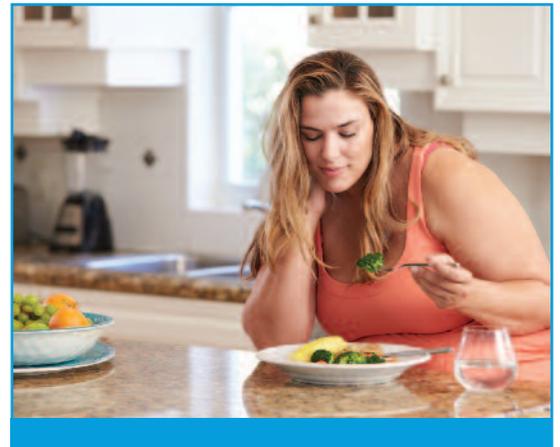# Obesity

What Is Obesity?

Having obesity means you have more body fat than is healthy. Having too much body fat can cause serious health problems. It can even shorten your life.

There are many factors that play a role in how much you weigh. These include:

- The types of food you eat
- How active you are and if you exercise
- Your family history
- Your sleep habits
- Taking certain medicines
- Feeling stressed or having depression
- Certain health problems

How Does Obesity Affect My Health?

Having obesity can cause:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Sleep apnea (when your breathing starts and stops during sleep)
- High blood pressure
- Aching joints
- Trouble with breathing
- Less energy and bad moods

How Is Obesity Diagnosed?

- Your doctor may review your weight history and ask questions about your activity level and eating habits.
- He or she may measure your body mass index (BMI), which can show whether you are overweight or have obesity.
- BMI is measured by comparing your weight to your height. In general, you are overweight when your BMI is 25–29.9, and have obesity when your BMI is 30 or more.
- Your doctor may also give you a physical exam and check for health problems related to your weight.

Obesity

How Is Obesity Treated?

Your doctor can help you set weight loss goals and give you ideas for losing weight. Even a little weight loss can improve your health. Some strategies include:

- Eating less and doing more physical activity.
- Joining self-help groups. Sometimes they make it easier to stay on a diet, especially if you are feeling sad or stressed, or can't stop eating.
- If diet and exercise are not enough, your doctor may give you medicine to help you lose weight.
- If you have severe obesity and serious health problems, surgery may be an option. It can lower the amount of food your body is able to take in and help you eat less.
- Your doctor will also work with you to manage any obesity-related health problems you may have, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Questions for My Doctor

- How much weight do I need to lose? Will losing weight improve my health?
- What is the best diet and exercise plan for weight loss? Should I try one of the plans they show on TV?
- I can't seem to stop eating—what should I do?
- Can you refer me to anyone who can help me lose weight?
- Are any medicines that I take causing me to gain weight? What are their side effects?
- Is weight loss surgery the right choice for me?

Bottom Line

- Having obesity means that you have more body fat than is healthy. It can be caused by many factors including family history, lifestyle, and other health problems.
- Body mass index is a good way to measure if you are overweight or have obesity.
- Your doctor can help you set weight loss goals and give you ideas for how to lose weight.
- Losing even a little weight can make you healthier.

For More Information

- **American College of Physicians:** www.acponline.org/patient_ed/obesity
- **Medline Plus:** https://medlineplus.gov/obesity.html

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