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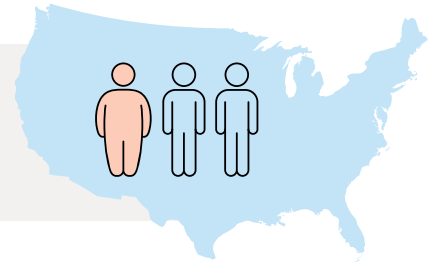
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# What you need to know about obesity and excess weight

# What is obesity?

Obesity is a chronic (long-term) disease that's linked to having more body fat. And it's common!

In fact, more than **1 in 3 adults** in the United States have obesity.



Having obesity increases your chances of having other serious health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. The good news is there are a variety of treatment options to help manage obesity, such as eating healthy meals and getting regular physical activity. Talk with your clinician about getting support and which treatment options are best for you.

## How is obesity diagnosed?

Measures such as body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference are common ways to check for obesity because they're easy to measure. But they don't give a complete picture of your health. Your doctor or health care professional may also ask questions about your medical history, medicines, and other facts about your life, like your physical activity and eating habits and any challenges you face getting health care or making healthy choices.

Everyone's body is unique, so talk with your doctor or health care professional about your weight and health goals.



If you're at least 20 years old, your doctor can assess whether you may have obesity by using a measurement called body mass index (BMI). BMI compares your weight to your height to check if you're at a healthy weight or if you may have obesity. Learn more about BMI and get a helpful BMI calculator: [cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult\\_bmi/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/index.html)

Based on your BMI and other factors, your doctor can tell you if you:

<b>Are underweight</b>	<b>Are at a healthy weight</b>	<b>Have overweight</b>	<b>Have obesity</b>
BMI less than 18.5	BMI between 18.5 and 24.9	BMI between 25 and 29.9	BMI higher than 30

Your doctor may also measure your waist circumference by wrapping a tape around your waist at belly button level. This measurement assesses how much fat your body stores around your belly. Having more fat around your belly can raise your risk of health problems. Learn more about waist circumference: [cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html)

## What causes obesity?

Obesity can be caused by various factors, many of which you can't control. For example, your weight can be affected by genes you inherit from your parents. Your brain and hormones send signals to help control hunger and fullness, metabolism (how your body burns or stores calories), and your body weight. And in people with obesity, these signals may not work as well as they should. Your environment can also affect whether you have obesity.



There are also some factors that you may be able to control or change, like your eating, physical activity, sleep habits, and how you manage stress. Having a healthy lifestyle is important for your overall health — not just your weight. Changing habits that can affect your weight, like food choices and activity level, may help you manage your weight and improve your health. Talk to your loved ones to get their support for a healthy lifestyle. Seek support from your doctor about healthy habits and ask them to help you make a plan for managing your weight.



Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the places where you're born, live, work, and get older. These factors can impact your health in many ways and may raise or lower your risk of obesity. Some examples of SDOH are safe housing, experiences with racism and discrimination, and access to health care, nutritious foods, and safe places to get physical activity. Get more information about SDOH and other causes of obesity:

[cdc.gov/obesity/basics/causes.html](https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/basics/causes.html)

## How might obesity affect health?

Having obesity can raise your risk of other health conditions or concerns, like:



Heart disease, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol



High blood sugar or diabetes



Stroke



Some types of cancer



Liver disease



Problems with sleep

Obesity can also affect your daily life and make it difficult to do the things you enjoy. For example, many people with obesity have a hard time living an active life. That's because obesity can cause:



Tiredness



Breathing problems



Joint or back pain



Sweating



Feelings of self-consciousness or loneliness because of stigma and discrimination



Mood changes or mental health conditions

## When and how should I talk to a doctor or healthcare professional about my weight?

If you're worried about your weight or want to change your physical activity or eating habits to lose weight, talk to your doctor. They can help you set goals for your weight and advise you on a treatment plan. But starting the conversation about weight can be hard.

As you prepare to talk with your doctor, think about the factors in your life that may affect your weight.



Answering the questions below can help you get ready to share with your doctor or other healthcare professional. Feel free to write down your thoughts and bring them to your appointment.



**Does obesity run in your family?**

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**When did you first gain weight or have concerns about your weight? Was there anything new happening in your life at that time?** (For example, think about whether you had changes in your stress level or eating habits or if you were pregnant, quitting smoking, or taking a new medicine.)

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**Are there changes you'd like to make to your eating habits?** (To get ideas, keep a log of all your meals and snacks for one day)

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**What's the most physically active thing you do in a typical day? How often are you physically active? What types of physical activities do you enjoy?** (For example, do you like to take walks or go swimming? What outdoor or indoor household chores get you moving?)

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**Do you feel like you get enough sleep most nights? If not, what do you think is happening?**

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**How is your stress level? How do you cope with stress?**

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**Are there other factors that you think might affect your weight?**

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If talking about weight or obesity with your doctor or other healthcare professional makes you uneasy, let them know. Acknowledging that you feel uncomfortable can help ease the tension. You can also bring a family member or friend for support. Remember, talking to the doctor can help you get the right care and take control of your health. Your doctor may also be able to recommend support groups as a good resource for sharing experiences.



What are questions I want to ask my doctor?

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# What can I do to manage obesity?

**Talk to your doctor before taking any new medicine or changing your eating or physical activity routines.**

If you have obesity, losing weight can help lower your risk of other health conditions and help you live a healthier, more active life. Even losing a small amount of weight — like 5 percent of your body weight — can make a big difference in your health. For a person who weighs 200 pounds, losing 5 percent of their body weight would mean losing 10 pounds. For a person who weighs 300 pounds, it would mean losing 15 pounds.



By making healthy lifestyle changes, you can take steps to improve your health and lose weight. Check out the list of ideas below and decide if any of these changes might help you achieve your health and weight goals. For example, you might:

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Eat balanced meals by:

- Filling half your plate with vegetables and fruit
- Filling a quarter of your plate with healthy foods that are high in protein, like skinless chicken, fish or seafood, tofu, eggs, or beans
- Filling a quarter of your plate with fiber-rich whole grains, like whole-grain bread, brown rice, or oatmeal





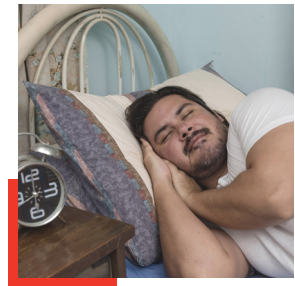
Drink water or calorie-free beverages, like unsweetened tea, coffee, or seltzer — or add lemon, cucumber slices, mint, or other herbs or fruit to your water for a refreshing twist

Choose healthy, filling snacks, like fruit, low-fat yogurt, celery or whole-grain crackers with peanut butter, or air-popped popcorn



Get more physical activity each day, like by taking a walk after lunch, raking leaves or sweeping your floors, or dancing or bopping along to your favorite song

Prioritize getting enough sleep, like by setting a regular bedtime



Get your loved ones involved in trying out new recipes or finding fun ways to be physically active together. Talk to your loved one about why managing your weight is important to you and ask for their support.

Share this information with your family and friends.  
Learn more about obesity and get helpful resources:  
[cdc.gov/obesity/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/index.html)

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